



# THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 15, 2008

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## STUDY EDITION

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

Publication of *The Watchtower* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### **Study Articles 1, 2** PAGES 3-11

Jehovah's Witnesses are known throughout the earth for their house-to-house ministry. This two-part series considers why we make such extensive use of this form of evangelizing and how we meet the challenges of preaching from door to door.

### **Study Articles 3, 4** PAGES 12-21

These articles contain a faith-strengthening discussion of five of Jesus' illustrations. Some of the explanations update our understanding. The articles strengthen our appreciation for the power of God's spirit as we learn how the five illustrations show different ways that the Kingdom-preaching work leads to increase.

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:



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*The Watchtower* (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

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Semimonthly

ENGLISH

# THE HOUSE-TO-HOUSE MINISTRY —WHY IMPORTANT NOW?

*"Every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."*—ACTS 5:42.

IT IS a familiar sight in almost every nation on earth. Two neatly dressed individuals approach a house and endeavor to share with the householder a brief message from the Bible concerning God's Kingdom. If he shows interest in the message, they may present Bible-based literature and offer a free home Bible study. Then they proceed to the next house. If you participate in this work, you likely find that people often recognize you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses even before you begin to speak. Indeed, the house-to-house ministry has become our trademark.

<sup>2</sup> We use a variety of methods to carry out the commission Jesus gave to preach and make disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20) We witness in marketplaces, on street corners, and in other public areas. (Acts 17:17) We contact many by telephone and by letter. We share Bible truths with those we meet during our daily activities. We even have an official Web site, which provides access to Bible-based information in more than 300 languages.\* All these methods yield good results. Yet, in most places, our principal way of spreading the good news is by preaching from house to house. What is the basis for this method of preaching? How did it come to be used so extensively by God's people in modern times? And why is it important now?

\* The Web-site address is [www.watchtower.org](http://www.watchtower.org).

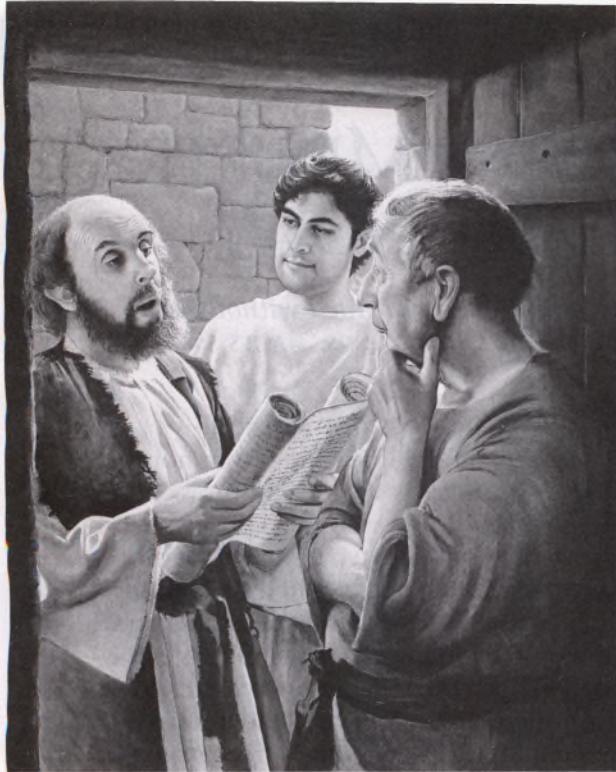
1, 2. (a) What method of preaching are Jehovah's Witnesses known for? (b) What will we consider in this article?

## The Apostolic Method

<sup>3</sup> The method of preaching from house to house has its basis in the Scriptures. When Jesus sent forth the apostles to preach, he instructed them: "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving." How were they to search for deserving ones? Jesus told them to go to people's homes, saying: "When you are entering *into the house*, greet the household; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish it come upon it." Were they to visit without a prior invitation? Note Jesus' further words: "Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet." (Matt. 10:11-14) These instructions make clear that as the apostles "went through the territory from village to village, declaring the good news," they were to take the initiative to visit people in their homes.—Luke 9:6.

<sup>4</sup> The Bible specifically mentions that the apostles preached from house to house. For example, Acts 5:42 says of them: "Every day in the temple and *from house to house* they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." Some 20 years later, the apostle Paul reminded the older men of the congregation in Ephesus: "I did not hold back from telling

3. What instructions about preaching did Jesus give the apostles, and what does this indicate about how they were to preach?
4. Where is house-to-house preaching specifically mentioned in the Bible?



*Like the apostle Paul, do you feel a responsibility to preach to others?*

(Read Joel 2:2, 7-9.) What a vivid portrayal of the perseverance and thoroughness of God's people in carrying out the witnessing work in modern times! Foremost among the methods used by anointed Christians and their "other sheep" companions in fulfilling this prophetic picture is the house-to-house ministry. (John 10:16) How did we, Jehovah's Witnesses, come to adopt that apostolic method of preaching?

<sup>6</sup> From 1919 on, the responsibility of each Christian to have a personal share in witnessing has been stressed. For example, an article entitled "Service Essential" in the *Watch Tower* of August 15, 1922, reminded anointed Christians of the importance of "actively carrying the printed message to the people and talking to them at their doors, giving the witness that the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Detailed presentations were provided in the *Bulletin* (now *Our Kingdom Ministry*). Still, the number of those who actually preached from house to house was small at first. Some held back. They raised various objections,

6. In 1922, what encouragement was given to witness from house to house, but how did some respond?

you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and *from house to house*." Did Paul visit those elders before they became believers? Evidently so, for he taught them, among other things, "about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:20, 21) Commenting on Acts 20:20, Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* says: "It is worth noting that this greatest of preachers preached from house to house."

### A Modern-Day Locust Army

<sup>5</sup> The witnessing done in the first century was but a foretaste of a greater work to be done in our day. The prophet Joel likened the preaching activity of anointed Christians to a devastating plague of insects, including locusts. (Joel 1:4) Advancing like an army, the locusts surmount obstacles, enter into houses, and devour everything in their path.

5. How is the preaching work depicted in the prophecy of Joel?

but the basic problem was that some felt it beneath their dignity to preach from house to house. As emphasis on field service increased, many of such ones gradually withdrew from association with Jehovah's organization.

<sup>7</sup> In the decades that followed, the scope of the preaching work grew. It became evident, however, that further personal training in the house-to-house ministry was needed. Take the situation in the United States as an example. During the early 1950's, 28 percent of the Witnesses in that country limited their preaching activity to distributing hand-bills or standing on the streets with magazines. Over 40 percent were irregular in the preaching work, allowing months to go by without doing any witnessing at all. What could be done to help all dedicated Christians preach from house to house?

<sup>8</sup> At an international convention held in New York City in 1953, the house-to-house ministry received special attention. Brother Nathan H. Knorr declared that the principal work of all Christian overseers should be to help every Witness to be a regular house-to-house minister. "Everyone," he said, "should be able to preach the good news from house to house." A global training program was launched to achieve this goal. Those who were not yet preaching from house to house were given training in approaching people at their doors, reasoning with them from the Bible, and answering their questions.

<sup>9</sup> The results of this training program were outstanding. Within a decade, the num-

7. In the 1950's, what need became evident?

8, 9. What training program was initiated in 1953, and with what results?

ber of publishers worldwide increased by 100 percent, the number of return visits by 126 percent, and the number of Bible studies by 150 percent. Today, almost seven million Kingdom publishers are preaching the good news worldwide. This remarkable growth is one evidence of Jehovah's blessing on the efforts of his people in the house-to-house ministry.—Isa. 60:22.

### Marking People for Survival

<sup>10</sup> The importance of the house-to-house ministry can be seen from a vision given to the prophet Ezekiel. In that vision, Ezekiel sees six men with weapons in their hands as well as a seventh man clothed in linen with a secretary's inkhorn at his side. The seventh man is told to "pass through the midst of the city" and "put a mark on the foreheads of the men that are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the midst of it." Following that marking work, the six men with the slaughtering weapons are commanded to execute all those who do not have the mark.—*Read Ezekiel 9:1-6.*

<sup>11</sup> We understand that in the fulfillment of this prophecy, the man "clothed in linen" represents the remnant of spirit-anointed Christians. By means of the preaching and disciple-making work, the anointed class puts a symbolic mark on those who become part of Christ's "other sheep." (John 10:16) What is the mark? It is the evidence, as if displayed on their uncovered foreheads, that such sheep are dedicated, baptized disciples of Jesus Christ and that they have put on the Christlike

Brother Knorr, 1953



10, 11. (a) What vision was Ezekiel given, as recorded in Ezekiel chapter 9? (b) How is that vision being fulfilled in our day?

new personality. (Eph. 4:20-24) These sheep-like ones become one flock with anointed Christians and assist them in their vital work of marking still others.—Rev. 22:17.

<sup>12</sup> Ezekiel's vision highlights one reason why our ongoing search for people who are "sighing and groaning" is so urgent. It involves lives. Soon, Jehovah's heavenly executional forces, represented by the six men with weapons, will destroy those who do not have the symbolic mark. Concerning that coming judgment, the apostle Paul wrote that the Lord Jesus, accompanied by "his powerful angels," will bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess. 1:7, 8) Notice that people will be judged on the basis of their response to the good news. Hence, the proclamation of God's message must continue unabated right to the end. (Rev. 14:6, 7) This places a heavy responsibility on all of Jehovah's dedicated servants.—*Read Ezekiel 3:17-19.*

<sup>13</sup> The apostle Paul felt a personal responsibility to share the good news with others. He

12. How does Ezekiel's vision about marking foreheads highlight the importance of our ongoing search for sheeplike ones?
13. (a) What responsibility did the apostle Paul feel, and why? (b) What responsibility do you feel toward the people in your territory?

### How Would You Answer?

- What is the Scriptural basis for preaching from house to house?
- How was the house-to-house ministry given emphasis in modern times?
- Why do dedicated servants of Jehovah have a responsibility to preach?
- What momentous events lie ahead?

wrote: "Both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to wise and to senseless ones I am a debtor: so there is eagerness on my part to declare the good news also to you there in Rome." (Rom. 1:14, 15) Out of gratitude for the mercy he had been shown, Paul felt compelled to try to help others to benefit from the undeserved kindness of God just as he had benefited from it. (1 Tim. 1:12-16) It was as if he owed a debt to each person he met, a debt that could be repaid only by sharing the good news with that person. Do you feel such a debt to the people in your territory?—*Read Acts 20:26, 27.*

<sup>14</sup> As important as the preservation of human life is, there is a far greater reason for preaching from house to house. In the prophecy recorded at Malachi 1:11, Jehovah declares: "From the sun's rising even to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and . . . a presentation will be made to my name, even a clean gift; because my name will be great among the nations." In fulfillment of this prophecy, Jehovah's dedicated servants are publicly praising his name in all the earth as they humbly carry out their ministry. (Ps. 109:30; Matt. 24:14) Rendering "a sacrifice of praise" to Jehovah is our foremost reason for preaching publicly and from house to house.—Heb. 13:15.

### Momentous Events Ahead

<sup>15</sup> What developments are yet in store for the preaching work? The siege of Jericho, recorded in the book of Joshua, provides an illustration. Recall that just before God destroyed Jericho, the Israelites were instructed to march around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, however, there was

14. What is our foremost reason for preaching publicly and from house to house?
15. (a) How did the Israelites intensify their activity as they marched around Jericho on the seventh day? (b) What does this indicate about the preaching work?

to be a marked increase in their activity. Jehovah told Joshua: "You should march round the city seven times and the priests should blow the horns. And it must occur that when they sound with the horn of the ram, . . . all the people should shout a great war cry; and the wall of the city must fall down flat." (Josh. 6:2-5) It is possible that there will be a similar expansion of our preaching activity. No doubt, by the time of the destruction of the present system of things, we will have seen the greatest witness to God's name and Kingdom in the history of this world.

<sup>16</sup> The time may well come when the message we declare is like "a great war cry." In the book of Revelation, powerful judgment messages are pictured as "a great hail with every

16, 17. (a) What will be accomplished before "the great tribulation" is finished? (b) What will we consider in the following article?

stone about the weight of a talent."<sup>\*</sup> And Revelation 16:21 states: "The plague of it was unusually great." Just what role the house-to-house ministry will play in the proclaiming of those climactic judgment messages remains to be seen. But we can be sure that before "the great tribulation" is finished, Jehovah's name will have been made known as never before in human history.—Rev. 7:14; Ezek. 38:23.

<sup>17</sup> As we await the momentous events that lie ahead, may we continue zealously declaring the good news of the Kingdom. In carrying out that assignment, what challenges do we face in the house-to-house ministry, and how can we meet those challenges? These questions will be considered in the following article.

\* If reference is being made to the Greek talent, each hailstone would weigh about 45 pounds.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE HOUSE-TO-HOUSE MINISTRY

*"We mustered up boldness by means of our God to speak to you the good news of God with a great deal of struggling."*—1 THESS. 2:2.

JEREMIAH was a person with feelings like ours. When Jehovah informed him of his commission to be "prophet to the nations," he cried out: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." Nevertheless, trusting in Jehovah, he accepted the assignment. (Jer. 1:4-10) For more than 40 years, Jeremiah contended with apathy, rejection, ridicule, and even physical violence. (Jer. 20:

1. What challenges did Jeremiah face, and how was he able to meet them?

1, 2) At times, he felt like giving up. Yet, he persevered in declaring an unpopular message to a largely unreceptive people. In God's strength, Jeremiah accomplished what he could never have done on his own.—Read Jeremiah 20:7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Many of God's servants today can relate to Jeremiah's feelings. When contemplating the prospect of preaching from house to house, more than a few of us once thought,

2, 3. How do God's servants today face challenges resembling those of Jeremiah?

'That is something I could never do.' Yet, when we realized that it was Jehovah's will that we proclaim the good news, we overcame our apprehension and got busy preaching. Even so, many of us faced circumstances in our lives that made it difficult, at least for a time, to keep on preaching. There is no denying that it is a challenge to start preaching from house to house and to keep on preaching right to the end.—Matt. 24:13.

<sup>3</sup> What if you have been studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending congregation meetings for some time but are hesitant to start preaching from house to house? Or what if you are a baptized Witness who finds it difficult to share in the door-to-door work, even though you are physically able to do so? Be assured that people of all backgrounds are meeting the challenges of the house-to-house ministry. With Jehovah's help, so can you.

### Mustering Up Boldness

<sup>4</sup> You no doubt recognize that the global preaching work is being accomplished, not by human power or wisdom, but by God's spirit. (Zech. 4:6) That is also true of the ministry of individual Christians. (2 Cor. 4:7) Consider the apostle Paul. Recalling a time when he and his missionary companion were mistreated by opposers, he wrote: "After we had first suffered and been insolently treated . . . in Philippi, we mustered up boldness by means of our God to speak to you the good news of God with a great deal of struggling." (1 Thess. 2:2; Acts 16:22-24) We may find it hard to imagine that a zealous preacher like Paul had times when it was a struggle for him to preach. Yet, like all of us, Paul had to lean on Jehovah in order to speak the good news with boldness. (*Read Ephesians 6:18-20.*) How can we imitate Paul's example?

4. What enabled the apostle Paul to speak the good news with boldness?

<sup>5</sup> One way we muster up boldness to preach is through prayer. A pioneer said: "I pray that I can speak with confidence, pray that I can reach the hearts of people, and pray that I can find joy in the ministry. After all, this is Jehovah's work, not our own, so we can do nothing without his help." (1 Thess. 5:17) All of us need to pray continually for the help of God's holy spirit to preach with boldness.—Luke 11:9-13.

<sup>6</sup> The book of Ezekiel reveals something else that can help us to speak with boldness. In a vision, Jehovah gave Ezekiel a scroll written on both sides with "dirges and moaning and wailing" and told him to eat it, saying: "Son of man, you should cause your own belly to eat, that you may fill your very intestines with this roll that I am giving you." What did this vision mean? Ezekiel was to absorb fully the message he was to deliver. It was to become part of him, as it were, affecting his inmost feelings. The prophet goes on to relate: "I began to eat it, and it came to be in my mouth like honey for sweetness." Declaring God's message in public was a delight—like tasting honey—for Ezekiel. He felt highly privileged to represent Jehovah and to fulfill this God-given assignment, even though that meant delivering a strong message to an unreceptive people.—*Read Ezekiel 2:8-3:4, 7-9.*

<sup>7</sup> This vision contains a valuable lesson for God's servants today. We too have a strong message to deliver to people who are not always appreciative of our efforts. For us to continue to view the Christian ministry as a God-given privilege, we must be well-nourished spiritually. Superficial or haphazard study habits will not be sufficient for us

5. What is one way we can muster up boldness to preach?

6, 7. (a) What vision did Ezekiel receive, and what did it mean? (b) What lesson does Ezekiel's vision provide for God's servants today?

to absorb God's Word fully. Could you improve the quality or regularity of your personal Bible reading and Bible study? Could you more often meditate on what you read? —Ps. 1:2, 3.

### Starting Bible Discussions

<sup>8</sup> For many publishers, the most difficult part of the house-to-house ministry is the initial exchange with the householder. Admittedly, in some territories it is a challenge to start conversations. Some publishers feel

8. What approach has helped some Kingdom publishers to start Bible discussions in the house-to-house ministry?

more comfortable when speaking to people at the door if they begin their presentation with a few well-chosen words and then hand the householder a tract, as outlined in the accompanying box. The title of the tract or its colorful illustration may capture the householder's attention, allowing us to mention briefly the purpose of our visit and to raise a question. A variation of this approach is to show the householder three or four different tracts and invite him to select one that interests him. Of course, our goal is not simply to place tracts or to use them at every door but to start Bible discussions that lead to Bible studies.

## One Way to Start Bible Discussions



### To get started:

- After you greet the householder, you might hand him a tract and say, "*My purpose in visiting today is to share an encouraging thought on this important subject.*"
- Or you might offer a tract and say, "*I'm visiting briefly today because I am interested in knowing what you think about this subject.*"

### If the tract is accepted:

- Without a lengthy pause, ask a simple viewpoint question based on the title of the tract.
- Listen carefully, seeking to understand the household-er's views. Graciously acknowledge his comments.

### To continue the discussion:

- Read and discuss one or more scriptures, tailoring your presentation to the person's interests and needs.
- Where interest is shown, offer literature and demonstrate a Bible study if possible. Arrange to return.

<sup>9</sup> Whatever approach you use, good preparation will help you to be poised and enthusiastic in the house-to-house ministry. One pioneer observed: "I have more joy if I am well prepared. It makes me want to give my presentation." Another pioneer said, "When I familiarize myself with the publications that I am going to offer, I become enthusiastic about using them." While there is some benefit in silently reviewing what you are going to say, many find it more helpful to rehearse their presentation out loud. Doing so helps them to give their best to Jehovah.—Col. 3:23; 2 Tim. 2:15.

<sup>10</sup> Practical meetings for field service contribute to our effectiveness and joy in the house-to-house ministry. If the daily text deals directly with the preaching activity, it may be read and briefly discussed. However, the brother conducting the meeting for field service should take sufficient time to discuss or demonstrate a simple presentation that is well-suited to the territory or to consider other practical information that can be used in the ministry that day. This will further equip those present to give an effective witness. With good advance preparation, elders and others who conduct these meetings can accomplish this and still conclude the meeting within the allotted time.—Rom. 12:8.

### The Power of Listening

<sup>11</sup> It is not only good preparation but a deep personal interest in others that helps us to start Bible discussions and reach people in the ministry. One way we demonstrate such interest is by the way we listen. A traveling overseer observed: "Being patient and showing a willingness to listen to people has an

9. Why is good preparation important?
10. What can be done to make meetings for field service practical and beneficial?
- 11, 12. How can compassionate listening help us to reach people with the good news? Give examples.

amazing power to attract and is a wonderful expression of warm personal interest." Compassionate listening can be the key that unlocks a householder's heart, as the following experience shows.

<sup>12</sup> In an open letter published in the newspaper *Le Progrès*, of Saint-Étienne, France, a woman described the visit of two people who knocked on her door shortly after she suffered the tragic loss of her three-month-old daughter in death. "I immediately recognized them as Jehovah's Witnesses," she wrote. "I was ready to dismiss them politely, but then I noticed a brochure they were offering. It was about why God permits suffering. So I decided to invite them in with the intention of demolishing their arguments. . . . The Witnesses stayed a little over an hour. They listened to me with great compassion, and when they were leaving, I felt so much better that I agreed to another visit." (Rom. 12:15) In time, this woman accepted a Bible study. It is revealing that what she remembered about that first visit was, not what the Witnesses said, but how they listened.

<sup>13</sup> When we listen compassionately, we in effect allow people to tell us why they need the Kingdom. This puts us in a much better position to share the good news with them. You have likely observed that effective evangelizers are usually skilled listeners. (Prov. 20:5) They show a real interest in the people they meet in the ministry. They take note not only of their names and addresses but also of their interests and needs. When someone expresses a specific concern, they do research and soon return to share what they found. Like the apostle Paul, they adapt their presentation of the Kingdom message to the individuals they meet. (*Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.*) Such sincere interest attracts people to the good news and wonder-

13. How can we adapt our presentation of the good news to the individuals we meet?

fully reflects "the tender compassion of our God."—Luke 1:78.

### Maintain a Positive Attitude

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah has dignified us by giving us free will. Although he is God Almighty, he forces no one to serve him but appeals to people on the basis of love, blessing those who respond appreciatively to his marvelous provisions. (Rom. 2:4) As his ministers, we should be ready to present the good news in a manner worthy of our merciful God each time we give a witness. (2 Cor. 5:20, 21; 6:3-6) To that end, we need to maintain a positive attitude toward the people in our territory. What can help us to meet this challenge?

<sup>15</sup> Jesus instructed his followers not to become unduly concerned if some rejected the message but rather to focus on finding deserving ones. (*Read Matthew 10:11-15.*) Setting small, reachable goals can help us to do this. One brother likens himself to a prospector. His motto is, "I look forward to striking gold sometime today." Another brother has the goal "to meet one nice person each week and return within a few days to cultivate the interest." Some publishers endeavor to share at least one scripture with each householder if possible. What realistic goal could you set for yourself?

<sup>16</sup> The success of the house-to-house ministry does not depend solely on the response of people in the territory. True, the preaching work plays a vital role in the salvation of honesthearted ones, but it also serves other important purposes. The Christian ministry gives us an opportunity to demonstrate our love for Jehovah. (1 John 5:3) It enables us to avoid bloodguilt. (Acts 20:26, 27) It warns the

14. As we carry out our ministry, how can we reflect Jehovah's qualities?

15. (a) Jesus instructed his apostles to do what if people rejected the message? (b) What can help us focus on finding deserving ones?

16. What reasons do we have to keep on preaching?

ungodly that "the hour of the judgment by [God] has arrived." (Rev. 14:6, 7) Above all, through the preaching of the good news, Jehovah's name is being praised in all the earth. (Ps. 113:3) Hence, whether people listen or not, we must keep sounding forth the Kingdom message. Indeed, all our efforts to proclaim the good news are beautiful in Jehovah's eyes.—Rom. 10:13-15.

<sup>17</sup> Although many today disregard our preaching work, they will soon come to view it in a different light. (Matt. 24:37-39) Jehovah assured Ezekiel that when the judgments he proclaimed came true, the rebellious house of Israel would "certainly know also that a prophet himself happened to be in the midst of them." (Ezek. 2:5) Similarly, when God carries out his judgments against the present system of things, people will be forced to recognize that the message Jehovah's Witnesses preached in public places and from house to house actually originated with the one true God, Jehovah, and that the Witnesses really did serve as his representatives. What a privilege we have to bear his name and declare his message in these momentous times! In his strength, may we continue to meet the challenges of the house-to-house ministry.

17. People will soon be forced to recognize what?

### How Would You Answer?

- How can we muster up boldness to preach?
- What can help us to start Bible discussions in the house-to-house ministry?
- How can we show sincere interest in others?
- What can help us to maintain a positive attitude toward the people in our territory?

# IT IS “GOD WHO MAKES IT GROW”!

*“Neither is he that plants anything nor is he that waters, but God who makes it grow.”—1 COR. 3:7.*

“**G**OD’S fellow workers.” That is how the apostle Paul described the privilege all of us can enjoy. (*Read 1 Corinthians 3: 5-9.*) The work to which Paul referred is the disciple-making work. He likened it to the sowing and watering of seed. If we are to be successful in that vital work, we need Jehovah’s help. Paul reminds us that it is “God who makes it grow.”

<sup>2</sup> That humbling fact helps us to have a proper view of our ministry. We may work diligently at preaching and teaching, but ultimately all praise goes to Jehovah for any growth that might result. Why? Because try as we may, none of us can fully understand the growth process, let alone control it. King Solomon expressed the situation correctly when he wrote: “You do not know the work of the true God, who does all things.” —Eccl. 11:5.

<sup>3</sup> Does our inability to understand the growth process make our work frustrating? No. Rather, it makes it exciting, intriguing. King Solomon said: “In the morning sow your seed and until the evening do not let your hand rest; for you are not knowing where this will have success, either here or there, or whether both of them will alike be good.” (Eccl. 11:6) Truly, when it comes to planting literal seed, we do not know where

1. In what way are we “God’s fellow workers”?
2. Why does the fact that ‘God makes it grow’ help us to have a proper view of our ministry?
3. What similarity exists between the work of sowing literal seed and that of making disciples?

or if it will sprout. Many factors are beyond our control. Something similar can be said of the disciple-making work. Jesus highlighted this fact in two illustrations that were recorded for us in the 4th chapter of Mark’s Gospel. Let us see what we can learn from these two illustrations.

## Different Types of Soil

<sup>4</sup> As recorded at Mark 4:1-9, Jesus describes a sower who casts, or scatters, seed that happens to land in different locations: “Listen. Look! The sower went out to sow. And as he was sowing, some seed fell alongside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. And other seed fell upon the rocky place where it, of course, did not have much soil, and it immediately sprang up because of not having depth of soil. But when the sun rose, it was scorched, and for not having root it withered. And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. But others fell upon the fine soil, and, coming up and increasing, they began to yield fruit, and they were bearing thirtyfold, and sixty and a hundred.”

<sup>5</sup> In Bible times, the sowing of seed was generally done by broadcasting. The sower carried the seed in a fold of his garment or in a container and scattered it with a long sweeping motion. So in this illustration, the sower does not deliberately sow the seed on

- 4, 5. Summarize Jesus’ illustration of the sower who scatters seed.

the different types of soil. Rather, the scattered seed lands in various locations.

<sup>6</sup> We are not left to guess the meaning of this illustration. Jesus went on to explain it, as recorded at Mark 4:14-20: "The sower sows the word. These, then, are the ones alongside the road where the word is sown; but as soon as they have heard it Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. And likewise these are the ones sown upon the rocky places: as soon as they have heard the word, they accept it with joy. Yet they have no root in themselves, but they continue for a time; then as soon as tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they are stumbled. There are still others who are sown among the thorns; these are the ones that have heard the word, but the anxieties of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches and the desires for the rest of the things make inroads and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Finally, the ones that were sown on the fine soil are those who listen to the word and favorably receive it and bear fruit thirtyfold and sixty and a hundred."

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6. How did Jesus explain the illustration of the sower?



<sup>7</sup> Notice that Jesus does not say that different types of seed are being used. Rather, he speaks of one type of seed that lands on different types of soil, each of which produces a different result. The first type of soil is hard, or packed down; the second is shallow; the third is overgrown with thorns; and the fourth is fine, or good, soil that produces well. (Luke 8:8) What is the seed? It is the Kingdom message found in God's Word. (Matt. 13:19) What do the different types of soil represent? People with differing heart conditions.—*Read Luke 8:12, 15.*

<sup>8</sup> Who is represented by the sower? He represents God's fellow workers, those who proclaim the Kingdom good news. Like Paul and Apollos, they plant and water. But even though they work hard, the results differ. Why? Because of the different heart conditions of those who hear the message. In the illustration, the sower has no control over these results. How comforting this is, especially to those of our faithful brothers and sisters who have worked for many years, in some cases for decades, with seemingly few tangible results!\* Why so?

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\* Consider the example of Brother Georg Fjölnir Lindal's ministry in Iceland, as reported in the 2005 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 210-211, and the experiences of faithful servants who persevered in Ireland for many years without immediate results, as found in the 1988 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 82-99.

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7. What do the seed and the different types of soil represent?

8. (a) Whom does the sower represent? (b) Why does the response to the Kingdom-preaching work differ?

**Why did Jesus compare a preacher of God's Kingdom to a sower of seed?**

<sup>9</sup> Faithfulness on the part of the sower is not measured by the results of his work. Paul alluded to that when he said: "Each person will receive his own reward according to his own labor." (1 Cor. 3:8) The reward is according to the labor, not according to the results of that labor. Jesus likewise emphasized this point when his disciples returned from a preaching tour. They were overjoyed because the demons were made subject to them by the use of Jesus' name. As exciting as that may have been, Jesus said to them: "Do not rejoice over this, that the spirits are made subject to you, but rejoice because your names have been inscribed in the heavens." (Luke 10:17-20) Even where a sower may not see a lot of increase as a result of his work, he has not necessarily been less diligent or faithful than others. To a large extent, results depend on the heart condition of the hearer. But ultimately, it is God who makes it grow!

### The Responsibility of Those Who Hear the Word

<sup>10</sup> What of the ones hearing the word? Is their response predetermined? No. Whether they resemble fine soil or not is up to them. Indeed, a person's heart condition can change for good or for bad. (Rom. 6:17) In his illustration, Jesus said that "as soon as [some] have heard" the word, Satan comes and takes it away. But this does not have to happen. At James 4:7, Christians are encouraged to "oppose the Devil," and then he will flee from them. Jesus describes others as accepting the word initially with joy but then being stumbled because of having "no root in themselves." But servants of God are admonished to "be rooted and established on the foundation" so that they may be able to grasp men-

9. What comforting truth did the apostle Paul and Jesus both emphasize?

10. What determines whether an individual who hears the word resembles fine soil or not?

tally "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge." —Eph. 3:17-19; Col. 2:6, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Others who heard the word are described as allowing "the anxieties of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches" to make inroads and choke the word. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10) How can they avoid this? The apostle Paul answers: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For he has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.'" —Heb. 13:5.

<sup>12</sup> Finally, Jesus says that those sown on the fine soil "bear fruit thirtyfold and sixty and a hundred." Even though some who respond to the word have a good heart condition and bear fruit, what they are able to do in proclaiming the good news varies according to their circumstances. For example, advanced age or enfeebling illness may limit the share that some have in the preaching work. (Compare Mark 12:43, 44.) Again, the sower may have little or no control over this, but he rejoices when he sees that Jehovah has made it grow.—Read Psalm 126:5, 6.

### The Sower Who Sleeps

<sup>13</sup> At Mark 4:26-29, we find another illustration concerning a sower: "In this way the kingdom of God is just as when a man casts the seed upon the ground, and he sleeps at night and rises up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows tall, just how he does not know. Of its own self the ground bears fruit gradually, first the grass-blade, then the stalk head, finally the full grain in the head. But as

11. How can one avoid allowing anxieties and riches to choke the word?

12. Why do those represented by the fine soil bear fruit in different amounts?

13, 14. (a) Summarize Jesus' illustration of the man who broadcasts seed. (b) Who is represented by the sower, and what is the seed?



***Those represented by fine soil wholeheartedly share in Kingdom-preaching according to their circumstances***

soon as the fruit permits it, he thrusts in the sickle, because the harvesttime has come."

<sup>14</sup> Who is this sower? Some in Christendom believe that this refers to Jesus himself. But how could it be said that Jesus sleeps and does not know how the seed grows? Surely Jesus is aware of the growth process! Rather, this sower, like the one mentioned earlier, represents individual Kingdom proclaimers, those who sow the Kingdom seed by their zealous preaching activity. The seed that is cast to the ground is the word that they preach.\*

<sup>15</sup> Jesus states that the sower "sleeps at night and rises up by day." This is not neglect on the sower's part. It just portrays the normal routine of life followed by most people. The wording used in this verse indicates an ongoing process of working by day and sleeping by night over a period of time. Jesus high-

\* It was previously explained in this magazine that the seed represents personality qualities that need to grow to maturity, being influenced along the way by environmental factors. However, it should be noted that in Jesus' illustration the seed does not change into bad seed or rotten fruit. It simply grows to maturity.—See *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1980, pages 17-19.

15, 16. What truth about literal and spiritual growth did Jesus bring out in his illustration of the sower?

lighted what happened during that time. "The seed sprouts and grows tall," he says. Then Jesus adds: "Just how he does not know." The emphasis is on the fact that the growth occurs "of its own self."\*

<sup>16</sup> What point was Jesus making here? Notice that the emphasis is on growth and on the gradual way in which it occurs. "Of its own self the ground bears fruit gradually, *first* the grass-blade, *then* the stalk head, *finally* the full grain in the head." (Mark 4: 28) This growth occurs gradually and in stages. It cannot be forced or speeded up. The same is true of spiritual growth. This occurs in stages as Jehovah allows the truth to grow in the heart of a person who is rightly disposed.—Acts 13:48; Heb. 6:1.

<sup>17</sup> How does the sower take part in the harvest "as soon as the fruit permits it"? When Jehovah makes the Kingdom truth grow in the hearts of new disciples, they eventually come to the point where they are prompted by their love for God to dedicate their lives to

\* The only other usage of this expression is found at Acts 12:10, where an iron gate is spoken of as opening automatically, "of its own accord."

17. Who share in the rejoicing when the seed of truth bears fruitage?

him. They symbolize their dedication by water baptism. Brothers who continue to progress to maturity are gradually able to take on more responsibility in the congregation. Kingdom fruitage is reaped by the original sower as well as by other Kingdom proclaimers who may not personally have been involved with sowing the seed that produced that particular disciple. (*Read John 4:36-38.*) Indeed, “the sower and the reaper . . . rejoice together.”

### Lessons for Us Today

<sup>18</sup> What have we learned from our review of these two illustrations recorded in Mark chapter 4? We can clearly see that we have a work to do—sowing. We should never allow excuses and potential problems and difficulties to stop us from doing this work. (Eccl. 11:4) At the same time, though, we are aware of our wonderful privilege to be counted as fellow workers with God. Jehovah is the one who causes spiritual growth, blessing our efforts and the efforts of those who receive the message. We realize that we cannot

<sup>18, 19. (a)</sup> How has this review of Jesus' illustrations encouraged you personally? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

force spiritual growth in anyone. We likewise need not feel discouraged or disheartened if growth is slow or lacking. How comforting it is to know that our success is measured by our faithfulness to Jehovah and to the privilege that he has granted us to preach the “good news of the kingdom . . . for a witness to all the nations.”—Matt. 24:14.

<sup>19</sup> What else did Jesus teach us about the growth of new disciples and the Kingdom work? The answer to that question is found in other illustrations recorded in the Gospel accounts. We will analyze some of these illustrations in the next article.

### Do You Remember?

- What are some similarities between the sowing of literal seed and the preaching of the Kingdom message?
- How does Jehovah measure the faithfulness of a Kingdom preacher?
- What similarity between literal and spiritual growth did Jesus emphasize?
- How do “the sower and the reaper . . . rejoice together”?



*It is God who keeps making it grow*



# YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE IT WILL HAVE SUCCESS!

*"In the morning sow your seed and until the evening do not let your hand rest; for you are not knowing where this will have success."—ECCL. 11:6.*

A FARMER needs to be patient. (Jas. 5:7) After sowing the seed, he needs to wait for it to sprout and grow. Gradually, when conditions are favorable, shoots begin to appear, breaking through the surface of the ground. Then they develop into plants that sprout heads of grain. Eventually, the farmer has a field ready to be harvested. How amazing it is to witness the miracle of growth! How humbling, too, to realize who is the Source of this growth. We can nurture the seed. We can assist with the watering process. But only God can make it grow.—Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6.

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in the preceding article, Jesus likened the Kingdom-preaching work to a farmer's sowing of seed. In the illustration of the different types of soil, Jesus emphasized that even though the farmer sows good seed, the heart condition of an individual determines whether the seed grows to maturity or not. (Mark 4:3-9) In the illustration of the sower who sleeps, Jesus highlighted that the farmer does not fully understand the process of growth. This is because growth is due to God's power, not to human efforts. (Mark 4:26-29) Let us now consider

1. Why is witnessing the growth process both amazing and humbling?
2. What points did Jesus teach about spiritual growth in the illustrations considered in the preceding article?



three more of Jesus' illustrations—the mustard grain, the leaven, and the dragnet.\*

## The Illustration of the Mustard Grain

<sup>3</sup> The illustration of the mustard grain, also recorded in Mark chapter 4, highlights two things: first, the amazing growth of the Kingdom message; second, the protection given to those who accept the message. Jesus said: "With what are we to liken the kingdom of God, or in what illustration shall we set it out? Like a mustard grain, which at the time it was sown in the ground was the tiniest of all the seeds that are on the earth—but when it has been sown, it comes up and becomes greater than all other vegetables and produces great branches, so that the birds of the heaven are able to find lodging under its shadow."—Mark 4:30-32.

<sup>4</sup> Here we find portrayed the growth of "the kingdom of God" as evidenced by the spread of the Kingdom message and the growth of the Christian congregation from Pentecost 33 C.E. onward. A mustard grain is a tiny seed that can represent something

\* The following explanations are an adjustment to what was previously explained in the June 15, 1992, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 17-22, and the October 1, 1975, issue, pages 589-608.

3, 4. The illustration of the mustard grain highlights what aspects concerning the Kingdom message?



*What does the illustration of the mustard grain teach us about Kingdom increase?*

very small. (Compare Luke 17:6.)

Eventually, though, a mustard plant may attain a height of from 10 to 15 feet and have sturdy branches, thus virtually becoming a tree.—Matt. 13:31, 32.

<sup>5</sup> The growth of the Christian congregation started in a small way in 33 C.E. when about 120 disciples were anointed with holy spirit. Within a relatively short period of time, this tiny congregation of disciples came to include thousands of believers. (Read Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:28; 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.) Within three decades, the number of harvest workers had expanded so much that the apostle Paul could say to the congregation in Colossae that the good news had already been “preached in all creation that is under heaven.” (Col. 1:23) What spectacular growth!

<sup>6</sup> Since the establishment of God’s Kingdom in heaven in 1914, the branches of the mustard “tree” have expanded beyond ex-

5. What growth was experienced by the first-century Christian congregation?

6, 7. (a) What expansion has taken place since 1914? (b) What further growth will take place?

pectations. God’s people have seen the literal fulfillment of the prophecy recorded by Isaiah: “The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation.” (Isa. 60: 22) The small group of anointed ones associated with the Kingdom work early in the 20th century had no way of knowing that by the year 2008, about seven million Witnesses would be engaging in this work in over 230 lands. Truly amazing growth, comparable to that of the mustard grain in Jesus’ illustration!

<sup>7</sup> But does the growth stop there? No. The subjects of God’s Kingdom will eventually encompass the entire earth. All opposers will have been removed. This will not occur as a result of human efforts but because of the intervention of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah in earth’s affairs. (Read Daniel 2:34, 35.) We will then see the final fulfillment of another prophecy recorded by Isaiah: “The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea.”—Isa. 11:9.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus says that the birds of the heaven are able to find lodging under the shadow of this Kingdom. These birds do not represent enemies of the Kingdom who try to eat up the good seeds, as was true of the birds in the illustration of the man who scattered seed on different kinds of soil. (Mark 4:4) Rather, in this illustration the birds represent right-hearted ones who seek protection within the confines of the Christian congregation. Even now, these ones are protected from the spiritually defiling habits and unclean practices of this wicked world. (Compare Isaiah 32: 1, 2.) Jehovah similarly likened the Messianic

8. (a) Whom do the birds in Jesus’ illustration represent? (b) From what are we protected even now?

Kingdom to a tree and stated prophetically: "On the mountain of the height of Israel I shall transplant it, and it will certainly bear boughs and produce fruit and become a majestic cedar. And under it there will actually reside all the birds of every wing; in the shadow of its foliage they will reside."—Ezek. 17:23.

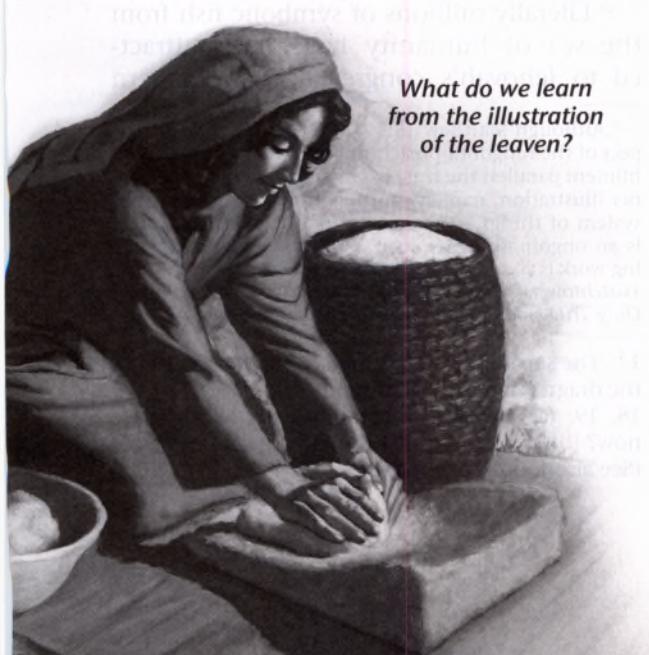
### The Illustration of the Leaven

<sup>9</sup> Growth is not always visible to human eyes. In his next illustration, Jesus emphasizes this point. He says: "The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three large measures of flour, until the whole mass was fermented." (Matt. 13: 33) What does this leaven represent, and how does it relate to the growth of the Kingdom?

<sup>10</sup> In the Bible, leaven is often used to represent sin. The apostle Paul referred to leaven in this way when speaking of the corrupting influence of a sinner in the congregation in ancient Corinth. (1 Cor. 5:6-8) Was Jesus

9, 10. (a) What point did Jesus emphasize in the illustration of the leaven? (b) In the Bible, what does leaven often represent, and what question about Jesus' reference to leaven will we consider?

*What do we learn from the illustration of the leaven?*



now using leaven to represent the growth of something negative?

<sup>11</sup> Before answering that question, we need to take note of three basic facts. First, although Jehovah did not allow leaven during the time of the Passover festival, at other times he did accept sacrifices that contained leaven. Leaven was used in connection with thanksgiving communion offerings, in which the offerer voluntarily made his presentation in a spirit of thankfulness for Jehovah's many blessings. This meal was one of cheerfulness.—Lev. 7:11-15.

<sup>12</sup> Second, although an element may on one occasion have a negative connotation in the Scriptures, on another occasion the same element may be used to represent something positive. For example, at 1 Peter 5:8, Satan is likened to a lion, picturing his dangerous, vicious nature. But at Revelation 5:5, Jesus is likened to a lion—"the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah." In the latter case, the lion is used as a symbol of courageous justice.

<sup>13</sup> Third, in Jesus' illustration, he did not say that the leaven corrupted the whole mass of flour, making it unusable. He simply referred to the normal process of making bread. The housewife deliberately added the leaven, and the results were positive. The leaven was *hidden in the mass of flour*. Thus, the leavening process was hidden from the view of the housewife. This reminds us of the man who sows seed and sleeps at night. Jesus said that "the seed sprouts and grows tall, just how [the man] does not know." (Mark 4: 27) What a simple way to illustrate the unseen progression of spiritual growth! We may not see the growth initially, but eventually its results become manifest.

11. How was leaven used in Israel of old?
12. What can we learn from the way the Bible uses word pictures?
13. What does Jesus' illustration of the leaven show about spiritual growth?

<sup>14</sup> Not only is this growth unseen to human eyes but *it is also pervasive*. This is another aspect emphasized in the illustration of the leaven. The leaven ferments the whole mass, all “three large measures of flour.” (Luke 13:21) Like leaven, the Kingdom-preaching work that has prompted this spiritual growth has expanded to the point that the Kingdom is now being preached “to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8; Matt. 24:14) What a wonderful privilege it is to be part of this amazing expansion of the Kingdom work!

### The Dragnet

<sup>15</sup> More important than the number of those who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ is the quality of those disciples. Jesus alludes to this aspect of Kingdom growth when he gives another illustration, one

14. What aspect of the preaching work is illustrated by the fact that the leaven ferments the whole mass?

15, 16. (a) Summarize the illustration of the dragnet. (b) What does the dragnet represent, and to what aspect of Kingdom growth does this illustration allude?

### How Would You Answer?

- What does Jesus’ illustration about the mustard grain teach us about Kingdom growth and spiritual protection?
- What does the leaven in Jesus’ illustration represent, and what truth about Kingdom growth does Jesus highlight?
- What aspect of Kingdom growth is pointed out in the illustration of the dragnet?
- How can we make sure that we remain among those who have been ‘collected into vessels’?

about a dragnet. He said: “Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet let down into the sea and gathering up fish of every kind.”—Matt. 13:47.

<sup>16</sup> The dragnet, which represents the Kingdom-preaching work, gathers fish of every kind. Jesus goes on to say: “When [the dragnet] got full they hauled it up onto the beach and, sitting down, they collected the fine ones into vessels, but the unsuitable they threw away. That is how it will be in the conclusion of the system of things: the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the fiery furnace. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.”—Matt. 13:48-50.

<sup>17</sup> Does this separating refer to the final judgment of the sheep and the goats that Jesus said would occur when he arrived in his glory? (Matt. 25:31-33) No. That final judgment will occur at Jesus’ coming during the great tribulation. By contrast, the separating referred to in the illustration of the dragnet occurs during “the conclusion of the system of things.”\* This is the time in which we are now living—the days leading up to the great tribulation. So how is a separating work taking place now?

<sup>18</sup> Literally millions of symbolic fish from the sea of humanity have been attracted to Jehovah’s congregation in modern

\* Although Matthew 13:39-43 refers to a different aspect of the Kingdom-preaching work, the time of its fulfillment parallels the time of the fulfillment of the dragnet illustration, namely, during “the conclusion of the system of things.” The separating of the symbolic fish is an ongoing process, just as the sowing and harvesting work is continual throughout this time period.—*The Watchtower*, October 15, 2000, pages 25-26; *Worship the Only True God*, pages 178-181, paragraphs 8-11.

17. The separating mentioned in the illustration of the dragnet refers to what time period?

18, 19. (a) How is a separating work taking place now? (b) What step must honesthearted ones take? (See also footnote on page 21.)

*What is pictured by the separating of the fine fish from the unsuitable fish?*

times. Some attend the Memorial, others come to our meetings, and still others are happy to study the Bible. But do all of these prove to be genuine Christians? They may be "hauled up onto the beach," but Jesus tells us that only "the fine ones" are gathered into vessels, which represent Christian congregations. The unsuitable are thrown away, eventually to be cast into a symbolic fiery furnace, denoting future destruction.

<sup>19</sup> As with the unsuitable fish, many who once studied the Bible with Jehovah's people have stopped studying. Some born to Christian parents have never really wanted to become footstep followers of Jesus. They have been unwilling to make the decision to serve Jehovah or after serving him for a while have ceased doing so.\* (Ezek. 33:32, 33) It is imperative, though, that all honesthearted ones allow themselves to be gathered into the vessellike congregations before the final day of judgment and to remain in a place of safety.

<sup>20</sup> So, what have we learned from our brief review of Jesus' illustrations concerning

\* Does this mean that everyone who has stopped studying or associating with Jehovah's people has been thrown away as unsuitable by the angels? No! If someone sincerely desires to return to Jehovah, he will find the way open.—Mal. 3:7.

20, 21. (a) What have we learned from reviewing Jesus' illustrations concerning growth? (b) What are you determined to do?



growth? First, like the growth of the mustard grain, there has been a tremendous growth in the Kingdom interests here on earth. Nothing can stop the spread of Jehovah's work! (Isa. 54:17) Additionally, spiritual protection has been provided for those who have sought "lodging under [the tree's] shadow." Second, it is God who makes it grow. Just as the hidden leaven spread through the whole mass, this growth has not always been readily discernible or understood, but spread it does! Third, not all those who responded have proved themselves suitable. Some have been like the unsuitable fish in Jesus' illustration.

<sup>21</sup> How encouraging, though, it is to see so many suitable ones being drawn by Jehovah! (John 6:44) This has resulted in spectacular increases in country after country. All glory for this growth goes to Jehovah God. Witnessing this, each of us should be motivated to obey the admonition written centuries ago: "In the morning sow your seed . . . , for you are not knowing where this will have success, either here or there, or whether both of them will alike be good."—Eccl. 11:6.

# WE WERE NOT AFRAID—JEHOVAH WAS WITH US

AS TOLD BY  
EGYPTIA PETRIDOU



*In 1972, the Witnesses throughout Cyprus gathered in Nicosia to hear a special talk by Nathan H. Knorr, who had long taken the lead in the ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses. He recognized me right away, and even before I had a chance to introduce myself, he asked: "Do you have any news from Egypt?" I had met Brother Knorr 20 years earlier in my hometown of Alexandria, Egypt.*

I WAS born in Alexandria on January 23, 1914, the eldest of four children. We grew up just a stone's throw from the sea. Alexandria was then a beautiful cosmopolitan city, renowned for its architecture and history. Since Europeans mingled with Arabs, we children learned to speak Arabic, English, French, and Italian, as well as our family's language, Greek.

After graduating from school, I found employment in a French fashion house, where I took pride in designing and sewing elegant gowns for ladies of high society. I was also very religious and loved to read the Bible, even though I understood little of what I read.

About that time—in the mid-1930's—I met a fine young man, a native of Cyprus. Theodosios Petrides was an accomplished wrestler, but he had also learned the art of confectionery and was employed in a well-known pastry parlor. Theodosios fell in love with

me, a petite brunette. Often he serenaded me from below my window with romantic Greek songs. We were married on June 30, 1940. Those were happy days. We lived in an apartment just below my mother's. Our first child, John, was born in 1941.

## Learning Bible Truths

For some time, Theodosios had been unsettled as far as our religion was concerned, and he was asking questions about the Bible. Unbeknownst to me, Jehovah's Witnesses had begun to study the Bible with him. One day, while I was at home with our baby, a lady knocked on our door and handed me a card with a Bible message on it. Out of politeness, I paused and read it. Then she offered me some Bible literature. Why, they were the very same books that Theodosios had brought home!

"Yes, I have these books," I said. "Please do come inside." Almost at once, I bombarded

the Witness, Eleni Nicolaou, with questions. Patiently, she used the Bible to answer me. I liked that. Suddenly, I began to understand the Bible's message. During a pause in our conversation, Eleni recognized a photograph of my husband. "I know that gentleman!" she exclaimed. Theodosos' secret was out. I was taken aback. Theo was going to Christian meetings without me—without even telling me! When Theodosos came home that day, I said to him: "The place you went to last Sunday—this week I shall come with you!"

At the first meeting I went to, a group of about ten persons were discussing the Bible book of Micah. I drank in everything! From then on, every Friday evening George and Katerini Petraki visited us to study the Bible with us. My father and most of my siblings were opposed to our studying with the Witnesses, but my sister was tolerant, although she never became a Witness. Mother, however, embraced Bible truth. In 1942, Mother, Theodosos, and I were baptized in the sea at Alexandria in symbol of our dedication to Jehovah.

### Our Lives Disrupted

In 1939, World War II began, and it soon escalated. By the early 1940's, German General Erwin Rommel and his tank troops were in nearby El Alamein, and Alexandria was full of British military personnel. We stocked up on dried foods. Then Theodosos was asked to care for his employer's new confectionery parlor in Port Taufiq, near Suez, so we moved there. Two Greek-speaking Witnesses set out to find us. Although they did not know our address, they preached from house to house until they found us.

While in Port Taufiq, we studied the Bible with Stavros and Giula Kypraios and their children, Totos and Georgia, and they

became our close friends. Stavros enjoyed studying the Bible so much that he would turn all the clocks in his house back one hour so that we would miss the last train home and have to stay longer. Our discussions continued late into the night.

We lived in Port Taufiq for 18 months, after which we returned to Alexandria when my mother got sick. She died in 1947, faithful to Jehovah. Once again, we felt how Jehovah encouraged us through upbuilding association with mature Christian friends. We were also able to extend hospitality to missionaries en route to their foreign

*With Theodosos in 1938*





assignments when their ships docked for a short while in Alexandria.

### Joys and Troubles

In 1952, I gave birth to our second son, James. As parents, we recognized the importance of raising our sons in a spiritually beneficial environment, so we made our home available for regular Bible study arrangements and often hosted full-time ministers. Thus our older son, John, developed a love for Bible truth, and while he was still in his mid-teens, he began to pioneer. At the same time, he attended night school to complete his secular education.

Not long afterward, Theodosios was diagnosed with a serious heart condition and was advised to stop his line of work. Our son James was only four. What were

**Once again, we felt  
how Jehovah encouraged  
us through upbuilding  
association with mature  
Christian friends**

we to do? Had not Jehovah promised: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you"? (Isa. 41:10) Imagine our surprise and joy in 1956 when we were invited to serve as pioneers in Ismailia, near the Suez Canal! The following years proved to be turbulent ones in Egypt, and our Christian brothers were in need of encouragement.

In 1960 we had to leave Egypt with just one suitcase each. We moved to Cyprus, my husband's island home. By this time, Theodosios was very sick and could not work. However, a kind Christian brother and his wife offered us accommoda-

tions on their property. Sadly, two years later my husband died, and I was left alone with young James. John, who had also come to Cyprus, had married and had his own family to care for.

### Cared for During Difficult Times

Then Stavros and Dora Kairis offered us accommodations in their house. I knelt and thanked Jehovah for once again caring for our needs. (Ps. 145:16) When Stavros and Dora decided to sell their home and build a new one with a Kingdom Hall on the ground floor, they kindly built a small two-room annex for James and me.

Eventually, James married, and he and his wife served as pioneers until the first of their four children was born. In 1974, two years after the memorable visit of Broth-

er Knorr, there was political upheaval in Cyprus.\* Many people, including Witnesses, fled their homes and had to start afresh. My son John was among them. He moved to Canada with his wife and three children. At the same time, though, we rejoiced to see an increase in the number of Kingdom publishers in Cyprus.

When I began to receive my pension, I was able to share more fully in the ministry. But a few years ago, I suffered a slight stroke and went to live with my son James and his family. Later, when my health took a turn for the worse, I was hospitalized for several weeks and then was moved to a nursing home. Despite constant pain, I witness to the nursing staff, patients, and visitors. I also spend many hours studying alone and, with the kind assistance of my spiritual brothers, manage to attend the Congregation Book Study nearby.

### **Comfort in My Twilight Years**

I find comfort when I hear news of those whom Theodosios and I were privileged to help. Many of their children and grandchildren are in the full-time ministry—some serving in Australia, Canada, England,

Greece, and Switzerland. Today, my son John and his wife live in Canada with their son. Their older daughter and her husband are pioneers. Their youngest daughter and her husband, Linda and Joshua Snape, were invited to attend the 124th class of Gilead School.

My son James and his wife are now living in Germany. Two of their sons serve at Bethel—one in Athens, Greece, and the other in Selters, Germany. Their youngest son, their daughter, and her husband are pioneers, serving in Germany.

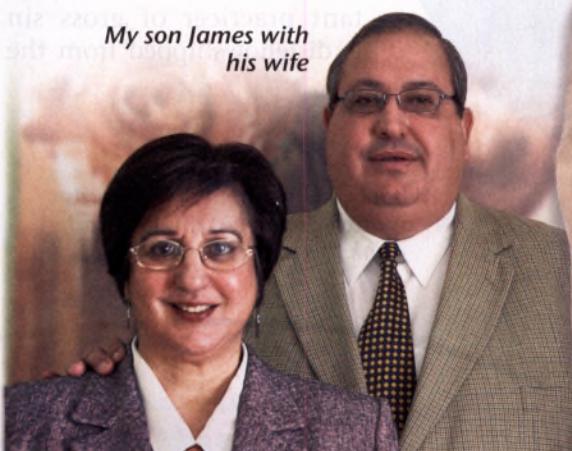
What stories we shall have to tell my mother and my dear Theodosios when they return in the resurrection! They will be thrilled to see what a fine heritage they left their family.\*

\* While this article was being prepared for publication, Sister Petridou died at the age of 93.

*My son John with his wife*



*My son James with his wife*



# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Letters to the Corinthians

THE apostle Paul is deeply concerned about the spiritual welfare of the congregation in Corinth. He has heard that there are dissensions among the brothers there. Immorality is being tolerated. The congregation has also written Paul, inquiring about certain matters. So about 55 C.E., when he is in Ephesus during the course of his third missionary journey, Paul writes the first of his two letters to the Corinthians.

The second letter, apparently written only a few months after the first, is a follow-up letter. Since conditions both inside and outside the congregation in first-century Corinth correspond in many ways to our times, the message of Paul's letters to the Corinthians is of great value to us.—Heb. 4:12.

### 'STAY AWAKE, STAND FIRM, GROW MIGHTY'

(1 Cor. 1:1-16:24)

"You should all speak in agreement," exhorts Paul. (1 Cor. 1:10) There is 'no other foundation than Jesus Christ' on which Christian qualities are built. (1 Cor. 3:11-13) Concerning a fornicator in the congregation, Paul says: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." (1 Cor. 5:13) "The body is not for fornication," he says, "but for the Lord." —1 Cor. 6:13.

In response to "the things about which [they] wrote," Paul provides sound counsel regarding marriage and singleness. (1 Cor. 7:1) After commenting on Christian headship, on orderliness at Christian meetings, and on the certainty of the resurrection, Paul gives the exhortation: "Stay awake, stand firm in the faith, carry on as men, grow mighty."—1 Cor. 16:13.

### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

1:21—Does Jehovah really use "foolishness" to save those believing? No, he does not. However, since "the world through its wisdom did not get to know God," what he uses to save people appears foolish to the world.—John 17:25.

5:5—What does it mean to "hand [the wicked] man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that the spirit may be saved"? When an unrepentant practitioner of gross sin is disfellowshipped from the



*What is the meaning of the words "as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup"?—1 Cor. 11:26*

congregation, he again becomes part of Satan's wicked world. (1 John 5:19) Hence, he is spoken of as being handed over to Satan. The person's expulsion results in the destruction, or the removal, of the corrupting element from the congregation and in the preservation of its spirit, or dominant attitude.—2 Tim. 4:22.

**7:33, 34—What is meant by “the things of the world” for which a married man or woman is anxious?** Paul is referring to the mundane things in life with which married Christians need to be concerned. These include food, clothing, and housing, but exclude the bad things of this world, which Christians shun.—1 John 2:15-17.

**11:26—How “often” is Jesus’ death to be commemorated, and “until” when?** Paul was not saying that Jesus' death would be commemorated often. The Greek word used for “as often as” means “whenever” or “every time that.” Therefore, Paul was saying that every time anointed Christians partake of the Memorial emblems, once a year on Nisan 14, they are “proclaiming the death of the Lord.” They do this “until he arrives,” that is, until he receives them into the heavens by a resurrection.—1 Thess. 4:14-17.

**13:13—In what way is love greater than faith and hope?** When the “things hoped for” become a reality and “the assured expectation” of them is realized, aspects of faith and hope come to an end. (Heb. 11:1) Love is greater than faith and hope in that it remains forever.

**15:29—What does it mean to be “baptized for the purpose of being dead ones”?** Paul was not suggesting that living people be baptized on behalf of those who died in an unbaptized state. Paul is here speaking of the immersion of spirit-anointed Christians into a course of life wherein they keep their integrity until their death and subsequent resurrection to spirit life.

### Lessons for Us:

**1:26-31; 3:3-9; 4:7.** Humbly boasting in Jehovah, not in ourselves, promotes unity in the congregation.

**2:3-5.** While witnessing in Corinth, a center of Greek philosophy and learning, Paul may have been concerned about whether he would be able to persuade his listeners. However, he did not allow any weakness or fear he might have had to interfere with the carrying out of his God-given ministry. Likewise, we should not permit unusual circumstances to hold us back from declaring the good news of God's Kingdom. We can confidently look to Jehovah for help as did Paul.

**2:16.** To have “the mind of Christ” is to know the pattern of his thinking, to think as he does, to have a grasp of the full range of his personality, and to imitate his example. (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1) How important it is that we carefully study Jesus' life and ministry!

**3:10-15; 4:17.** We should analyze and improve our ability to teach and make disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20) If we do not teach well, our student may not survive tests of faith, and we may suffer a loss so painful that our salvation will be “as through fire.”

**6:18.** To “flee from fornication” is to avoid not only acts of *por-nei'a* but also pornography, moral uncleanness, sexual fantasizing, flirting—anything that can lead to fornication.—Matt. 5:28; Jas. 3:17.

**7:29.** Marriage mates ought to be careful not to get so absorbed in each other that Kingdom interests take second place in their lives.

**10:8-11.** Jehovah was greatly offended when Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron. We are wise when we guard against developing a pattern of murmuring.

**16:2.** Our financial giving toward the advancement of Kingdom interests will be

consistent if it is planned in advance and is done systematically.

### 'CONTINUE TO BE READJUSTED' (2 Cor. 1:1–13:14)

Paul tells the Corinthians that they should "kindly forgive and comfort" a repentant wrongdoer who has been rebuked. Although his first letter had saddened them, Paul expresses joy because they were "saddened into repenting."—2 Cor. 2:6, 7; 7:8, 9.

'Just as they are abounding in everything,' Paul encourages the Corinthians to 'abound in giving.' After answering opposers, he gives final advice to all: "Continue to rejoice, to be readjusted, to be comforted, to think in agreement, to live peaceably."—2 Cor. 8:7; 13:11.

#### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**2:15, 16—How are we "a sweet odor of Christ"?** This is the case because we adhere to the Bible and share in dispensing its message. While such "fragrance" might be disgusting to unrighteous individuals, it is sweet-smelling to Jehovah and honesthearted ones.

**5:16—How is it that anointed Christians "know no man according to the flesh"?** They do not look upon people in a fleshly way, that is, showing favoritism on the basis of wealth, race, or ethnic or national origin. What is important to them is their spiritual relationship with fellow believers.

**11:1, 16; 12:11—Was Paul being unreasonable with the Corinthians?** No, he was not. However, he may have appeared to some to be boastful and unreasonable because of what he was compelled to say in defense of his apostleship.

**12:1–4—Who "was caught away into paradise"?** Since the Bible does not speak of any other person who had such a vision and the passage follows Paul's defense of his apostle-

ship, he was probably relating *his own* experience. What the apostle envisioned was likely the spiritual paradise enjoyed by the Christian congregation in "the time of the end."—Dan. 12:4.

#### Lessons for Us:

**3:5.** In principle, this verse tells us that Jehovah adequately qualifies Christians for the ministry by his Word, his holy spirit, and the earthly part of his organization. (John 16:7; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17) We do well to study the Bible and Bible-based publications diligently, persistently pray for holy spirit, and regularly attend and participate in Christian meetings.—Ps. 1:1-3; Luke 11:10-13; Heb. 10:24, 25.

**4:16.** Since Jehovah renews 'the man we are inside from day to day,' we should regularly avail ourselves of Jehovah's provisions, not allowing a day to go by without giving consideration to spiritual matters.

**4:17, 18.** Remembering that "the tribulation is momentary and light" can help us to remain faithful to Jehovah during hardship.

**5:1-5.** How beautifully Paul expresses the sentiments of anointed Christians toward their hope of heavenly life!

**10:13.** As a general rule, unless some specific arrangements have been made for us to help where the need is greater, we should work only the territory assigned to our congregation.

**13:5.** To 'test whether we are in the faith,' we have to measure our conduct in the light of what we learn from the Bible. To 'prove what we ourselves are,' we have to evaluate the level of our spirituality, including the sharpness of our "perceptive powers" and the extent of our works of faith. (Heb. 5:14; Jas. 1:22-25) By applying Paul's sound advice, we can keep on walking in the way of the truth.

# Cultivate Reasonable Expectations, and Be Joyful

"I FAILED again!" How many times have you said something like that because you were unable to accomplish what you set out to do? A young Christian mother may express such sentiments because she feels overwhelmed by the constant attention demanded by her newborn child and is frustrated that she cannot pay more attention to spiritual interests. Another Christian may feel limited because of his upbringing and think that he never does enough in the congregation. An elderly Witness may feel dejected because she is unable to share to the full in Christian activities she enjoyed when she had more energy and mobility. "A talk encouraging pioneer service is sometimes enough to make me cry," notes Christiane, whose family situation prevents her from doing as much as she would like in Jehovah's service.

How can we deal with such feelings? How have some Christians been able to cultivate a realistic view of their circumstances? What are the benefits of having balanced expectations?

## Be Reasonable

The apostle Paul gives us a key to maintaining our joy when he says: "Always rejoice in the Lord. Once more I will say, Rejoice! Let your *reasonableness* become known to all men." (Phil. 4:4, 5) To experience joy and satisfaction in our service to God, we need to cultivate reasonable expectations in the light of our own abilities and circumstances. If we strive to attain unreasonable goals regardless of the cost, we subject ourselves to undue

tension. On the other hand, we should be careful not to become too lenient with ourselves, using our perceived limitations as an excuse for slowing down more than is necessary in the Christian ministry.

No matter what our circumstances, Jehovah requires that we give him our very best—our whole-souled and wholehearted service. (Col. 3:23, 24) If we were to give

To experience joy and satisfaction in our service to God, we need to cultivate reasonable expectations in the light of our own abilities and circumstances

Jehovah less than our best, we would not be living up to our dedication to him. (Rom. 12:1) In addition, we would deprive ourselves of the deep satisfaction, true joy, and other rich blessings that come from whole-souled service.—Prov. 10:22.

The word translated "reasonable" in the Bible contains the thought of being considerate. Its literal meaning is "yielding." (Jas. 3:17, ftn.) The word also conveys the sense of not being overly strict. So, then, if we are reasonable, we will be able to take a balanced look at our circumstances. Is that difficult to do? For some it is, even though they may be able to view others with consideration. For

instance, if a close friend was showing signs of exhaustion because he was overexerting himself, would we not try to help him to see the wisdom of making some adjustments in his life? Similarly, we need to learn to recognize the signs that may tell us that we are going beyond our own limits.—Prov. 11:17.

To have a reasonable view of our limitations can be more challenging if we have been brought up by overly demanding parents. Some felt during childhood that they always had to do more or be better to earn their parents' love. If that was the case with us, we might have a wrong idea about Jehovah's view of us. Jehovah loves us for the wholehearted way in which we render our service to him. God's Word assures us that Jehovah "well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Ps. 103:14) He knows our limitations and loves us when we serve him zealously in spite of them. Remembering that our God is not a strict taskmaster will help us to be modest in what we expect of ourselves, recognizing our limitations.—Mic. 6:8.

Still, some find it difficult to cultivate such a balanced attitude. If that is true in your case, why not seek the help of an experienced Christian who knows you well? (Prov. 27:9) For example, do you want to serve as a regular pioneer? That is an excellent goal! Are you having difficulty realizing it? Perhaps you need help to simplify your life. Or your trusted Christian friend might discuss with you whether your many family responsibilities make regular pioneering a practical goal at this time. He or she could help you to see if the additional activities you

want to take on are within your reach or what adjustment might enable you to do more. A husband is also in a good position to help his wife to find a pace that fits her capabilities. For instance, he could suggest that she get some rest before starting a new month of increased activities. This may build up her energy and help her to preserve her joy in the ministry.

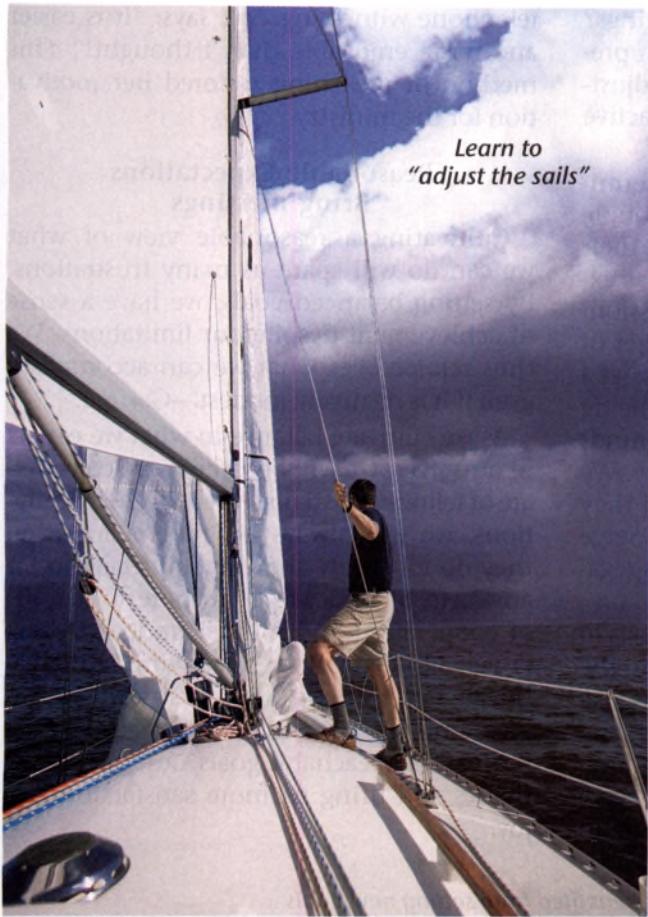
### **Look for Things That You Can Do**

Advanced age or failing health may place certain limits on what we can do in Jehovah's service. If you are a parent, you may have the impression that you benefit little from personal study or Christian meetings because much of your time and energy is taken up by young children. However, could it be that concentrating on your limitations could at times prevent you from seeing what is still within your reach?

Thousands of years ago, a certain Levite expressed a desire that was impossible for him to satisfy. He was privileged to serve for two weeks every year at the temple. However, he expressed the laudable desire to dwell per-

*Nerlande finds joy in doing what she can in the ministry*





manently near the altar. (Ps. 84:1-3) What helped this faithful man to be content? He realized that even a single day in the temple courtyards was a unique privilege. (Ps. 84:4, 5, 10) Similarly, rather than dwelling on our limitations, we should try to discern and appreciate possibilities that are within our reach.

Take Nerlande, a Christian sister in Canada, as an example. She is confined to a wheelchair and felt very limited in what she could do in the ministry. However, she changed her perspective by viewing a nearby shopping mall as her personal preaching territory. She explains: "I sit in my wheelchair near a

bench in the mall. I find joy in witnessing to people who come and sit down to rest for a moment." Sharing in this valuable form of the ministry gives Nerlande much satisfaction.

### Make Adjustments if Needed

A sailboat may be coursing along at full speed with the wind blowing in its sails. However, when the sailor at the helm encounters a fierce storm, he is forced to adjust the sails. He is not in control of the storm, but by making adjustments, he may remain in control of his sailboat. In a comparable way, often we have no control over adverse stormlike circumstances that we encounter in life. But we can keep control of our life to the extent possible by adjusting the way we use physical, mental, and emotional resources. When we take into consideration our new circumstances, we will be helped to preserve our satisfaction and joy in God's service.

—Prov. 11:2.

Consider some examples. If we have a limited amount of energy, we may find it appropriate to avoid exhausting activities earlier in the day so that we will have strength to attend a Christian meeting in the evening. This will allow us to take full advantage of our association with fellow Christians. Or if a mother is unable to share in the house-to-house ministry because her child is unwell, she may find it practical to invite a Christian sister to her home to share with her in witnessing by telephone while the child is having a nap.

What if your circumstances do not allow you to study in advance everything that will

be considered at the congregation meetings? You can determine how much you can prepare and do that as well as possible. By adjusting our immediate goals, we can stay active and happy.

Adjusting our goals may require determination and effort. Serge and Agnès, a couple in France, had to make a big change in their plans. "When we learned that Agnès was expecting a baby, our dream of being missionaries vanished," says Serge. Now a father of two lively girls, Serge explains how they set a new goal as a couple. He says: "Not being able to serve abroad, we made up our minds to be 'missionaries' in our own country. We joined a foreign-language group." Did they benefit from setting this new goal? Serge notes: "We feel very useful in the congregation."

Odile, a Christian sister in France who is in her 70's and suffers from osteoarthritis in the knees, cannot stand for long. She was discouraged that her physical problems prevented her from having a share in the house-to-house ministry. However, she did not give up. She adjusted her activities by sharing in

telephone witnessing. She says: "It is easier and more enjoyable than I thought!" This method of preaching restored her motivation for the ministry.

### Reasonable Expectations Bring Blessings

Cultivating a reasonable view of what we can do will spare us many frustrations. By setting balanced goals, we have a sense of achievement despite our limitations. We thus rejoice over what we can accomplish, even if it is relatively modest.—Gal. 6:4.

As we cultivate balance in what we expect of ourselves, we will become more considerate of fellow Christians. Aware of their limitations, we will always be grateful for what they do for us. By showing appreciation for any help offered, we contribute to a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding. (1 Pet. 3:8) Remember, as a loving Father, Jehovah never asks more of us than we can give. And when we have balanced expectations and set reachable goals, our spiritual activities will bring us more satisfaction and joy.

*Serge and Agnès benefited from setting new goals*

