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# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
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**SONG 151**

He Will Call

**PREVIEW**

First Corinthians chapter 15 focuses on the resurrection. Why is that teaching important to us, and why can we have confidence that Jesus was resurrected? This article will address these and other important questions about the resurrection.

## The Resurrection —A Sure Hope!

*“I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection.”—ACTS 24:15.*

HOPE is very important. The hope of some people centers on having a successful marriage, raising healthy children, or recovering from a serious illness. We Christians may long for the same things. But the hope we cherish most goes further than that; it includes our everlasting future as well as the future of our loved ones who have died.

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul stated: “I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15) Paul was not the first to express the hope of a resurrection. The patriarch Job did too. He was confident that God would remember him and raise him to life again.—Job 14:7-10, 12-15.

<sup>3</sup> “The resurrection of the dead” is part of the “foundation,” or “primary doctrine,” of all Christian teachings. (Heb. 6:1, 2) Paul’s discussion of the resurrection is recorded in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. What he wrote must have built up first-century Christians. And that chapter can build us up and strengthen a hope that we may have long held.

<sup>4</sup> The resurrection of Jesus Christ is key to our hope for our dead loved ones. It was part of “the good news” that Paul declared to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 15:1, 2) In fact, he said that if a Christian lacked belief in that resurrec-

1-2. True worshippers have what wonderful hope?

3. Why can we benefit from 1 Corinthians chapter 15?

4. What is key to our hope for our dead loved ones?

tion, his faith would be useless. (1 Cor. 15:17) Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is central to our Christian hope.

<sup>5</sup> Early in Paul's discussion of the resurrection, he brought up three realities. They are (1) "Christ died for our sins." (2) He "was buried." (3) He "was raised up on the third day according to the Scriptures."—**Read 1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4.**

<sup>6</sup> What do Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection mean for us? The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be "cut off from the land of the living" and be "given a burial place with the wicked." More was involved, though. Isaiah added that the Messiah would carry "the sin of many people." Jesus did this by providing the ransom. (Isa. 53:8, 9, 12; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8) So the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus provide a solid basis for our hope of being set free from sin and death and being reunited with our loved ones who have died.

#### TESTIMONY FROM MANY WITNESSES

<sup>7</sup> Our hope in the resurrection is linked to the resurrection of Jesus, so we need to be convinced that Jesus was resurrected. Why can we be certain that Jehovah brought Jesus back to life?

<sup>8</sup> There were many eyewitnesses who testified that Jesus had been raised. (1 Cor. 15:5-7) The first witness on Paul's list was the apostle Peter (Cephas). A group of disciples confirmed that Pe-

ter saw the resurrected Jesus. (Luke 24: 33, 34) In addition, "the Twelve," the apostles, saw Jesus after he was raised. Then Christ "appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time," perhaps at the joyous event in Galilee mentioned at Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus also "appeared to James," likely Jesus' half brother, who previously had not put faith in Jesus as the Messiah. (John 7:5) After seeing the resurrected Jesus, James was convinced. Significantly, about 55 C.E. when Paul wrote this letter, many eyewitnesses of the resurrection were alive, so any doubter could consult with living, credible witnesses.

<sup>9</sup> Later, Jesus appeared to Paul himself. (1 Cor. 15:8) Paul (Saul) was on his way to Damascus when he heard the voice of the resurrected Jesus and saw a vision of him in heavenly glory. (**Read Acts 9:3-5.**) Paul's experience added to the evidence that Jesus' resurrection was not a myth.—Acts 26:12-15.

<sup>10</sup> Paul's testimony would be especially noteworthy to some because he at one time persecuted Christians. Once he became convinced that Jesus had been raised up, Paul labored to convince others of this truth. He endured beatings, imprisonment, and shipwreck as he spread the truth that Jesus had died but was alive again. (1 Cor. 15:9-11; 2 Cor. 11:23-27) Paul was so sure that Jesus had been raised from the dead that he was willing to die defending his belief. Does this early testimony not convince

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5-6. What do the words found at 1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4 mean for us?

7-8. What helps Christians to be sure that Jesus was resurrected?

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9. As we read at Acts 9:3-5, how could Paul add testimony about Jesus' resurrection?

10. What did Paul's conviction that Jesus was raised from the dead move him to do?



Jesus was the first of many  
to be raised from death to  
heavenly life  
(See paragraphs 15-16)



you that Jesus was raised from the dead? And does it not strengthen your belief in the resurrection?

### ADDRESSING WRONG VIEWS

<sup>11</sup> Some in the Greek city of Corinth had wrong views about the resurrection, even going so far as to say that “there is no resurrection of the dead.” Why? (1 Cor. 15:12) Philosophers in another Greek city, Athens, had mocked the idea that Jesus was resurrected. Such thinking may have affected some in Corinth. (Acts 17:18, 31, 32) Others may have thought of the resurrection in a figurative sense, meaning that a person was once “dead” in sin but had become “alive” as a Christian. Whatever their reason, denying the resurrection meant that their faith was in vain. If God did not resurrect Jesus, no ransom was paid and all remained in sin. So those who rejected the resurrection had no valid hope.—1 Cor. 15:13-19; Heb. 9:12, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Paul had firsthand knowledge that “Christ [had] been raised from the dead.” That resurrection was superior to the resurrection of those who had earlier been brought back to life on earth—only to die again. Paul said that Jesus was “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death.” In what sense was Jesus first? He was the first person to be raised to life as a spirit being and the first one from mankind to ascend to heaven.—1 Cor. 15:20; Acts 26:23; **read 1 Peter 3:18, 22.**

11. Why may some in Corinth have had wrong views about the resurrection?

12. In line with 1 Peter 3:18, 22, how did Jesus’ resurrection differ from earlier ones?

### THOSE WHO “WILL BE MADE ALIVE”

<sup>13</sup> How could the death of one man bring life to millions? Paul gives a logical answer to that question. He draws a contrast between what Adam brought on mankind and what is possible through Christ. With regard to Adam, Paul wrote: “Death came through a man.” When Adam sinned, he brought disaster on himself and his descendants. We still feel the tragic effects of his disobedience. How different is the outcome made possible because God raised his Son! “Resurrection of the dead also comes through a man,” Jesus. “For just as in Adam all are dying,” Paul reasoned, “so also in the Christ all will be made alive.”—1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

<sup>14</sup> What did Paul mean when he said that “in Adam *all* are dying”? Paul had in mind Adam’s descendants, who inherited sin and imperfection from Adam and thus are in a dying condition. (Rom. 5:12) Adam is not among those who “will be made alive.” Christ’s ransom does not cover him, for Adam was a perfect man who willfully disobeyed God. The outcome for Adam is the same as what is ahead for those whom “the Son of man” will judge as “goats,” namely, “everlasting cutting-off.”—Matt. 25:31-33, 46; Heb. 5:9.

<sup>15</sup> Note that Paul said that “*in the Christ all* will be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15:22) Paul’s letter was written to anointed

13. Paul drew what contrast between Adam and Jesus?

14. Will Adam be resurrected? Explain.

15. Who are included in the “*all*” who “will be made alive”?



Putting trust in the resurrection allows us to look to the future with confidence  
(See paragraph 20)

Christians in Corinth, who would be resurrected to life in heaven. Those Christians were “sanctified in union with Christ Jesus, called to be holy ones.” And Paul mentioned “those who have fallen asleep in **death in union with Christ.**” (1 Cor. 1:2; 15:18; 2 Cor. 5:17) In another inspired letter, Paul wrote that those “united with [Jesus] in the likeness of his death” will “be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.” (Rom. 6: 3-5) Jesus was raised as a spirit and went to heaven. So that will be the outcome for all “in union with Christ,” that is, all spirit-anointed Christians.

<sup>16</sup> Paul wrote that Christ was raised as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death.” Bear in mind that others, such as Lazarus, had been brought back to life on earth, but Jesus was the **first** one ever to be raised from the dead as a spirit and to receive everlasting life. He could be likened to the firstfruits of the harvest that the Israelites offered to God. Furthermore, by calling Jesus “the firstfruits,” Paul implied that others

16. What did Paul imply by calling Jesus “the firstfruits”?

thereafter would be raised from death to heavenly life. The apostles and others “in union with Christ” would follow Jesus. In due time, they would experience a resurrection similar to that of Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> The heavenly resurrection for those “in union with Christ” had not yet begun to occur at the time Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Rather, Paul pointed to a future time: “Each one in his own proper order: Christ the firstfruits, **afterward** those who belong to the Christ **during his presence.**” (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4: 15, 16) Today we are living during that foretold “presence” of Christ. Yes, the apostles and other spirit-anointed Christians who died had to await that presence to receive their heavenly reward and be “united with [Jesus] in the likeness of his resurrection.”

### YOU HAVE A SURE HOPE!

<sup>18</sup> What, though, of all the loyal Chris-

17. When would those “in union with Christ” receive their heavenly reward?

18. (a) Why can we conclude that another resurrection will follow the heavenly one? (b) As indicated at 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, what developments will occur in heaven?



tians who do not have the hope of living in heaven with Christ? They too have the hope of a resurrection. The Bible says that Paul and others who go to heaven share in “the *earlier* resurrection from the dead.” (Phil. 3:11) Does that not suggest that another resurrection would follow? That would be in harmony with what Job said about his future. (Job 14:15) “Those who belong to the Christ during his presence” will be in heaven with Jesus when he brings to nothing all governments and all authority and power. Even “the last enemy, death,” will be brought to nothing. Certainly, inherited death will no more afflict those raised to heaven. But what about others?—**Read 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.**

<sup>19</sup> What can those with an earthly hope expect? They can derive hope from Paul’s words: “I have hope . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15) Clearly, no unrighteous person can enter into heaven, so those words point to a future resurrection on earth.

19. What can those with an earthly hope expect?

<sup>20</sup> Without a doubt, “there is going to be a resurrection”! Those who are brought back to life on earth will have the prospect of living here forever. You can put your trust in that promise. That hope can bring you comfort regarding your loved ones who have died. They can be raised from the dead during the time when Christ and others will “rule as kings . . . for the 1,000 years.” (Rev. 20:6) You too can maintain the sure hope that if you should happen to die before the Millennium begins, your future is secure. This “hope does not lead to disappointment.” (Rom. 5:5) It can sustain you now and add to your joy in serving God. But there is more that we can learn from 1 Corinthians chapter 15, as the following article will show.

20. How has your hope been strengthened?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS** **Page 4:** Jesus was the first to be taken to heaven. (Acts 1:9) Some of his disciples who would join him there included Thomas, James, Lydia, John, Mary, and Paul. **Page 6:** A brother has lost his beloved wife, with whom he had long served. He trusts that she will be resurrected, and he continues to serve Jehovah loyally.

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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| ■ What evidence can you point to that Jesus was resurrected? | ■ Why is the fact that Jesus was raised so important to us? | ■ How does 1 Corinthians chapter 15 strengthen your faith in the resurrection? |
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**SONG 141**

The Miracle of Life

**PREVIEW**

The second half of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 contains details about the resurrection, especially that of anointed Christians. However, what Paul wrote is also of interest to those of the other sheep. This article will show how the hope of the resurrection should affect our life now and give us reason to look forward to the future.

## “How Are the Dead to Be Raised Up?”

*“Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?”*

—1 COR. 15:55.

MOST people now serving Jehovah hope to live forever on earth. A remnant of spirit-anointed Christians, however, hope to be raised to life in heaven. These anointed ones are keenly interested in what their future life will be like, but what about those with the earthly hope? As we will see, the heavenly resurrection will lead to blessings also for those who have the hope of living forever on earth. So regardless of whether our hope is heavenly or earthly, we should be interested in the heavenly resurrection.

<sup>2</sup> God inspired some of Jesus’ disciples in the first century to write about the heavenly hope. The apostle John explained: “We are now children of God, but it has not yet been made manifest what we will be. We do know that when he is made manifest we will be like him.” (1 John 3:2) So anointed Christians do not know what they will be like when they are raised to heaven with spirit bodies. However, they will in a literal sense see Jehovah when they receive their reward. The Bible does not reveal every detail about the heavenly resurrection, but the apostle Paul did provide some information about it. The anointed will be with Christ when he brings “to nothing all government and all authority and power.” That includes “the last enemy, death.” Finally, Jesus—along

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1-2. Why should all Christians be interested in the heavenly resurrection?



with his corulers—will subject himself and all things to Jehovah. (1 Cor. 15:24-28) What a climax that will be!\*

<sup>3</sup> Paul's belief in the resurrection helped him to endure various trials. **(Read 1 Corinthians 15:30-32.)** He told the Corinthians: "Daily I face death." Paul also wrote: "I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus." Perhaps he was alluding to his fighting real animals at an arena in Ephesus. (2 Cor. 1:8; 4:10; 11:23) Or he may have been referring to hostile Jews and others who were like "wild beasts." (Acts 19:26-34; 1 Cor. 16:9) Whichever it was, Paul faced serious perils. Yet, he still had a positive outlook on the future.—2 Cor. 4:16-18.

<sup>4</sup> We are living in dangerous times. Some of our brothers have been victims of crime. Others live in war-torn areas where their safety is far from guaranteed. Still others serve Jehovah at the risk of their life or freedom in lands where the preaching work is restricted or even banned. Yet, all these brothers and sisters persevere in their worship of Jehovah, becoming examples for us. They are secure in the knowledge that even if they lose their life at the present time, Jehovah has something far better in mind for them in the future.

<sup>5</sup> Paul warned his brothers about a

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\* "Questions From Readers" in this issue addresses Paul's comments found at 1 Corinthians 15:29.

3. As indicated at 1 Corinthians 15:30-32, Paul's belief in the resurrection helped him to do what?

4. How has the hope of the resurrection strengthened Christians today? (See cover picture.)

5. What dangerous viewpoint could weaken our faith in the resurrection?

dangerous viewpoint that some had: "If the dead are not to be raised up, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die.'" That viewpoint actually existed even before Paul's day. He may have been quoting Isaiah 22:13, which refers to the attitude of the Israelites. Instead of drawing close to God, they pursued a life of pleasure. Basically, the attitude of those Israelites was "here today, gone tomorrow," a view common even today. However, the bad outcome to the nation of Israel is a matter of record.—2 Chron. 36:15-20.

<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the fact that Jehovah can resurrect the dead should affect our choice of associates. The brothers in Corinth needed to guard against associating with those who denied the resurrection. There is a lesson for us today: No good can come from choosing as regular associates those who have a live-for-the-moment outlook. Being with such ones can ruin a true Christian's viewpoint and habits. In fact, it might lead him to have a lifestyle that includes what God hates—sin. Thus, Paul strongly urged: "Come to your senses in a righteous way and do not practice sin." —1 Cor. 15:33, 34.

#### WHAT SORT OF BODY?

<sup>7</sup> **Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.** An inquirer who wanted to cast doubt on the resurrection might have asked: "How are the dead to be raised up?" We

6. How should the resurrection hope affect our choice of associates?

7. What question about the resurrection might some have asked, as shown at 1 Corinthians 15:35-38?



do well to consider Paul's answer because many people today have personal views about life after death. But what does the Bible teach?

<sup>8</sup> When someone dies, his body decomposes. But the One who created the universe from nothing can resurrect that person, giving him a suitable body. (Gen. 1:1; 2:7) Paul used an illustration to show that God would not need to bring back the same body. Think of "a bare grain," or a plant "seed." A seed of grain that is planted in the ground germinates and becomes a new plant. The resulting plant is quite different from the small seed. Paul used this comparison to show that our Creator can provide "a body just as it [pleases] him."

<sup>9</sup> **Read 1 Corinthians 15:39-41.** Paul

8. What illustration can help us to understand the resurrection to heavenly life?

9. As to bodies, 1 Corinthians 15:39-41 calls attention to what differences?

noted that there is great diversity in creation. For example, there are different fleshly bodies, such as cattle, birds, and fish. He stated that in the sky, we see differences between the sun and the moon. And he noted that "one star differs from another star in glory." Yes, even if we may not discern it with the naked eye, there are what scientists call red giant stars, white dwarfs, and yellow stars, such as our sun. Paul also stated that "there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies." How so? Well, on earth, we have bodies of flesh, but in heaven there are spirit bodies, like the ones the angels have.

<sup>10</sup> Note what Paul said next: "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised up in incorruption." Of course, upon dying, the

10. How might differences in bodies relate to the resurrection?



Using a seed and a plant, Paul illustrated that God can provide a suitable body for those who are resurrected

(See paragraph 8)

human body decays and returns to the dust. (Gen. 3:19) So how can it be that a body is “raised up in incorruption”? Paul was not speaking of a human who is resurrected to life on earth, such as those raised by Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus. Paul was referring to a person who is resurrected with a heavenly body, that is, “a spiritual one.”—1 Cor. 15:42-44.

<sup>11</sup> When Jesus walked the earth, he had a fleshly body. But when he was resurrected, he “became a life-giving spirit” and returned to heaven. Likewise, anointed Christians would be resurrected to spirit life. Paul explained: “Just as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we will bear also the image of the heavenly one.”—1 Cor. 15:45-49.

<sup>12</sup> Paul was reaching the climax of his

11-12. What change did Jesus experience when he was resurrected, and how do the anointed experience something similar?

discussion of the resurrection. It is important to note that Jesus was not resurrected with a human body. Paul pointedly said: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s Kingdom” in heaven. (1 Cor. 15: 50) The apostles and other anointed ones would not be resurrected to heaven with corruptible bodies of flesh and blood. When would they be resurrected? Paul stressed that this resurrection still lay ahead; it was not something they would experience right after they died. By the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, some disciples had already “fallen asleep in death,” for example, the apostle James. (Acts 12:1, 2) Other apostles and anointed ones would yet fall “asleep in death.”—1 Cor. 15:6.

### VICTORY OVER DEATH

<sup>13</sup> Both Jesus and Paul pointed forward to a special time in history—Christ’s

13. How would Jesus’ presence be marked?



Those who are changed  
“in the blink of an eye”  
will share with Jesus in  
smashing the nations  
(See paragraph 15)



presence. That presence would be marked by wars, earthquakes, pestilences, and other global developments. We have seen this Bible prophecy being fulfilled since 1914. There would be another outstanding part of that sign. Jesus said that the good news of God's established Kingdom would be preached “in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end [would] come.” (Matt. 24:3, 7-14) Paul pointed out that “the presence of the Lord” would also be a time of resurrection for anointed Christians who had “fallen asleep in death.”—1 Thess. 4:14-16; 1 Cor. 15:23.

<sup>14</sup> Anointed ones who today finish their earthly course are instantly raised

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14. What do anointed ones who pass away during Christ's presence experience?

to life in the heavens. This is confirmed by Paul's words recorded at 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52: “We will not all fall asleep in death, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, during the last trumpet.” These words of Paul are now undergoing fulfillment! Upon their resurrection, these brothers of Christ will have complete joy; they will “always be with the Lord.”—1 Thess. 4:17.

<sup>15</sup> The Bible tells us what work those who are changed “in the blink of an eye” will do in heaven. Jesus says to them: “To the one who conquers and observes my deeds down to the end, I will give authority over the nations, and he will shepherd the people with an iron rod so

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15. What work awaits those who will be changed “in the blink of an eye”?



that they will be broken to pieces like clay vessels, just as I have received from my Father.” (Rev. 2:26, 27) They will follow their Commander in the task at hand—shepherding the nations with a rod of iron.—Rev. 19:11-15.

<sup>16</sup> Clearly, the anointed will be victorious over death. (1 Cor. 15:54-57) Their resurrection will put them in position to share in the victory over earth-wide wickedness during the coming war of Armageddon. Millions of other Christian men and women will “come out of the great tribulation,” surviving into the new world. (Rev. 7:14) Those survivors on earth will be eyewitnesses to another victory over death—the resurrection of billions of people who died in the past. Just imagine the joy when that victori-

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16. How will many humans be victorious over death?

ous event occurs! (Acts 24:15) And all those who prove completely loyal to Jehovah will be victorious even over inherited death. They will be able to live forever.

<sup>17</sup> Every Christian now alive should be grateful for the reassuring words that Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding the resurrection. We have every reason to show that we accept Paul’s urging to be fully occupied now “in the work of the Lord.” **(Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.)** If we loyally and actively share in that work, we will put ourselves in line to experience a future filled with joy. That future will be more wonderful than anything we can imagine. It certainly will confirm that our labor has not been in vain in connection with the Lord.

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17. With 1 Corinthians 15:58 in mind, what should we do now?

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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|--|--|---|
| ■ As we face perils, how should the resurrection hope affect us? | ■ What share will those who are changed “in the blink of an eye” have with Christ? | ■ Why is the counsel found at 1 Corinthians 15:58 appropriate for us today? |
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### Do the apostle Paul's words found at 1 Corinthians 15:29 mean that some Christians back then got baptized on behalf of dead people?

■ No, neither the Bible nor history indicates that such was done.

The way that this text reads in many Bibles has led some to think that water baptism on behalf of the dead was carried out in Paul's day. For example: "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead?"—*New International Version*.

However, note the comments of two Bible scholars. Dr. Gregory Lockwood said that the idea that baptisms were performed "on behalf of persons who had already died" would be "a form of baptism, which as far as can be determined, was without historical or biblical parallel." Similarly, Professor Gordon D. Fee wrote: "There is no historical or biblical precedent for such baptism. The N[ew] T[estament] is otherwise completely silent about it; there is no known practice in any of the other churches nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately follow."

The Bible says that Jesus' followers were to "make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them . . . , teaching them to observe all the things" he had commanded. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Before a person could become a baptized disciple, he needed to learn about, believe in, and obey Jehovah and His Son. Someone who was already dead and in the grave could not do that; nor could a living Christian do it for him.—Eccl. 9:5, 10; John 4:1; 1 Cor. 1:14-16.

What, then, was Paul saying?

Some Corinthians denied that the dead would be resurrected. (1 Cor. 15:12) Paul

refuted that view. He pointed out that he 'daily faced death.' Of course, he was still alive. But despite experiencing dangers, he was confident that after death he would be resurrected as a powerful spirit, even as Jesus was.—1 Cor. 15:30-32, 42-44.

The Corinthians needed to realize that being anointed Christians meant that they would face daily trials and die before they could be resurrected. Being "baptized into Christ Jesus" involved being "baptized into his death." (Rom. 6:3) Their figurative baptism resulted in a course that would lead to their literal death and resurrection to heaven.

More than two years after Jesus got baptized in water, he told two of his apostles: "With the baptism with which I am being baptized, you will be baptized." (Mark 10:38, 39) Jesus was not then being baptized in water. He meant that his ongoing course of integrity would lead to his actual death. Paul wrote that anointed ones would "suffer together so that [they might] also be glorified together." (Rom. 8:16, 17; 2 Cor. 4:17) So they too would have to die to be resurrected to life in heaven.

Accordingly, Paul's statement can accurately be rendered: "Otherwise, what will they do who are being baptized for the purpose of being dead ones? If the dead are not to be raised up at all, why are they also being baptized for the purpose of being such?"

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Proverbs 24:16 says: “The righteous one may fall seven times, and he will get up again.” Does this refer to someone who repeatedly falls into sin but then is forgiven by God?

■ Actually, that is not the point of this verse. Rather, it refers to someone who falls in the sense of repeatedly facing problems or adversities and who gets up again in the sense of being able to recover.

Consider the verse in context: “Do not wickedly lie in ambush near the home of the righteous one; do not destroy his place of rest. **For the righteous one may fall seven times, and he will get up again, but the wicked will be made to stumble by calamity.** When your enemy falls, do not rejoice, and when he stumbles, do not let your heart be joyful.”—Prov. 24:15-17.

Some have held that verse 16 applies to a person who may fall into sin but can recover. Two British clerics wrote that “preachers, ancient and modern, have made much use of this text” in that way. The clerics added that such a view means that “a good man may fall into . . . serious sins, but he never loses his love of God, and rises from his fall by repentance on every occasion.” Such an opinion could appeal to someone who does not want to resist sin. He might imagine that even if he sins repeatedly, God will always forgive him.

That misses the real sense of verse 16.

The Hebrew word rendered “fall” and “falls” in verses 16 and 17 can be used in various ways. It can mean a literal fall—a bull falls on the road, someone falls off a roof, or a pebble falls to the ground. (Deut. 22:4, 8; Amos 9:9) The word can also be used figuratively, as in the following: “Jehovah guides the steps of a man when He finds pleasure in

his way. Although he may fall, he will not be hurled down, for Jehovah supports him by the hand.”—Ps. 37:23, 24; Prov. 11:5; 13:17; 17:20.

However, note a point made by Professor Edward H. Plumptre: “The Hebrew word for [“fall”] is never used of falling into sin.” Hence, another scholar summarizes verse 16 this way: “It would be futile and self-defeating to mistreat God’s people, for they survive—the wicked do not!”

Yes, rather than speak of “falling” in the moral sense of falling into sin, Proverbs 24:16 refers to experiencing problems or difficulties, even repeatedly. In the present wicked system of things, a righteous one may face health or other problems. He may even be the object of intense governmental persecution. But he can trust that God is his support and will help him to cope and succeed. Ask yourself, ‘Have I not seen that things often work out well for God’s servants?’ Why? We are assured that “Jehovah supports all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.”—Ps. 41:1-3; 145:14-19.

“The righteous one” does not find comfort in the reality that others are having problems. Rather, he is comforted in the knowledge that “it will turn out well for those who fear the true God, because they fear him.”—Eccl. 8:11-13; Job 31:3-6; Ps. 27:5, 6.

**SONG 30**

My Father, My God  
and Friend

**PREVIEW**

Joseph, Naomi and Ruth, a Levite, and the apostle Peter experienced discouraging trials. In this article, we will see how Jehovah comforted and strengthened them. We will also consider what we can learn from their examples and from the compassionate way that God dealt with them.

## “Jehovah . . . Saves Those Who Are Discouraged”

*“Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those who are discouraged.”*—PS. 34:18, ftn.

AT TIMES, we might think about the fact that life is short and our days are “filled with trouble.” (Job 14:1) So it is understandable that we occasionally feel discouraged. A number of Jehovah’s servants in ancient times felt that way. Some even wanted to die. (1 Ki. 19:2-4; Job 3:1-3, 11; 7:15, 16) But time and again, Jehovah—the God in whom they trusted—reassured and strengthened them. Their accounts were recorded to comfort and instruct us.—Rom. 15:4.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, we will consider some servants of Jehovah who endured discouraging trials, namely Jacob’s son Joseph, the widow Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth, the Levite who wrote Psalm 73, and the apostle Peter. How did Jehovah strengthen them? And what lessons can we personally learn from their examples? The answers reassure us that “Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted,” and he “saves those who are discouraged.”—Ps. 34:18, ftn.

### JOSEPH ENDURED CRUEL INJUSTICES

<sup>3</sup> Joseph was about 17 years old when he had two dreams, both of which were from God. These dreams indicated that Joseph would one day hold a position of respect in the family. (Gen. 37:5-10) But soon after Joseph had the dreams, his life changed drastically. Far from showing respect for him, his brothers sold him into slavery. He came to be in the household of an Egyptian of-

1-2. What will we consider in this article?

3-4. What happened to Joseph when he was a young man?



ficial named Potiphar. (Gen. 37:21-28) In short order, Joseph went from being a cherished son of his father to being a lowly slave of a pagan court official in Egypt.—Gen. 39:1.

<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph's troubles were about to get worse. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of trying to rape her. Without investigating the charges, Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison, and he was bound in irons. (Gen. 39:14-20; Ps. 105:17, 18) Imagine how the young Joseph must have felt to be falsely accused of attempted rape. And think of the reproach that accusation might have brought on Jehovah's name. Surely Joseph had reason to feel discouraged!

<sup>5</sup> While a slave and later in prison, Joseph had limited options and freedom of movement. How did he keep

5. How did Joseph overcome discouragement?

his balance? Instead of focusing on what he was no longer able to do, he diligently applied himself to the work he was assigned to do. Most of all, Joseph kept Jehovah as the most important Person in his life. In turn, Jehovah blessed everything Joseph did.—Gen. 39:21-23.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph may also have found encouragement by reflecting on the earlier prophetic dreams. They indicated that he would see his family again and that his situation would improve. And this is what happened. When Joseph was about 37 years of age, his prophetic dreams began to be fulfilled in a spectacular way! —Gen. 37:7, 9, 10; 42:6, 9.

<sup>7</sup> **Lessons for us.** We are reminded that this world is cruel and that people will

6. How may Joseph have been comforted by his dreams?

7. According to 1 Peter 5:10, what will help us to endure trials?



God proved to Naomi and Ruth that he can help his worshippers overcome discouragement and sadness. Can he do so for you?

(See paragraphs 8-13)



treat us unjustly. Even a fellow believer may hurt us. But if we view Jehovah as our Rock, or Refuge, we will not lose heart or stop serving him. (Ps. 62: 6, 7; **read 1 Peter 5:10.**) Recall, too, that Joseph may have been about 17 when Jehovah dealt with him in a special way. Obviously, Jehovah has confidence in young servants of his. Today, many young ones are like Joseph. They too have faith in Jehovah. Some of them have even been unjustly imprisoned because they would not compromise their loyalty to God.—Ps. 110:3.

## TWO WOMEN OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF

<sup>8</sup> Because of a severe famine, Naomi and her family left their home in Judah and settled as foreigners in Moab. There, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, leaving her with their two sons. In time, both men married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. About ten years later, Naomi's sons also died, leaving no children behind. (Ruth 1:1-5) Imagine how grief-stricken the three women must have been! Of course, Ruth and Orpah could remarry. Who, though, would care for aging Naomi? Naomi was so depressed that at one point she said: "Do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me." Brokenhearted, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, and Ruth went with her.—Ruth 1:7, 18-20.

<sup>9</sup> The solution to Naomi's despair was loyal love. For example, Ruth showed

loyal love for Naomi by sticking with her. (**Read Ruth 1:16, 17, 22.**) In Bethlehem, Ruth worked hard gleaning barley for herself and Naomi. As a result, the young woman soon earned a fine reputation.—Ruth 3:11; 4:15.

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah had given the Israelites a compassionate law that made provision for needy ones like Naomi and Ruth. He told his people that when they harvested a crop, they were to leave the edge of the field unharvested for the poor to glean. (Lev. 19:9, 10) So Naomi and Ruth did not have to beg for food. They could obtain it in a dignified way.

<sup>11</sup> The owner of the field in which Ruth gathered grain was a wealthy man named Boaz. He was so touched by Ruth's loyalty to Naomi and by the love she was showing her mother-in-law that he repurchased their family inheritance and took Ruth as his wife. (Ruth 4:9-13) The couple had a child whose name was Obed; he became the grandfather of King David.—Ruth 4:17.

<sup>12</sup> Imagine Naomi's joy as she held little Obed and poured out her thankful heart to Jehovah! But the best is yet to come for Naomi and Ruth. In the resurrection, they will learn that Obed was an ancestor of the Promised Messiah, Jesus Christ!

<sup>13</sup> **Lessons for us.** When we go through trials, we may feel discouraged, even brokenhearted. Perhaps we see no way

10. In what ways did Jehovah show love for needy ones like Naomi and Ruth?

11-12. How did Boaz give Naomi and Ruth reason for joy?

13. What valuable lessons can we learn from the account about Naomi and Ruth?

8. What happened to Naomi and Ruth?

9. According to Ruth 1:16, 17, 22, how did Ruth encourage Naomi?



The writer of Psalm 73 was almost stumbled by the seeming success of those not focused on Jehovah. That can happen to us  
(See paragraphs 14-16)

out of our problems. At such times, we should trust fully in our heavenly Father and stay close to our fellow worshippers. Of course, Jehovah may not remove the trial. After all, he did not bring back to Naomi her dead husband and sons. But he will help us to cope, perhaps through acts of loyal love expressed by our spiritual family.—Prov. 17:17.

#### A LEVITE WHO ALMOST STUMBLED

<sup>14</sup> The writer of Psalm 73 was a Levite. As such, he had the remarkable privilege of serving at Jehovah’s place of worship. Still, at one point in his life, even he got discouraged. Why? He began to envy the wicked and arrogant, not because of their badness, but because of their evident prosperity. (Ps. 73:2-9, 11-14) They seemed to have it all—wealth, a good life, and no anxieties. Their apparent success so discouraged the psalmist that he said: “Surely in vain I have kept

14. Why did one Levite become deeply discouraged?

my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence.” Clearly, he was in grave spiritual danger.

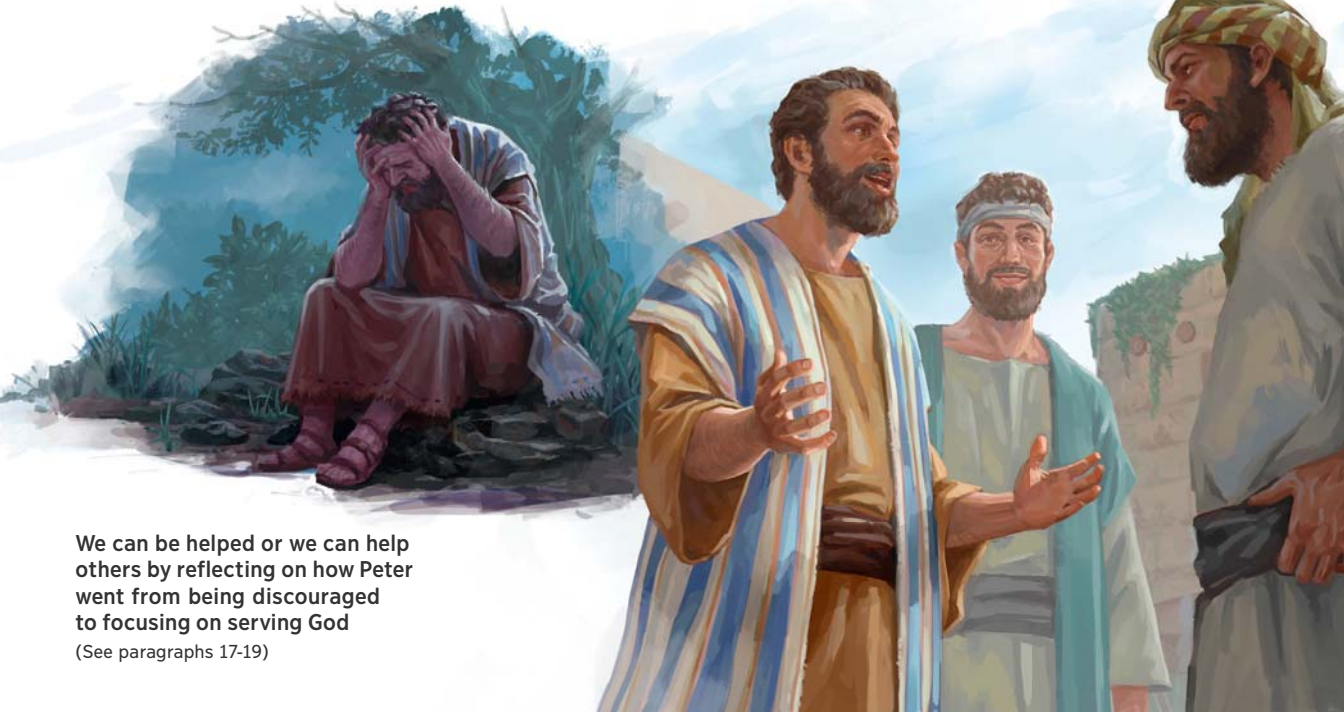
<sup>15</sup> **Read Psalm 73:16-19, 22-25.** The Levite “entered the grand sanctuary of God.” There, likely among fellow worshippers, he was able to analyze his situation calmly, clearly, and prayerfully. As a result, he began to see that his thinking had become foolish, that he had started on a dangerous path that would separate him from Jehovah. He also discerned that the wicked are “on slippery ground” and will come to “a terrible end.” To be cured of envy and discouragement, the Levite psalmist needed to see things from Jehovah’s standpoint. On doing so, he was at peace once again, and he was happy. He said: “Besides [Jehovah] I desire nothing on earth.”

<sup>16</sup> **Lessons for us.** Let us never envy

15. According to Psalm 73:16-19, 22-25, how did the Levite who wrote this psalm overcome discouragement?

16. What lessons can we learn from one Levite?





We can be helped or we can help others by reflecting on how Peter went from being discouraged to focusing on serving God  
(See paragraphs 17-19)

wicked people who seem to prosper. Their happiness is superficial and temporary; they have no lasting future. (Eccl. 8:12, 13) To envy them is to invite discouragement as well as spiritual ruin. So if you find yourself envying the seeming success of the wicked, do what the Levite did. Heed God’s loving advice, and associate with others who do Jehovah’s will. When Jehovah is your greatest delight, you will find true happiness. And you will stay on the path to “the real life.”—1 Tim. 6:19.

#### PETER’S WEAKNESSES DISCOURAGED HIM

<sup>17</sup> The apostle Peter was a dynamic man; but he could also be rather impulsive and, at times, quick to express his feelings. As a result, he on occasion said or did things that he later regretted. For

17. What reasons did Peter have for becoming discouraged?

instance, when Jesus told his apostles that he would suffer and die, Peter rebuked him, saying: “You will not have this happen to you at all.” (Matt. 16:21-23) Jesus then corrected Peter. When a mob came to arrest Jesus, Peter acted rashly, cutting off the ear of a slave of the high priest. (John 18:10, 11) Again, Jesus corrected the apostle. In addition, Peter had boasted that while the other apostles might stumble in connection with Christ, he would never do so! (Matt. 26:33) But that overconfidence gave way to fear of man, and Peter denied his Master three times. Deeply discouraged, Peter “went outside and wept bitterly.” (Matt. 26:69-75) He must have wondered if Jesus could ever forgive him.

<sup>18</sup> However, Peter did not allow himself to be overwhelmed by discouragement.

18. How did Jesus help Peter to overcome discouragement?



ment. After stumbling, he recovered, and we later find him with the other apostles. (John 21:1-3; Acts 1:15, 16) What helped him to recover? For one thing, Jesus had prayed earlier that Peter's faith might not give out, and Jesus urged Peter to return and strengthen his brothers. Jehovah answered that heartfelt prayer. Later, Jesus personally appeared to Peter, no doubt to encourage him. (Luke 22:32; 24:33, 34; 1 Cor. 15:5) After the apostles had a disappointing night of fishing, Jesus appeared to them. On this occasion, Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to reaffirm his love for him. Jesus had forgiven his dear friend and entrusted him with more work.—John 21:15-17.

<sup>19</sup> **Lessons for us.** The way that Jesus dealt with Peter highlights Jesus' mercy, and Jesus perfectly reflects his Father. So when we make mistakes, we should not judge ourselves as being beyond hope. We should bear in mind that Satan

19. How does Psalm 103:13, 14 help us to see our sins through Jehovah's eyes?

wants us to give in to such feelings. Instead, let us try hard to see ourselves—and those who sin against us—through the compassionate and loving eyes of our heavenly Father.—**Read Psalm 103: 13, 14.**

<sup>20</sup> The examples of Joseph, Naomi and Ruth, the Levite, and Peter assure us that “Jehovah is close to the broken-hearted.” (Ps. 34:18) He allows us to suffer trials and to feel discouraged at times. Nevertheless, when we endure trials successfully with Jehovah's help, our faith is strengthened. (1 Pet. 1:6, 7) In the following article, we will further see how Jehovah supports his loyal ones who are discouraged, perhaps because of their imperfections or because of difficult circumstances.

20. What will we consider in the following article?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 17:** Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah were saddened and discouraged by the death of their mates. Later, Ruth and Naomi rejoiced with Boaz over the birth of Obed.

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## WHEN DISCOURAGED, HOW CAN YOU BE STRENGTHENED BY THE WAY THAT JEHOVAH HELPED . . .

■ Joseph as well as Naomi  
and Ruth?

■ a Levite?

■ Peter?

**SONG 33**

Throw Your Burden  
on Jehovah

**PREVIEW**

We all get discouraged at times. In this article, we will discuss some specific things we can do when we feel downhearted. As we will see, with Jehovah's help we can win the fight against discouragement.

## How You Can Fight Discouragement

*“Throw your burden on Jehovah, and he will sustain you.”*

—PS. 55:22.

EACH day we face problems and deal with them as best we can. But would you not agree that we handle our problems much better when we are not discouraged? So we need to view discouragement as an unwelcome visitor that can rob us of confidence, courage, and joy. Proverbs 24:10 and footnote says: “If you become discouraged in times of trouble, your strength will be meager.” Yes, discouragement can drain us of the energy we need to cope with life's problems successfully.

<sup>2</sup> We can become discouraged by many things—some internal, some external. The causes may include imperfections, weaknesses, and ill health. They may also include our not receiving a desired assignment in Jehovah's service or our having to witness in a territory that seems unresponsive. In this article, we will consider some things we can do to deal with discouragement.

### WHEN DEALING WITH IMPERFECTIONS AND WEAKNESSES

<sup>3</sup> It would be easy for us to develop an unbalanced view of our imperfections and weaknesses. As a result, we might believe that because of our failings, Jehovah would never welcome us into his new world. Such an attitude can be harmful. How should we look at our imperfections? The Bible reveals that, with the exception of Jesus Christ, all humans “have sinned.” (Rom. 3:23) But the Bible's Author is not a faultfinder or perfectionist.

1. How might discouragement affect us?
2. What can cause us to feel discouraged, and what will we consider in this article?
3. What can help us to have a balanced view of our imperfections?



Jehovah knows  
both the good  
we did in the past  
and the good  
we are doing now  
(See paragraph 5)

Rather, he is a loving Father who wants to help us. He is also patient. He sees how we struggle to fight our weaknesses and overcome an unbalanced view of ourselves, and he is ready to help us.—Rom. 7:18, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Consider the examples of Deborah and Maria.\* As a child, Deborah was often treated in ways that made her feel humiliated. She was rarely commended. She thus developed a negative view of herself. When she made small mistakes, she felt that she was a complete failure. Maria had a similar problem. Her relatives humiliated her. As a result, she struggled with feelings of worthlessness. After coming into the truth, she even felt unworthy to bear God’s name!

<sup>5</sup> Yet, these two sisters did not stop serving Jehovah. Why? For one thing, they threw their burden on Jehovah by means of fervent prayer. (Ps. 55:22) They came to accept that our loving heavenly Father knows how our past experiences and our negative thinking have affected us. But he also sees the

good in our heart—qualities that we may not see in ourselves.—**Read 1 John 3:19, 20.**

<sup>6</sup> Someone who is struggling to overcome a deep-seated bad habit might have a setback and feel disappointed in himself. Of course, it is normal to feel a measure of guilt when we sin. (2 Cor. 7:10) However, we should not go to extremes and condemn ourselves, thinking: ‘I’m a complete failure. How can Jehovah ever forgive me?’ Such negative thinking is not based on the truth and could cause us to stop serving Jehovah. Remember what we read at Proverbs 24:10—our strength will be meager when we are discouraged. Instead, “set matters straight” with Jehovah by going to him in prayer and seeking his mercy. (Isa. 1:18) Considering your sincere repentance, he will forgive you. In addition, approach the elders. They will patiently help you to become spiritually well again.—Jas. 5:14, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Luc, an elder in France, says to those struggling with a weakness:

\* Some names have been changed.

4-5. In line with 1 John 3:19, 20, why did two sisters not give in to discouragement?

6. How might someone react if he experiences a setback?

7. Why should we not feel discouraged if we are struggling to do what is right?

“A righteous person in Jehovah’s eyes is, not someone who never errs, but someone who is sorry for his mistakes and always repents.” (Rom. 7:21-25) So do not condemn yourself if you are struggling with a weakness. Remember that none of us can earn a righteous standing before God. We all need God’s undeserved kindness by means of the ransom.—Eph. 1:7; 1 John 4:10.

<sup>8</sup> ***We can turn to our brothers and sisters—our spiritual family—for encouragement!*** They may provide a listening ear when we need to talk and offer reassuring words that can cheer us up. (Prov. 12:25; 1 Thess. 5:14) Joy, a sister in Nigeria who has battled with discouragement, says: “Where would I be without the brotherhood? My brothers and sisters are proof that Jehovah answers my prayers. I have even learned from them how to encourage others who are downhearted.” We need to keep in mind, though, that our brothers and sisters may not always know when we need encouragement. So we may need to take the initiative to approach a mature fellow believer and open up about our need for help.

#### WHEN DEALING WITH ILL HEALTH

<sup>9</sup> ***Turn to Jehovah for support.*** When we are not feeling well and especially if we are dealing with a chronic illness, we may find it hard to think positively. While Jehovah does not cure us miraculously now, he does comfort us and can give us the strength we need so as

to endure. **(Read Psalm 41:3; 94:19.)** For example, he may move fellow Christians to come to our aid when we need help with chores or shopping. He may move our brothers to pray with us. Or he may bring back to our mind comforting thoughts found in his Word, such as the wonderful hope of perfect life without sickness and pain in the coming new world.—Rom. 15:4.

<sup>10</sup> Isang, who lives in Nigeria, had an accident that left him paralyzed. His doctor told him that he would never walk again. “I was heartbroken and crushed in spirit,” Isang said. But did he stay crushed? No! What helped him? “My wife and I never stopped praying to Jehovah and studying his Word,” Isang explains. “We were also determined to count our blessings, including our hope of life in God’s new world.”

<sup>11</sup> Cindy, who lives in Mexico, was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. How did she cope? When she was receiving treatment, she made it her goal to give a witness every day. She writes: “Doing so, I was able to focus on others instead of on the surgery, the pain, or how awful I felt. My approach was this: During a conversation with doctors or nurses, I would ask about their families. Then I would ask why they chose such a demanding occupation. After that, it was easy to see which topics might touch their heart. Several mentioned that it was rare for a patient to ask them, ‘How are you doing?’ And many thanked me

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8. When we feel down, to whom can we turn for help?

9. How do Psalm 41:3 and 94:19 encourage us?

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10. Why did Isang not remain downhearted after his accident?

11. How did Cindy find joy during a health crisis?



for caring. Some even gave me their contact information. So during this difficult time in my life, Jehovah gave me a deep inner joy that surprised even me!” —Prov. 15:15.

<sup>12</sup> Sick or infirm ones may feel discouraged because they are limited in what they can do in the ministry. Still, many have been able to give a fine witness. In the United States, a sister named Laurel was confined to an iron lung for 37 years! She endured cancer, major surgeries, and chronic skin disorders. But even these extraordinary challenges did not silence her. She witnessed to nurses and attendants who came to her home. The result? She helped at least 17 people come to an accurate knowledge of the Bible!\*

<sup>13</sup> Richard, an elder in France, has a practical suggestion for those who are confined to their home or to a nursing facility. “I recommend that they have a small literature display. The display arouses curiosity and leads to conversations. This can encourage our dear

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\* Read Laurel Nisbet’s life story in the January 22, 1993, issue of *Awake!*

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12-13. How have some sick or infirm ones been able to share in the ministry, and with what results?

brothers and sisters who can no longer go from house to house.” Those who are housebound can also share in the ministry by means of letter writing and telephone witnessing.

### WHEN WE DO NOT RECEIVE A PRIVILEGE

<sup>14</sup> Because of the limitations of age, health, or other factors, we may not be eligible to receive a certain assignment or privilege in the congregation or circuit. In that connection, we can learn from the example of King David. When told that he had not been chosen to build God’s temple—something that David had dearly hoped to do—he gave full support to the one whom God had selected for the assignment. David even contributed generously toward the project. What an outstanding example to follow!—2 Sam. 7:12, 13; 1 Chron. 29:1, 3-5.

<sup>15</sup> Because of health problems, Hugues, a brother in France, stopped serving as an elder, and he could not even care for simple tasks around the home. He writes: “At first, I felt worthless and deeply discouraged. But in time, I saw the importance of accepting my limitations, and

14. What outstanding example did King David set?

15. How did Hugues overcome discouragement?



Even those who are physically limited can have a productive, rewarding share in the ministry  
(See paragraphs 11-13)

## Ways to Enrich Your Ministry

- 1 Call when people are more likely to be at home.
- 2 Go where people can be found, such as at markets, in parks, and at transit stops.
- 3 Consider different forms of witnessing, such as letter writing, street work, and other forms of public witnessing.
- 4 Cultivate the art of conversation.
- 5 Learn to use our digital tools well.
- 6 If a magazine or a brochure is designed for a certain group of people, search for such ones in your territory.
- 7 Step over into territory that is worked less or is more productive, perhaps by learning another language.

I found joy in serving Jehovah within those limits. I am determined not to give up. Like Gideon and his three hundred men—all of whom were tired—I will keep up the fight!”—Judg. 8:4.

<sup>16</sup> The faithful angels are a fine example. During King Ahab’s reign, Jehovah invited the angels to suggest ways to fool the wicked king. A number of angels responded by offering ideas. But God chose one angel and told him that his suggestion would succeed. (1 Ki. 22:19-22) Did the other faithful angels become

16. What can we learn from the example of the angels?

discouraged, perhaps thinking, ‘Why did I bother?’ We have no reason to believe that they did. The angels are truly humble and want all honor to go to Jehovah.—Judg. 13:16-18; Rev. 19:10.

<sup>17</sup> ***Fix in mind the privilege we have to bear God’s name and to announce his Kingdom.*** Assignments may come and go, but they are not what make us precious to God. It is when we are modest and humble that we become truly lovable to Jehovah and to our brothers and sisters. So beg Jehovah to help you remain modest and humble. Reflect on the many fine examples of modesty and humility that are recorded in his Word. Willingly serve your brothers in any way you can.—Ps. 138:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.

### WHEN YOUR TERRITORY SEEMS UNPRODUCTIVE

<sup>18</sup> Have you at some point felt discouraged because your territory seems to be unproductive or because few people are found at home? In such a situation, what can be done to maintain or increase our joy? Some practical suggestions are listed in the box “Ways to Enrich Your Ministry.” It is also important to have the right view of the ministry. What does that involve?

<sup>19</sup> ***Keep your focus on proclaiming God’s name and Kingdom.*** Jesus made it plain that relatively few will find the path to life. (Matt. 7:13, 14) When we are in the ministry, we have the honor of working with Jehovah, Jesus, and the an-

17. What should we do if we feel down because we do not have certain privileges of service?

18-19. How can you have joy in your ministry even when your territory seems to be unproductive?

gels. (Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 3:9; Rev. 14:6, 7) Jehovah draws those who are deserving. (John 6:44) So if a person does not respond well to our message this time, he may listen the next time we call.

<sup>20</sup> We can learn much from the prophet Jeremiah. He was assigned a territory that was extremely difficult. The people insulted and jeered him “all day long.” **(Read Jeremiah 20:8, 9.)** He became so discouraged at one point that he felt like giving up. But he did not. Why not? “The word of Jehovah” was like a fire inside Jeremiah, and he could not hold it in! The same is true of us when we fill our mind and heart with God’s Word. That is an added reason for us to study the Bible daily and meditate on it. As a result, our joy can continue to increase, and our ministry may become more productive. —Jer. 15:16.

20. What can Jeremiah 20:8, 9 teach us about fighting discouragement?

<sup>21</sup> “Discouragement can be a formidable weapon used by Satan,” notes Deborah, quoted earlier. But Satan’s weapons are no match for Jehovah God. So when you feel discouraged for whatever reason, supplicate Jehovah for his support. He will help you to deal with your imperfections and weaknesses. He will support you through illness. He will help you to keep a balanced view of assignments of service. And he will help you to have a positive view of your ministry. Moreover, pour out your concerns to your heavenly Father. With his help, you can win the fight against discouragement.

21. How can we win the fight against discouragement, whatever its cause?

**PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 23:** A sister was discouraged for a time, but she reflects on her past service and prays to Jehovah. She is sure that he remembers what she did and is doing.

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## HOW CAN THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES HELP US TO FIGHT DISCOURAGEMENT?

■ 1 John 3:19, 20

■ Psalm 41:3

■ Jeremiah 20:8, 9



## Put Your Heart Into Your Assignment!

HOW do you feel when you receive a warm letter from a good friend? The Christian disciple Timothy got such a letter from the apostle Paul, a letter that we now know as the Bible book of 2 Timothy. No doubt Timothy was eager to find a quiet place so that he could read what his dear friend had to say. Perhaps Timothy was thinking: ‘How is Paul doing? Does he have any advice for me on how to view my assignments? Can this letter help me succeed in my Christian ministry and help others?’ As we will see, Timothy found answers to these questions and much more in this valuable letter. But for now, let us focus on a few key points of helpful counsel that can be found in this letter.

### “I GO ON ENDURING ALL THINGS”

When Timothy started to read the opening words of the letter, he could immediately sense the close relationship he had with Paul. Warmly, Paul calls him “a beloved child.” (2 Tim. 1:2) Though Timothy was probably in his 30’s when he received this letter, about 65 C.E., he was already an experienced Christian elder. He had been as-

sociated with Paul for over a decade and had learned a lot.

Timothy must have been greatly encouraged to learn that Paul was enduring tribulations faithfully. Paul was in prison chains in Rome, facing death. (2 Tim. 1:15, 16; 4:6-8) Timothy could see the apostle’s courageous outlook: “I go on enduring all things.” (2 Tim. 2:8-13) Like Timothy, we can draw strength from Paul’s marvelous example of endurance.

### “STIR UP LIKE A FIRE THE GIFT”

Paul urged Timothy to view his assignment in God’s service as very valuable. Paul wanted Timothy “to stir up like a fire the gift of God” that was in him. (2 Tim. 1:6) Paul used the word *kha’ri-sma* for “gift.” That Greek word basically refers to a free and undeserved gift, something that is unearned and even unmerited. Timothy had received this gift when he had been set apart for a special service in connection with the congregation.—1 Tim. 4:14.

What was Timothy to do with this gift? As he read the expression “stir up like a fire,”



he may have reflected on the fact that home fires might at times become mere glowing coals. Those coals had to be stirred up to produce flames and more heat. One lexicon says that the Greek verb (*a·na·zo·py·re’o*) that Paul used means to “rekindle, revive, fan into flame,” thus figuratively to “excite into fresh activity.” In effect, Paul was advising Timothy: ‘Put your heart into your assignment!’ You can likely appreciate that we today need to do the same—exert ourselves zealously in our service.

### “GUARD THIS FINE TRUST”

Continuing to read the letter from his dear friend, Timothy came to another expression that would help him to be successful in his ministry. Paul wrote: “Guard this fine trust by means of the holy spirit, which is dwelling in us.” (2 Tim. 1:14) What was that trust? What had Timothy been entrusted with? In the preceding verse, Paul referred to the “wholesome words,” the truth imparted through the Scriptures. (2 Tim. 1:13) As a Christian minister, Timothy was to preach **the truth** both inside and outside the congregation. (2 Tim. 4:1-5) Also, Timothy had been appointed as an elder to shepherd God’s flock. (1 Pet. 5:2) Timothy could guard his trust—the truth he was to teach—by relying on Jehovah’s holy spirit and His Word. —2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Today, we too have been entrusted with the truth that we share in the Christian ministry. (Matt. 28:19, 20) We can maintain our appreciation for this wonderful trust by persevering in prayer and cultivating the good habit of studying God’s Word. (Rom. 12:11, 12; 1 Tim. 4:13, 15, 16) We may also have the additional assignment of serving as an appointed elder or in the full-time ministry. A trust like that should humble us, helping us to sense our dependence on God. So we can guard, or protect, our trust by treasuring it and relying on Jehovah’s help to care for it.

### “THESE THINGS ENTRUST TO FAITHFUL MEN”

The assignments Timothy had received did not concern him alone. Others were involved as well. That is why Paul urged Timothy: “The things you heard from me . . . entrust to faithful men, who, in turn, will be adequately qualified to teach others.” (2 Tim. 2:2) Yes, Timothy was to learn from his Christian brothers and to share with them. It is important that every overseer in the Christian congregation today strive to do the same. A good overseer does not jealously keep his knowledge about a given task to himself. Instead, he teaches others so that they will be able to do the job. He is not afraid that they might outshine him by knowing more or by displaying greater ability. Hence, the overseer does not teach just the basic steps of a task. He wants to help those he is training to develop good judgment and insight—to grow spiritually. In that way, the “faithful men” whom he has taught will prove to be of greater benefit to the congregation.

No doubt Timothy cherished the warm letter he received from Paul. We can easily imagine him repeatedly reviewing the valuable counsel and pondering over how he could best apply it in his assignments.

We want to take this counsel to heart as well. How? We can endeavor to stir up our gift like a fire, to guard our trust, and to entrust our experience and knowledge to others. In that way, as Paul noted to Timothy, we can “fully accomplish [our] ministry.” —2 Tim. 4:5.

Have you carefully read this year's issues of *The Watchtower*? Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

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### **How should we treat anointed Christians?**

We appreciate their faith; yet, we do not give them excessive attention. We avoid “admiring personalities.” (Jude 16, fn.) We do not ask them personal questions about their hope.—w20.01, p. 29.

### **What should convince you that Jehovah notices you personally?**

The Bible shows that he noticed you before you were born. And he hears your prayers. He knows your thoughts and what is in your heart, and your actions affect him. (1 Chron. 28:9; Prov. 27:11) He has drawn you to him.—w20.02, p. 12.

### **What are examples of when to speak and when not to speak?**

We happily speak about Jehovah. We speak up if we see someone heading down a wrong path. Elders speak to offer counsel if needed. We do not speak to get (or to give out) details about our work in lands under ban. We do not reveal confidential matters.—w20.03, pp. 20-21.

### **How do the locusts in Joel chapter 2 differ from those in Revelation chapter 9?**

Joel 2:20-29 says that God drives the locusts away and promises to make compensation for their damage. After that, God pours out his spirit. Such aspects were fulfilled in the Babylonian invasion of Israel and later. Revelation 9:1-11 describes the locustlike anointed in our day as they proclaim God's judgments against this wicked system, making its supporters very uncomfortable.—w20.04, pp. 3-6.

### **Who is the king of the north today?**

Russia and its allies. They have directly impacted God's people, banning the preaching work and showing hatred for the Witnesses. The king of the north has been competing with the king of the south.—w20.05, p. 13.

### **Are the nine qualities mentioned at Galatians 5:22, 23 the complete list of the aspects of “the fruitage of the spirit”?**

No. The holy spirit helps us to produce additional fine qualities, such as righteousness. (Eph. 5: 8, 9)—w20.06, p. 17.

### **What is one danger of posting material online about yourself?**

What is posted may give the impression that you are bragging about yourself, not that you are humble.—w20.07, pp. 6-7.

### **What can Christian ministers learn from skilled fishermen?**

They work when and where they are most likely to find fish. They are trained to use the right equipment. And they courageously work in changing conditions. We can do likewise in our ministry.—w20.09, p. 5.

### **What are some ways that we can help Bible students to deepen their love for Jehovah?**

We can encourage them to read the Bible daily and to meditate on what they have read. And we can teach them to pray.—w20.11, p. 4.

### **Who are included in the statement: “In the Christ *all* will be made alive”?—1 Cor. 15:22.**

The apostle Paul was not saying that every human would be resurrected. He was referring to anointed Christians, those who have been “sanctified in union with Christ Jesus.” (1 Cor. 1:2; 15: 18)—w20.12, pp. 5-6.

### **What will the anointed do after they are ‘changed in the blink of an eye, during the last trumpet’?—1 Cor. 15:51-53.**

They will share with Christ in shepherding the people with an iron rod. (Rev. 2:26, 27)—w20.12, pp. 12-13.

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