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THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

(Pages 3-11, 16-20, 20-25)

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE
WEEKS OF:

November 29–December 5

“Who Has Come to Know
the Mind of Jehovah?”

PAGE 3 SONGS TO BE USED: 69, 51

December 6-12

Keep On Seeking First
“His Righteousness”

PAGE 7 SONGS TO BE USED: 40, 22

December 13-19

Do You Take the Lead
in Honoring Fellow Believers?

PAGE 16 SONGS TO BE USED: 122, 104

December 20-26

Do You Share in Making
Christian Meetings Upbuilding?

PAGE 20 SONGS TO BE USED: 20, 64

PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 3-11

These articles examine how we can endeavor to attain intimacy with Jehovah by learning from Jesus’ activities. They also explain what God’s righteousness involves, why we should seek it first, and why we should never judge Jehovah by our own standards.

STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 16-20

What is involved in showing honor to our fellow believers? What reasons do we have for doing so? How can we personally take the lead in showing honor? These are some of the questions considered in this article.

STUDY ARTICLE 4 PAGES 20-25

This article considers how those who are conducting Christian meetings and those who are in attendance can make our meetings uplifting occasions for all who are present. It also discusses some adjustments that have been made to this magazine.

“WHO HAS COME TO KNOW THE MIND OF JEHOVAH?”

*“Who has come to know the mind of Jehovah, that he may instruct him?”
But we do have the mind of Christ.”—1 COR. 2:16.*

HAVE you ever found it difficult to understand another person’s way of thinking? Perhaps you recently got married, and you feel that you have no way of fully understanding how your spouse thinks. Indeed, men and women think and even speak differently. Why, in some cultures, men and women actually speak different dialects of the same language! Additionally, differences in culture and language can result in different patterns of thinking and behavior. However, the more you get to know others, the more opportunity you have to start to understand their way of thinking.

² We should not, therefore, be surprised that our thinking is far different from that of Jehovah. Through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah told the Israelites: “The thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways.” Then, illustrating this fact, Jehovah went on to say: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”—Isa. 55:8, 9.

³ Does this mean, though, that we should not even try to understand Jehovah’s way of thinking? No. Although we can never *fully* understand all of Jehovah’s thoughts, still the Bible encourages us to gain “intimacy

with Jehovah.” (Read Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 3:32.) One way we can draw closer to Jehovah is by showing regard for and paying attention to his activities as recorded in his Word, the Bible. (Ps. 28:5) Another way is by getting to know “the mind of Christ,” who is “the image of the invisible God.” (1 Cor. 2:16; Col. 1:15) By taking time to study Bible accounts and to meditate on them, we can begin to understand Jehovah’s qualities and his way of thinking.

Beware of a Wrong Tendency

⁴ As we meditate on Jehovah’s activities, we need to avoid the tendency to judge God by human standards. This tendency is alluded to in Jehovah’s words as recorded at Psalm 50:21: “You imagined that I would positively become like you.” It is as one Bible scholar stated over 175 years ago: “Men are apt to judge of God by themselves, and to suppose him restricted by such laws as they deem proper for their own observance.”

⁵ We need to be careful not to shape our concept of Jehovah so as to conform it to our own standards and desires. Why is this important? Well, as we study the Scriptures, some of Jehovah’s actions may seem to be not quite right from our limited, imperfect viewpoint. The ancient Israelites fell into

1, 2. (a) What difficulty do many people experience? (b) What do we need to remember about our thinking and that of Jehovah?

3. What are two ways in which we can endeavor to attain “intimacy with Jehovah”?

4, 5. (a) What wrong tendency do we need to avoid? Explain. (b) The Israelites fell into what wrong way of thinking?

that way of thinking and drew a wrong conclusion concerning Jehovah's dealings with them. Notice what Jehovah said to them: "You people will certainly say: 'The way of Jehovah is not adjusted right.' Hear, please, O house of Israel. Is not my own way adjusted right? Are not the ways of you people not adjusted right?"—Ezek. 18:25.

⁶ A key to avoiding the trap of judging Jehovah by our own standards is to recognize that our viewpoint is limited and at times seriously flawed. Job needed to learn this lesson. During his time of suffering, Job struggled with despair and became somewhat self-centered. He lost sight of the bigger issues. But Jehovah lovingly helped him to broaden his viewpoint. By asking Job over 70 different questions, none of which Job could answer, Jehovah emphasized the limitations of Job's understanding. Job reacted in a humble way, adjusting his viewpoint.—*Read Job 42:1-6.*

Gaining "the Mind of Christ"

⁷ Jesus perfectly imitated his Father in everything he said and did. (John 14:9) Therefore, examining Jesus' activities helps us to understand Jehovah's way of thinking. (Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:5) Let us, then, examine two Gospel accounts.

⁸ Imagine the scene. It was just before the Passover of 32 C.E. Jesus' apostles had recently returned from a remarkable preaching tour throughout Galilee. Since they were tired from all this activity, Jesus took them to an isolated place on the north-

east shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, thousands followed them there. After Jesus healed this multitude and taught them many things, a logistical problem arose. How could all these people get something to eat in such an isolated location? Realizing the need, Jesus asked Philip, who was from that area: "Where shall we buy loaves for these to eat?"—John 6:1-5.

⁹ Why did Jesus ask Philip this question? Was Jesus worried about what to do? No. What really was his thinking? The apostle John, who also was there, explains: "[Jesus] was saying this to test him, for he himself knew what he was about to do." (John 6:6) Jesus here tested the spiritual progress of his disciples. By asking this question, he got their attention and gave them an opportunity to express their faith in what he could do. But they missed this opportunity and showed how limited their viewpoint really was. (*Read John 6:7-9.*) Jesus then went on to show that he could do something they had not even imagined. He miraculously fed those thousands of hungry people.—John 6:10-13.

¹⁰ This account may help us to understand Jesus' thinking on another occasion. Shortly after feeding this large group of people, Jesus and his apostles traveled north, beyond the borders of Israel, to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. While there, they met a Greek woman who begged Jesus to heal her daughter. At first, Jesus ignored the woman. But when she kept on insisting, Jesus said to her: "First let the children be satisfied, for it is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to the little dogs."—Mark 7:24-27.

10-12. (a) Why may Jesus not have granted the Greek woman's request immediately? Explain. (b) What will we now consider?

6. What lesson did Job learn, and how can we benefit from his experience?

7. Why are we helped to understand Jehovah's thinking if we examine Jesus' activities?

8, 9. As recorded at John 6:1-5, what situation led Jesus to ask Philip a question, and why did Jesus do so?



What do we learn about Jehovah's thinking from the way he dealt with Moses and with Abraham?

¹¹ Why did Jesus at first refuse to help this woman? Was Jesus testing her, as he did Philip, to see how she would react, giving her an opportunity to display her faith? His tone of voice, although not revealed in the written text, did not discourage her. His use of the term “little dogs” softened the comparison. So perhaps Jesus was acting like a parent who intends to grant a child’s request but withholds any outward sign of that intent in order to test out the child’s seriousness. Whatever the case, once the woman expressed her faith, Jesus willingly granted her request.—*Read Mark 7:28-30.*

¹² These two Gospel accounts give us precious insight into “the mind of Christ.” Let us now see how these accounts can help us to understand better Jehovah’s own mind.

Jehovah’s Dealings With Moses

¹³ Gaining insight into Jesus’ way of thinking helps us in understanding passages in the Scriptures that may be difficult to grasp. For example, consider Jehovah’s words to Moses after the Israelites had made a golden calf to worship. God said: “I have looked at this people and here it is a stiff-necked people. So now let me be, that my anger may blaze against them and I may ex-

13. How does gaining insight into Jesus’ way of thinking help us?

terminate them, and let me make you into a great nation.”—Ex. 32:9, 10.

¹⁴ The account goes on to say: “Moses proceeded to soften the face of Jehovah his God and to say: ‘Why, O Jehovah, should your anger blaze against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand? Why should the Egyptians say, “With evil intent he brought them out in order to kill them among the mountains and to exterminate them from the surface of the ground”? Turn from your burning anger and feel regret over the evil against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel your servants, to whom you swore by yourself, in that you said to them, “I shall multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land that I have designated I shall give to your seed, that they may indeed take possession of it to time indefinite.”’ And Jehovah began to feel regret over the evil that he had spoken of doing to his people.”—Ex. 32:11-14.*

¹⁵ Did Moses really need to correct Jehovah’s thinking? By no means! Although

* A similar account appears at Numbers 14:11-20.

14. How did Moses react to Jehovah’s words?

15, 16. (a) What opportunity opened up to Moses because of what Jehovah said? (b) In what sense did Jehovah “feel regret”?

Jehovah expressed what he was *inclined* to do, this was not his final judgment. In effect, Jehovah was here testing Moses, just as Jesus later did Philip and the Greek woman. Moses was given an opportunity to express his view.* Jehovah had appointed Moses as mediator between Israel and Himself, and Jehovah respected His appointment of Moses to that role. Would Moses succumb to frustration? Would he take this opportunity to encourage Jehovah to forget about Israel and to make a mighty nation from Moses' own descendants?

¹⁶ Moses' response revealed his faith and trust in Jehovah's justice. His reaction showed, not selfish interest, but concern over Jehovah's name. He did not want it to be defamed. Moses thereby showed that he understood "the mind of Jehovah" concerning this matter. (1 Cor. 2:16) What was the outcome? Because Jehovah was not firmly committed to a certain course of action, the inspired record says that he "began to feel regret." In Hebrew, this expression can simply mean that Jehovah did not bring

* According to some scholars, the Hebrew idiom rendered "let me be" at Exodus 32:10 could be taken as an invitation, a suggestion that Moses would be allowed to intercede, or 'stand in the gap,' between Jehovah and the nation. (Ps. 106:23; Ezek. 22:30) Be that as it may, Moses obviously felt comfortable expressing his opinion freely to Jehovah.

Do You Remember?

- What will help us to avoid the tendency to judge Jehovah by our own standards?
- How can understanding Jesus' actions help us to gain "intimacy with Jehovah"?
- What lessons did you learn from Jehovah's conversations with Moses and with Abraham?

about the calamity he stated that he was *inclined* to bring upon the whole nation.

Jehovah's Dealings With Abraham

¹⁷ Another example of how Jehovah allows his servants an opportunity to express their faith and trust involves Abraham's request concerning Sodom. In that account, Jehovah showed great patience by letting Abraham make a series of eight inquiries. At one point, Abraham makes this impassioned appeal: "It is unthinkable of you that you are acting in this manner to put to death the righteous man with the wicked one so that it has to occur with the righteous man as it does with the wicked! It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?"—Gen. 18:22-33.

¹⁸ From this account, what do we learn about Jehovah's thinking? Did Jehovah need Abraham to reason with him in order to make the right decision? No. Of course, Jehovah could have simply stated in the beginning the reasons for his decision. But by means of these questions, Jehovah gave Abraham time to come to grips with the decision and to understand His thinking. It also allowed Abraham to understand the depth of Jehovah's compassion and justice. Yes, Jehovah dealt with Abraham as a friend.—Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23.

Lessons for Us

¹⁹ What have we learned about "the mind of Jehovah"? We need to allow God's Word to mold our understanding of Jehovah's mind. We should never impose our limitations on Jehovah and judge him by our stan-

17. How did Jehovah show great patience in dealing with Abraham's concerns?

18. What do we learn from the way that Jehovah dealt with Abraham?

19. How can we imitate Job?

dards and thinking. Job stated: “[God] is not a man like me that I should answer him, that we should come together in judgment.” (Job 9:32) Like Job, when we start to understand the mind of Jehovah, we cannot help but exclaim: “Look! These are the fringes of his ways, and what a whisper of a matter has been heard of him! But of his mighty thunder who can show an understanding?”—Job 26:14.

²⁰ As we read the Scriptures, what should we do if we come across a passage that is difficult to understand, especially with regard to Jehovah’s thinking? If after researching the matter we still do not have a clear an-

20. What should we do if we come across a passage of Scripture that is difficult for us to understand?

swer, we can view this as a test of our trust in Jehovah. Remember, at times certain statements allow us an opportunity to express our faith in Jehovah’s qualities. Let us humbly acknowledge that we do not understand everything that he does. (Eccl. 11:5) We will thus be prompted to agree with these words of the apostle Paul: “O the depth of God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are! For ‘who has come to know Jehovah’s mind, or who has become his counselor?’ Or, ‘Who has first given to him, so that it must be repaid to him?’ Because from him and by him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.”—Rom. 11:33-36.

KEEP ON SEEKING FIRST “HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

“Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.”—MATT. 6:33.

“KEEP ON, then, seeking first the kingdom.” (Matt. 6:33) This admonition given by Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount is well-known by Jehovah’s Witnesses today. In every aspect of our lives, we endeavor to show that we love that Kingdom government and want to be loyal to it. But we must also keep in mind the second part of this expression, namely, “and his righteousness.” What is God’s righteousness, and what does it mean to seek it first?

1, 2. What is God’s righteousness, and upon what is it based?

² The original-language words for “righteousness” can also be translated “justice” or “uprightness.” Hence, God’s righteousness is uprightness according to his personal standards and values. As the Creator, Jehovah has the right to set the standard for what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. (Rev. 4:11) God’s righteousness, however, is not a cold, rigid set of laws or an endless list of rules and regulations. Rather, it is based on Jehovah’s personality and his cardinal attribute of justice together with his other cardinal attributes of love,

wisdom, and power. God's righteousness, then, is linked with his will and purpose. It includes what he expects of those who desire to serve him.

³ What does it mean to seek first God's righteousness? Simply stated, it means to do God's will in order to please him. Seeking his righteousness includes trying to live according to his values and perfect standards and not our own. (*Read Romans 12:2.*) This way of life involves our very relationship with Jehovah. It is not a matter of obeying his laws out of fear of punishment. Rather, our love for God motivates us to endeavor to please him by upholding his standards, not establishing our own. We realize that this is the right thing to do, the very thing that we have been designed to do. Like Jesus Christ, the King of God's Kingdom, we must love righteousness.—Heb. 1:8, 9.

⁴ How important is it to seek Jehovah's righteousness? Consider this fact: The original test in the garden of Eden was based on whether Adam and Eve would accept Jehovah's right to set standards or not. (Gen. 2: 17; 3:5) Their failure to do so has brought misery and death upon us as their descendants. (Rom. 5:12) On the other hand, God's Word states: "He that is pursuing righteousness and loving-kindness *will find life, righteousness and glory.*" (Prov. 21:21) Yes, seeking first God's righteousness results in a harmonious relationship with Jehovah that, in turn, leads to our very salvation.—Rom. 3: 23, 24.

The Danger of Becoming Self-Righteous

⁵ In writing to the Christians in Rome, the

3. (a) What does it mean to seek first God's righteousness? (b) Why do we uphold Jehovah's righteous standards?

4. Why is it so important to seek God's righteousness?

5. What danger do we need to avoid?

apostle Paul highlighted a danger we all need to avoid if we are to be successful in seeking first God's righteousness. Speaking of his fellow Jews, Paul said: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge; for, because of not knowing the righteousness of God but *seeking to establish their own*, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:2, 3) According to Paul, those worshippers did not understand the righteousness of God because they were too busy trying to establish their own righteousness.*

⁶ One way we could fall into this trap is by viewing our service to God as a competition, comparing ourselves to others. This attitude could easily lead us to become overconfident as to our abilities. But, really, if we were to act that way, we would be forgetting Jehovah's righteousness. (Gal. 6:3, 4) The correct motive for doing the right thing is our love for Jehovah. Any attempts to prove our own righteousness could invalidate our claim to love him.—*Read Luke 16:15.*

⁷ Jesus was concerned about those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and who considered the rest as nothing." He addressed the problem of self-righteousness by relating this illustration: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and began to pray these things to himself, 'O God, I thank you I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax col-

* According to one scholar, the original-language word translated "to establish" can also mean 'to erect a monument.' So those Jews were, in effect, erecting a figurative monument to their own praise and not God's.

6. What attitude should we avoid, and why?

7. How did Jesus address the problem of self-righteousness?

What lesson do we learn from Jesus' illustration of the two men who prayed at the temple?

lector. I fast twice a week, I give the tenth of all things I acquire.' But the tax collector standing at a distance was not willing even to raise his eyes heavenward, but kept beating his breast, saying, 'O God, be gracious to me a sinner.'" Jesus concluded by saying: "I tell you, This man went down to his home proved more righteous than that man; because everyone that exalts himself will be humiliated, but he that humbles himself will be exalted."—Luke 18:9-14.

Another Danger—Becoming "Righteous Overmuch"

⁸ Another danger that we need to avoid is described at Ecclesiastes 7:16: "Do not become *righteous overmuch*, nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself?" The inspired Bible writer then goes on, as noted in verse 20, to give us a reason for avoiding such an attitude: "For there is no man righteous in the earth that keeps doing good and does not sin." The person who becomes "righteous overmuch" sets his own standards for righteousness and judges others by them. Yet, he fails to realize that by doing so, he is elevating his standards above those of God and thereby proving himself to be unrighteous in God's sight.

⁹ Being "righteous overmuch," or as some Bible translations put it, being "excessively righteous" or "overrighteous," could even cause us to question Jehovah's way of handling matters. We need to remember, though, that if we question the fairness or rightness of Jehovah's decisions, we are, in effect, starting to put our standard of rightness

8, 9. What does it mean to be "righteous overmuch," and to what can it lead us?



ness above Jehovah's standard. It is as if we put Jehovah on trial and judged him by our own standards of right and wrong. But Jehovah is the one who has the right to set the standard for righteousness, not us! —Rom. 14:10.

¹⁰ Although none of us would deliberately want to judge God, our imperfect nature can lead us down this path. This can easily happen when we see something that we view as unfair or if we personally suffer hardship. Even the faithful man Job made this mistake. Job was initially described as "blameless and upright, and fearing God and turning aside from bad." (Job 1:1) But then Job was beset by a series of calamities that to him, appeared to be unfair. This led Job to declare "his own soul righteous rather than God." (Job 32:1, 2) Job had to have his viewpoint corrected. So we should not be surprised if, at times, we might find ourselves in a similar situation. If that happens, what can help us to readjust our thinking?

We Do Not Always Have All the Facts

¹¹ The first thing to remember is that we *do not always have all the facts*. That was

10. As in the case of Job, what might cause us to judge God?

11, 12. (a) If we feel that something is unfair, what do we need to remember? (b) Why might someone feel that Jesus' illustration of the workers in the vineyard depicts something unfair?

*Was it unfair to pay the
11th-hour workers the same as those
who worked the whole day?*

true in Job's case. He did not know of the meetings of the angelic sons of God in heaven where Satan falsely accused him. (Job 1: 7-12; 2:1-6) Job did not realize that his problems were actually caused by Satan. In fact, we cannot be certain that Job even knew the true identity of Satan! So he wrongly assumed that his problems were caused by God. Yes, it is easy to come to the wrong conclusion when we do not know all the facts.

¹² Consider, for example, Jesus' illustration of the workers in the vineyard. (Read *Matthew 20:8-16*.) Here Jesus describes a householder who pays the same amount of money to all his workers, whether they worked the whole day or just one hour. How do you feel about that? Does that seem fair? Perhaps you immediately identify with the workers who worked all day in the hot sun. Surely they deserved to be paid more! Based on that conclusion, the householder could be viewed as being unloving and unfair. Even his answer to those workers who complained could appear to be an arbitrary abuse of authority. But do we have all the facts?

¹³ Let us analyze this illustration from another viewpoint. No doubt the householder in the illustration realized that all these men needed to feed their families. In Jesus' day, field workers were paid on a daily basis. Their families relied on the wages paid each day. With this in mind, think about the position of those whom the householder found late in the day and who therefore

13. What other viewpoint could we take with regard to Jesus' illustration of the workers in the vineyard?



worked for only one hour. Perhaps they would not be able to feed their family with just one hour's pay; yet, they had been willing to work and had waited the whole day to be employed. (Matt. 20:1-7) It was not their fault that they were not allowed to work the entire day. There is no indication that they deliberately tried to avoid work. Imagine if you had to wait all day, knowing that others were dependent on what you would earn that day. How grateful you would be to get some work—and how surprised you would be to receive enough payment to feed your family!

¹⁴ Now let us reevaluate the actions of the householder. He did not underpay anyone. Rather, he treated all the workers as those having a right to a living. Even though the situation could be viewed as a buyer's market, with no shortage of workers, he did not take advantage of them by offering less than what was fair. All his workers returned home with enough to feed their families. Taking into consideration these extra details may change our view of his actions. His decision was a loving one and not an arbitrary abuse of authority. What lesson can we learn?

14. What valuable lesson do we learn from the vineyard illustration?

That considering just *some* of the facts can cause us to jump to the wrong conclusion. Indeed, this parable highlights the superiority of God's righteousness, which is not based on legal regulations and human merit alone.

Our Viewpoint May Be Distorted or Limited

¹⁵ The second factor to remember when we are faced with a situation that appears to be unfair is that *our viewpoint may be distorted or limited*. It can be distorted by imperfection, prejudice, or cultural background. It is also limited by our inability to discern motives and to know what is really in people's hearts. In contrast, both Jehovah and Jesus have no such limitations.—Prov. 24:12; Matt. 9:4; Luke 5:22.

¹⁶ Let us analyze the account of David's adultery with Bath-sheba. (2 Sam. 11:2-5) According to the Mosaic Law, they deserved to be executed. (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) Although Jehovah punished them, he did not enforce his own law. Was that unfair on Jehovah's part? Did he show favoritism to David and violate His own righteous standards? Some Bible readers have felt that way.

¹⁷ However, this law on adultery was given by Jehovah to imperfect judges, who could not read hearts. Despite their limitations, they were enabled by this law to be consistent in their judgments. On the other hand, Jehovah can read hearts. (Gen. 18:25; 1 Chron. 29:17) So we should not expect that Jehovah would have to be restricted by a law he designed for imperfect judges. If he were, would that not be like forcing someone with perfect vision to wear eyeglasses

15. Why might our viewpoint of fairness be distorted or limited?

16, 17. Why may Jehovah not have enforced his law on adultery at the time of David's sin with Bath-sheba?

that are designed to correct the vision of those with defective sight? Jehovah could read the hearts of David and Bath-sheba and see their genuine repentance. Taking such a factor into consideration, he judged them accordingly, in a merciful and loving manner.

Continue to Seek Jehovah's Righteousness

¹⁸ So if at times we see something that we feel is unfair on Jehovah's part—whether we read it in a Bible account or experience it in our personal life—let us never judge God by our own standards of righteousness. Remember that we do not always have all the facts and that our viewpoint may be distorted or limited. Never forget that “man's wrath does not work out God's righteousness.” (Jas. 1:19, 20) In this way, our hearts will never become “enraged against Jehovah himself.”—Prov. 19:3.

¹⁹ Like Jesus, let us always acknowledge that Jehovah alone has the right to set the standard for what is righteous and good. (Mark 10:17, 18) Strive to gain an “accurate knowledge” or “a real knowledge” of his standards. (Rom. 10:2; 2 Tim. 3:7, *The Twentieth Century New Testament*) By accepting these and conforming our lives to Jehovah's will, we show that we are seeking first “his righteousness.”—Matt. 6:33.

18, 19. What will help us never to judge Jehovah by our own standards of righteousness?

Do You Remember?

- Why is it important to seek Jehovah's righteousness?
- What two dangers do we need to avoid?
- How can we seek first God's righteousness?

DO YOU TAKE THE LEAD IN HONORING FELLOW BELIEVERS?

“In brotherly love have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead.”—ROM. 12:10.

IN HIS letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul emphasizes the importance for us as Christians to show love within the congregation. He reminds us that our love should be “without hypocrisy.” He also mentions “brotherly love” and notes that such love should be shown with “tender affection.”—Rom. 12:9, 10a.

² Of course, having brotherly love involves more than merely having warm feelings toward others. Such feelings need to be demonstrated by actions. After all, no one will know of our love and affection unless we give out samples, so to speak. Hence, Paul adds the admonition: “In showing honor to one another take the lead.” (Rom. 12:10b) What is involved in showing honor? Why is it important to take the lead in showing honor to fellow believers? How can we do so?

Respect and Honor

³ The principal Hebrew word for “honor” literally means “heaviness.” A person who is honored is regarded as being weighty or as amounting to something. The same Hebrew word is also often translated in the Scriptures as “glory,” which further indicates the high regard shown to the one being honored. (Gen. 45:13) The Greek word translated “honor” in the Bible conveys the sense of

esteem, value, preciousness. (Luke 14:10) Yes, those we honor are precious, valuable to us.

⁴ What is involved in honoring others? It starts with respect. In fact, the words “honor” and “respect” are often used together because they are closely related. Honor is the manifestation, or outward demonstration, of respect. In other words, respect refers primarily to how we *view* our brother while honor refers to how we *treat* our brother.

⁵ How can a Christian show genuine honor to fellow believers if he does not have heartfelt respect for them? (3 John 9, 10) Just as a plant can flourish and last only if it is rooted in good soil, so honor can be genuine and lasting only if it is rooted in heartfelt respect. Since insincere honor does not grow out of genuine respect, it will wither sooner or later. No wonder, therefore, that Paul preceded his admonition to show honor with the clear-cut statement: “Let your love be without hypocrisy.”—Rom. 12:9; *read 1 Peter 1:22.*

Honor Those Created “in the Likeness of God”

⁶ Since having heartfelt respect is a key to showing honor, we should never lose sight of the Scriptural reasons we have for respecting all our brothers. Let us, therefore, consider two of those reasons.

4, 5. How are showing honor and having respect related? Illustrate.

6, 7. Why do we need to have respect for others?

1, 2. (a) What admonition does Paul give in his letter to the Romans? (b) What questions will we consider?

3. What meaning does the word “honor” carry in the original Bible languages?

⁷ Unlike other creatures on earth, humans were created “in the likeness of God.” (Jas. 3:9) Hence, we possess such godly attributes as love, wisdom, and justice. Note what else we have received from our Creator. The psalmist states: “O Jehovah . . . , you whose dignity is recounted above the heavens! . . . You also proceeded to make [man] a little less than godlike ones, and with glory and splendor [“honour,” *King James Version*] you then crowned him.” (Ps. 8:1, 4, 5; 104:1)* Humans in general are crowned, or adorned, by God with a measure of dignity, glory, and honor. Thus, when we dignify another person, we are, in effect, acknowledging the Source of human dignity, Jehovah. Now, if we have valid reasons for showing respect to people in general, how much more ought we to have respect for fellow believers!—John 3:16; Gal. 6:10.

Members of One Family

⁸ Another reason why we respect one another is mentioned by Paul. Just before he gives the admonition to show honor, he states: “In brotherly love have tender affection for one another.” The Greek expression translated “tender affection” refers to the strong bond that unites a loving and mutually supportive family. Thus, by using that expression, Paul emphasizes that relationships in the congregation should be as strong and as warm as in a close-knit family. (Rom. 12:5) Moreover, keep in mind that Paul wrote those words to anointed Christians, all of whom had been adopted as children by the same Father, Jehovah. So in a very significant sense, they *were* a close fam-

* David’s expressions in the 8th Psalm are also prophetic, pointing to the perfect man Jesus Christ.—Heb. 2:6-9.

8, 9. What reason for having respect for fellow believers does Paul mention?

ily. Hence, anointed Christians in Paul’s day truly had a powerful reason for respecting one another. The same holds true for anointed ones today.

⁹ What about those who are of the “other sheep”? (John 10:16) Although they have not yet been adopted as God’s children, they can appropriately call one another brother and sister because they form one united worldwide Christian family. (1 Pet. 2:17; 5:9) Thus, if those of the other sheep fully appreciate what they are saying when using the terms “brother” or “sister,” then they too have a powerful reason for having heartfelt respect for their fellow believers.—*Read 1 Peter 3:8.*

Why So Important?

¹⁰ Why is having respect and showing honor so important? For this reason: By showing honor to our brothers and sisters, we greatly contribute to the well-being and unity of the entire congregation.

¹¹ Of course, we realize that having a close relationship with Jehovah and receiving the support of his spirit are the most powerful sources of strength that we have as true Christians. (Ps. 36:7; John 14:26) At the same time, when fellow believers show that they appreciate us, we are encouraged. (Prov. 25:11) We feel uplifted by a sincere expression of appreciation and respect. It gives us added strength to continue walking with joy and determination on the road to life. You have no doubt experienced such feelings yourself.

¹² Now, since Jehovah knows our inborn need for receiving respect, through his Word he properly urges us to “be eager to

10, 11. Why is having respect and showing honor so important?

12. How can each of us contribute to a warm, loving atmosphere in the congregation?

show respect for one another.” (Rom. 12:10, *Today’s English Version*; read Matthew 7:12.) All Christians who take that timeless counsel to heart contribute to an atmosphere of warmth and love within the Christian brotherhood. Hence, we do well to pause and ask ourselves, ‘When was the last time that I expressed through words and actions my heartfelt respect for a brother or sister in the congregation?’—Rom. 13:8.

A Specific Assignment for All

¹³ Who should take the lead in showing honor? In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul describes Christian elders as “those who are taking the lead among you.” (Heb. 13:17) True, elders take the lead in numerous activities. Still, as shepherds of the flock, they surely need to take the lead in honoring fellow believers—including fellow elders. For instance, when elders meet to consider the spiritual needs of the congregation, they honor one another by carefully listening to the comments made by any of their fellow elders. Further, they show honor by taking into consideration the views and expressions of all the elders when making a decision. (Acts 15:6-15) We should remember, though, that Paul’s letter to the Romans was directed not only to the elders but to the entire congregation. (Rom. 1:7) Thus, by extension, the admonition to take the lead in showing honor applies to all of us today.

13. (a) Who should take the lead in showing honor? (b) What do Paul’s words found at Romans 1:7 indicate?



How can we show honor to fellow believers?

¹⁴ Note also this aspect of Paul’s counsel. He urged his fellow believers in Rome not merely to show honor but to *take the lead* in showing honor. Why does that make a difference? Think of this example. Would a teacher urge a group of literate students to learn to read? No. They already know how to read. Instead, the teacher would want to help the students to read better. Similarly, having love for one another, which moves us to show honor, is already the identifying mark of true Christians. (John 13:35) However, just as literate students can make further progress by improving their reading skills, so we can make further progress by *taking the lead* in showing honor. (1 Thess. 4:9, 10) That specific assignment is given to each one of us. We might ask ourselves, ‘Am

14. (a) Illustrate the difference between showing honor and *taking the lead* in showing honor. (b) What question might we ask ourselves?

I doing that—taking the initiative in honoring others in the congregation?’

Honor “the Lowly Ones”

¹⁵ When showing honor, whom in the congregation should we not overlook? God’s Word states: “He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him.” (Prov. 19:17) How should the principle found in those words affect us as we endeavor to take the lead in showing honor?

¹⁶ You will agree that most people manage to show honor to their superiors, but these same people may treat those whom they consider to be their inferiors with little or no respect. However, Jehovah is not like that. He states: “Those honoring me I shall honor.” (1 Sam. 2:30; Ps. 113:5-7) Jehovah shows honor to all those who serve and honor him. He does not ignore “the lowly ones.” (*Read Isaiah 57:15; 2 Chron. 16:9*) Of course, we wish to imitate Jehovah. Thus, if we want to measure how we fare in showing genuine honor, we do well to ask ourselves, ‘How do I treat those who have no prominent, or responsible, position in the congregation?’ (John 13:14, 15) The answer to that question reveals much about the degree of heartfelt

15, 16. (a) When showing honor, whom should we not overlook, and why? (b) What may reveal that we have heartfelt respect for all our brothers and sisters?

Do You Recall?

- How are honor and respect related?
- What reasons do we have for honoring our fellow believers?
- Why is it important to show honor to one another?
- In what ways can we show honor to fellow believers?

respect we have for others.—*Read Philippians 2:3, 4.*

Showing Honor by Giving of Our Time

¹⁷ What is a major way in which we can take the lead in showing honor to all in the congregation? By giving others of our time. Why is that so? As Christians, we live busy lives, and carrying out our numerous important congregation activities takes much of our time. Not surprisingly, therefore, we view time as precious. We realize, too, that we should not demand that our brothers and sisters give us inordinate amounts of their time. Likewise, we appreciate it when others in the congregation understand that they should not be demanding when it comes to asking us for our time.

¹⁸ Nonetheless, we also recognize (especially those of us who serve as shepherds in the congregation) that our willingness to interrupt our activities in order to give some time to fellow believers demonstrates that we have respect for them. In what way? By dropping our activities to give some time to our brothers, we say to them, in effect, ‘You are so valuable in my eyes that it is more important to me to spend some time with you than to continue what I am doing.’ (Mark 6:30-34) The opposite is also true. If we are reluctant to stop our activities so as to give some time to our brother, we may make him feel that he is of little value to us. Of course, it is understood that there are times when an urgent matter cannot be interrupted. Still, our willingness—or our reluctance—to give some of our time to others does reveal much about the depth of respect we have in our

17. What is a major way in which we can take the lead in showing honor, and why is that so?

18. As shown by the picture on page 18, how might we indicate our willingness to give some time to fellow believers?

heart for our brothers and sisters.—1 Cor. 10:24.

Be Determined to Take the Lead

¹⁹ There are other important ways in which we can show honor to fellow believers. For instance, when giving them of our time, we should also give them our attention. Again, Jehovah sets the example. The psalmist David states: “The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help.” (Ps. 34:15) We strive to imitate Jehovah by turning our eyes and ears—our full attention—toward

19. In what way, other than giving of our time, can we show honor to fellow believers?

our brothers, especially those who approach us for help. By doing so, we show them honor.

²⁰ As we have considered, we want to keep clearly in mind why we should have heartfelt respect for fellow believers. Further, we look for opportunities to be the first in expressing honor to all, including lowly ones. By taking these steps, we will strengthen the bond of brotherly love and unity in the congregation. Therefore, let all of us continue not only to show honor but especially to *take the lead* in showing honor to one another. Are you determined to do just that?

20. What reminders about showing honor do we want to keep in mind?

DO YOU SHARE IN MAKING CHRISTIAN MEETINGS UPBUILDING?

*“When you come together, . . . let all things
take place for upbuilding.”—1 COR. 14:26.*

THAT was such an upbuilding meeting!’ Have you expressed similar sentiments after attending a meeting at the Kingdom Hall? No doubt you have! Congregation meetings truly are a source of encouragement, but that is not surprising. After all, just as in the days of the early Christians, an important objective of our meetings today is to strengthen spiritually all in attendance. Note how the apostle Paul

1. According to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, what is an important objective of Christian meetings?

emphasizes that specific goal of Christian meetings in his first letter to the Corinthians. Throughout chapter 14, he states time and again that each part delivered at congregation meetings should have the same objective—“the *upbuilding* of the congregation.”—*Read 1 Corinthians 14:3, 12, 26.**

* It was foretold that some features of first-century Christian meetings would cease. For example, we no longer “speak in tongues” or “prophesy.” (1 Cor. 13:8; 14:5) Even so, Paul’s instructions give us insight into how Christian meetings should be conducted today.

² We realize that upbuilding, or edifying, meetings are first of all the result of the influence of God's spirit. Therefore, we begin each congregation meeting with a heartfelt prayer to Jehovah in which our heavenly Father is asked to bless our gathering by means of his holy spirit. Still, we know that all members of the congregation can have a share in making the meeting programs as upbuilding as possible. So, then, what are some of the steps we can personally take to make sure that the weekly meetings conducted at our Kingdom Hall are always a source of spiritual refreshment and encouragement?

³ To answer, we will examine some aspects of our meetings that should be kept in mind by those who conduct them. We will also consider how the congregation as a whole can share in making meetings uplifting occasions for all who attend. This subject is of great interest to us because our meetings are sacred gatherings. Indeed, attending and participating in meetings are important features of our worship to Jehovah.—Ps. 26:12; 111:1; Isa. 66:22, 23.

A Meeting Designed for Studying the Bible

⁴ All of us want to benefit fully from our weekly *Watchtower* Study. Hence, to understand clearly the principal objective of that meeting, let us review some of the adjustments that have been made to the *Watchtower* magazine and the study articles.

⁵ Starting with the first study edition of *The Watchtower*, the January 15, 2008, issue, a significant detail was included on the front cover. Did you notice it? Take a good look at

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2. (a) Upbuilding meetings are the result of what?
(b) What question will we consider?
3. How important are Christian meetings?
4, 5. What is the objective of the *Watchtower* Study?

the cover of the magazine you are holding. There, at the base of the tower, you will note an open Bible. That added feature underscores the reason why we have the *Watchtower* Study. It is to study the Bible with the help of this magazine. Yes, at our weekly *Watchtower* Study, God's Word is "being expounded," and just as in the time of Nehemiah of old, there is "a putting of meaning into it."—Neh. 8:8; Isa. 54:13.

⁶ Because the Bible is our main textbook, an adjustment was made to the *Watchtower* Study. Several cited scriptures in the study articles are marked "read." All of us are encouraged to follow the reading of these scriptures during the meeting, using our own copy of the Bible. (Acts 17:11) Why? When we see God's counsel in our own Bible, it makes a deeper impression on us. (Heb. 4:12) Therefore, before such scriptures are read out loud, the one conducting the meeting should give all in attendance sufficient time to look up these scriptures and to follow along as the verses are read.

More Time Available to Express Our Faith

⁷ Still another adjustment to the *Watchtower* study articles has to do with their length. In recent years, they are shorter. Thus, during the *Watchtower* Study, less time is used for reading paragraphs while more time is available for giving comments. More in the congregation now have an opportunity to make a public expression of their faith by answering a printed question, by giving an application of a scripture, by relating a brief experience that illustrates the wisdom of following Bible principles, or in

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6. (a) What adjustment was made to the *Watchtower* Study? (b) What should be kept in mind regarding "read" scriptures?
7. What opportunity do we have during the *Watchtower* Study?

TEN WAYS TO MAKE MEETINGS UPBUILDING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Prepare in advance. When you study in advance the material that will be discussed at the Kingdom Hall, the meetings will capture your interest more fully and leave a deeper impression.

Attend regularly. Since a good attendance is more encouraging to everyone present, your presence makes a difference.

Arrive on time. If you are seated before the program starts, you can join in the opening song and prayer, which form part of our worship to Jehovah.

Come well-equipped. Bring your Bible and the publication(s) used during the meeting so that you can follow along and better grasp what is being discussed.

Avoid distractions. For example, read electronic text messages after, not during, the meetings. In that way, you keep personal affairs in their proper place.

Participate. When more give comments, more are encouraged and built up by the diverse expressions of faith.

Keep your comments brief. This gives as many as possible an opportunity to share in commenting.

Fulfill assignments. As students in the Theocratic Ministry School or as participants in the Service Meeting, prepare well, rehearse in advance, and try hard not to cancel your assignments.

Commend participants. Tell those who have a part at the meeting or who give comments how much their efforts are appreciated.

Associate. Kind greetings and upbuilding conversations before and after meetings add much to the pleasure and benefits that come from being present.

other ways. Some time should also be spent discussing the artwork.—*Read Psalm 22:22; 35:18; 40:9.*

⁸ However, that additional time for giving a variety of comments will be available only if participants comment briefly and the one conducting the meeting refrains from commenting too often himself during the *Watchtower* Study. So, then, what may help a conductor to find the proper balance between his comments and those given by the

8, 9. What is the role of the *Watchtower* Study conductor?

congregation so that the meeting will be upbuilding to all?

⁹ To answer, consider an illustration. A *Watchtower* Study that is well-conducted is like a bouquet of flowers that delights the eye. Just as a large bouquet is made up of many individual flowers, so a *Watchtower* Study is made up of many different comments. And just as the individual flowers in a bouquet differ in size and color, so the comments given during the meeting vary in length and manner of presentation. And where does the



conductor fit in? His occasional comments are like the few pieces of greenery that are carefully added to a bouquet. These pieces do not dominate; rather, they serve to provide structure and to unify the whole. Similarly, the one who conducts needs to keep in mind that his role is, not to overwhelm, but to complement the expressions of praise that are offered by the congregation. Yes, when the many diverse comments given by the congregation and the few well-placed remarks made by the conductor are skillfully put together, they form a beautiful bouquet of words that will delight all in attendance.

“Let Us Always Offer to God a Sacrifice of Praise”

¹⁰ Paul’s description of Christian meetings found at 1 Corinthians 14:26-33

gives us insight into how those gatherings were conducted in the first century. In commenting on these verses, one Bible scholar writes: “The really notable thing about an early Church service must have been that almost everyone came feeling that he had both the privilege and the obligation of contributing something to it. A man did not come with the sole intention of being a passive listener; he came not only to receive but to give.” Indeed, early Christians viewed

10. How did early Christians view congregation meetings?

congregation meetings as opportunities to express their faith.—Rom. 10:10.

¹¹ Expressing our faith at meetings greatly contributes to “the upbuilding of the congregation.” Surely you will agree that no matter how many years we may have been attending meetings, it remains a true pleasure to listen to the comments made by our brothers and sisters. We are touched by a heartfelt answer expressed by an elderly, faithful fellow believer; we feel uplifted by an insightful observation made by a caring elder; and we cannot help but smile when a child blurts out a spontaneous comment that expresses genuine love for Jehovah. Clearly, by giving comments, all of us share in making Christian meetings upbuilding.*

¹² For those who are timid, though, giving comments can be a real challenge. If that is the case with you, it may be helpful to remember that your situation is not unusual. In fact, even such faithful servants of God as Moses and Jeremiah expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to speak in public. (Ex. 4:10; Jer. 1:6) Yet, just as Jehovah helped those servants of old to praise him publicly, God will help you to offer sacrifices of praise. (*Read Hebrews 13:15.*) How can you receive Jehovah’s help in overcoming your fear of giving comments? First, prepare well for the meeting. Then, before you go to the Kingdom Hall, approach Jehovah in prayer and specifically petition him to give you the courage to give a comment. (Phil. 4:6) You

* For suggestions on how to improve our comments at the meetings, see *The Watchtower*, September 1, 2003, pages 19-22.

11. (a) What contributes greatly to upbuilding meetings, and why? (b) Applying what suggestions may improve our comments at meetings? (See footnote.)

12. (a) What can be learned from the examples of Moses and Jeremiah? (b) What role does prayer play in giving comments?

are requesting something that is “according to his will,” so you can be confident that Jehovah will answer your prayer.—1 John 5:14; Prov. 15:29.

Meetings That Aim to ‘Upbuild, Encourage, and Console’

¹³ Paul states that an important purpose of congregation meetings is to ‘upbuild, encourage, and console’ those in attendance.* (1 Cor. 14:3) How can Christian elders today make sure that their meeting parts indeed lift the spirits of their brothers and sisters and leave them consoled? To answer, let us consider a meeting that Jesus conducted shortly after his resurrection.

¹⁴ First, note the events that preceded that meeting. Just before Jesus was put to death, the apostles “abandoned him and fled,” and as foretold, they were “scattered each one to his own house.” (Mark 14:50; John 16:32) Then, after his resurrection, Jesus invited his downhearted apostles to attend a special meeting.[#] In response, “the eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had arranged for them.” When they arrived, “Jesus approached and spoke to them.” (Matt. 28:10, 16, 18) Imagine how relieved the apostles must have been when Jesus took that initiative! What did Jesus discuss?

* As to the difference between “encourage” and “console,” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* explains that the Greek word translated “console” denotes “a greater degree of tenderness than [encourage].”—Compare John 11:19.

[#] This may have been the occasion to which Paul later referred when he said that Jesus “appeared to upward of five hundred.”—1 Cor. 15:6.

13. (a) What effect should our meetings have upon those in attendance? (b) What question is of special importance to elders?

14. (a) What events preceded a meeting that was arranged by Jesus? (b) Why must the apostles have been relieved when “Jesus approached and spoke to them”?

¹⁵ Jesus began by making an announcement: “All authority has been given me.” Then he gave them an assignment: “Go therefore and make disciples.” Finally, he gave them warm assurance: “I am with you all the days.” (Matt. 28:18-20) But did you note what Jesus did *not* do? He did not reprimand his apostles; nor did he use that meeting to question their motives or to deepen their feelings of guilt by referring to their momentary weakness of faith. Instead, Jesus reassured them of his and his Father’s love by entrusting them with a weighty assignment. How did Jesus’ approach affect the apostles? They were so upbuilt, encouraged, and consoled that some time after that meeting, they were once again “teaching and declaring the good news.”—Acts 5:42.

¹⁶ In imitation of Jesus, elders today view meetings as opportunities to reassure fellow believers of the unfailing love that Jehovah has for his people. (Rom. 8:38, 39) Hence, in their meeting parts, elders focus on their brothers’ strengths, not on their weaknesses. They do not question their brothers’ motives. Rather, their expressions reveal that they view their fellow believers as individuals who love Jehovah and want to do what is right. (1 Thess. 4:1, 9-12) Of course, the elders may at times need to give corrective counsel to the congregation in general, but if just a few individuals need to be readjusted, such counsel is usually best given in a private conversation with those involved. (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26) When addressing the entire congregation, elders aim to give commendation whenever it is fitting. (Isa.

15. (a) What subjects did Jesus consider, but what did he not discuss? (b) How did that meeting affect the apostles?

16. How do Christian elders today imitate Jesus’ example in conducting meetings that are a source of refreshment?

32:2) They strive to speak in such a way that at the end of the meeting, all in attendance are refreshed and energized.—Matt. 11:28; Acts 15:32.

A Safe Haven

¹⁷ As Satan's world becomes ever more oppressive, we need to make sure that our Christian gatherings are a safe haven—a source of comfort for all. (1 Thess. 5:11) A sister who together with her husband coped with a severe trial some years ago recalls: "Being at the Kingdom Hall was like being held in Jehovah's caring hands. During the hours we were there, surrounded by our

17. (a) Why is it more important than ever that our meetings are a safe haven? (b) What can you personally do to make meetings upbuilding? (See the box "Ten Ways to Make Meetings Upbuilding for Yourself and Others.")

Christian brothers and sisters, we felt that we were able to place our burden on Jehovah, and we experienced a measure of inner calm." (Ps. 55:22) May all who attend our meetings feel similarly encouraged and consoled. To make sure that this will be the case, let us keep on doing our share in making Christian meetings upbuilding.

How Would You Answer?

- How important are Christian meetings?
- Why do comments given at meetings contribute to "the upbuilding of the congregation"?
- What can be learned from a meeting that Jesus conducted with his followers?