

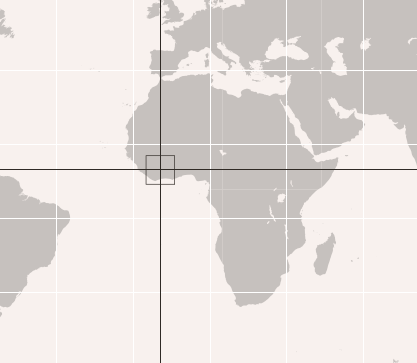
DECEMBER 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JANUARY 29–FEBRUARY 25, 2018



COVER IMAGE:
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast) is a major producer of cocoa beans, which are used to make chocolate. The beans are spread to dry under the sun. A pioneer shares with a worker the important contents of the *Good News* brochure

PUBLISHERS
11,133

BIBLE STUDIES
28,274

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2016)
76,526

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“I Know He Will Rise”

“Our friend has fallen asleep, but I am traveling there to awaken him.”—JOHN 11:11.

JESUS’ close friend and disciple Martha was grieving. Her brother, Lazarus, had died. Could anything ease her sorrow? Yes. Jesus assured her: “Your brother will rise.” That may not have erased all her sadness; yet, Martha accepted Jesus’ assurance. She said: “I *know* he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.” (John 11:20-24) She was sure that would occur in the future. Jesus then performed a miracle. He brought Lazarus back to life that very day.

² We have no basis to expect that Jesus or his Father will now perform such a miracle for us. Are you, though, just as sure as Martha was of a *future* resurrection for a loved one? Maybe it is your deceased mate, your mother, your father, or a beloved grandparent. Or you may be grieving over the loss of a child. You long to hug, to speak with, and to laugh with that dear one. Happily, like Martha, you have good reason to say, ‘I know that my loved one will rise in the resurrection.’

1. What was Martha confident about regarding her brother? (See opening picture.)
2. Why would you like to have the conviction that Martha had?

SONGS: 142, 129

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What Bible accounts gave Martha confidence in the resurrection?

How can we be sure that there is a basis for a *future* resurrection?

Like Martha, what joyful event are you looking forward to?

Still, it will do each Christian good to reflect on why that is a valid conviction.

³ It is unlikely that Martha, living near Jerusalem, observed Jesus resurrect the son of a widow near Nain in Galilee. Yet, she had probably heard about it. And it is similar with Jesus' bringing Jairus' daughter back to life. Those at the girl's house "knew she had died." Still, Jesus took her lifeless hand and said: "Child, get up!" And she did, immediately. (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41, 42, 49-55) Both Martha and her sister, Mary, were aware that Jesus could cure the sick. For that reason, they felt that had Jesus been present, Lazarus would not have died. Now that Jesus' dear friend was dead, though, what did the future hold? Note that Martha spoke of Lazarus' coming back to life *in the future*, "*on the last day*." Why could she be certain of that? And why can you be sure that there will be a future resurrection that may include your loved ones?

⁴ There are good reasons for your conviction. As we review some of them, you might find things in God's Word that you do not often link with your valiant hope of seeing your loved one again.

EVENTS THAT PRODUCE HOPE!

⁵ Note that Martha did not say: 'I *hope* that my brother will rise.' She said: "I *know* he will rise." Martha was convinced because of miracles that she likely learned about even before Jesus' ministry began. She had learned of these as a youth at home and at the syn-

agogue. Three accounts recorded in the inspired Scriptures may come to mind.

⁶ The first resurrection occurred at a time when God was empowering his prophet Elijah to work miracles. Up in Zarephath, a Phoenician coastal town, a poor widow showed hospitality to the prophet. God then miraculously maintained her supply of flour and oil, so that she and her son stayed alive. (1 Ki. 17:8-16) Later, her son got sick and died. Elijah came to her aid. While touching the corpse, Elijah prayed: "God, please, let this child's life come back into him." And it happened! God heard Elijah, and the child came back to life. That was the first resurrection of Bible record. **(Read 1 Kings 17:17-24.)** Martha had certainly learned of that remarkable event.

⁷ The second resurrection related in the Scriptures was performed by Elijah's successor, the prophet Elisha. A prominent Israelite woman in Shunem showed Elisha exceptional hospitality. Through the prophet, God rewarded this childless woman and her elderly husband with a son. Some years later, the boy died. Imagine the mother's crushing grief. With her husband's permission, she traveled about 19 miles (30 km) to Elisha at Mount Carmel. The prophet sent his attendant Gehazi back to Shunem ahead of them. Gehazi was not able to bring the dead boy back to life. Then the grieving mother arrived with Elisha.—2 Ki. 4:8-31.

⁸ There by the body at the house

3, 4. How might Martha's conviction have been strengthened by what Jesus had recently done?

5. What contributed to Martha's confidence that Lazarus would be resurrected?

6. Elijah performed what outstanding miracle, and how does that relate to Martha?

7, 8. (a) Relate what Elisha did to relieve a woman's grief. (b) What does Elisha's miracle prove about Jehovah?

in Shunem, Elisha prayed. Miraculously, the dead boy came to life and was reunited with his now elated mother! **(Read 2 Kings 4:32-37.)** She might well have recalled what formerly barren Hannah had prayed when she brought Samuel to serve at the tabernacle: “Jehovah . . . brings down to the Grave, and he raises up.” (1 Sam. 2:6) Clearly, God in a very literal way raised up the boy in Shunem, proving His ability to resurrect.

⁹ But that was not the final startling event involving Elisha. He had served for over 50 years as a prophet, and then he “became ill with the sickness from which he eventually died.” Later, when Elisha’s body had been reduced to mere bones, an enemy band came into the land. Some Israelites were on their way to bury a man. Rushing to escape their enemies, they threw the dead man into the grave or tomb where Elisha’s bones lay. We read: “When the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet.” (2 Ki. 13:14, 20, 21) Think what those resurrection accounts would have meant to Martha! God definitely has power over death. And reflect on what they should mean to you. They certainly should convince you that God’s power is vast, unlimited.

EVENTS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

¹⁰ In the Christian Greek Scriptures, we also read that resurrections took place in the presence of God’s representatives. We can see that from the resurrections Jesus performed when outside of Nain and when in the home of Jai-

rus. The apostle Peter was responsible for another one, that of the Christian woman Dorcas (Tabitha). Peter came to where her body was awaiting burial. While near the corpse, Peter prayed. Then, he said: “Tabitha, rise!” She came to life right away, and Peter “presented her alive” to fellow Christians. That event was so convincing that “many became believers in the Lord.” They could testify both in general about the Lord and specifically about Jehovah’s ability to raise the dead.—Acts 9:36-42.

¹¹ Others became eyewitnesses to another resurrection. One time, the apostle Paul was at a meeting in an upper room in Troas, in what is now northwest Turkey. Paul spoke till midnight. A young man named Eutychus was listening, seated at a window. But he dozed off and fell from the third story to the ground below. Perhaps the physician Luke was the first to reach Eutychus, and Luke made a medical assessment: Eutychus was not merely injured and unconscious—he was dead! Paul came downstairs and embraced the corpse, and then he made the dramatic announcement: “He is alive.” What a profound impact that would have had on eyewitnesses! Knowing the facts and grasping that a resurrection had occurred, they “were comforted beyond measure.”—Acts 20:7-12.

A SOLID HOPE

¹² The accounts mentioned above should give you something that Martha

9. Explain how Elisha was involved in the third resurrection related in the Bible.

10. How did Peter help a Christian sister who had died?

11. What did the physician Luke report happened to a young man, and how did that affect others?

12, 13. In the light of the resurrections discussed, what questions do we need to consider?



Like Martha, you can be confident about the resurrection
(See paragraphs 19, 20)

had. That is, assurance that our God and Life-Giver has the ability to bring a dead person back to life. It is interesting, though, that a faithful servant of God, such as Elijah, Jesus, or Peter, was present on each of those occasions, during the time when Jehovah was performing miracles. What can we say, however, about those who died at other times in history? If in a certain era God was not performing resurrections, could faithful men and women expect that God would raise the dead at a *future* time? Could they feel as did Martha, who said: “I know [my brother] will rise *in the resurrection on the last day*”? Just why could she believe that, and why can you?

¹³ There are actually a number of passages in God’s inspired Word that show that Jehovah’s loyal servants knew that a future time of resurrection was in store. Consider a few.

¹⁴ Think of what God told Abraham to do with Isaac, the long-awaited heir. Jehovah said: “Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac,

14. We can learn what about the resurrection from the account about Abraham?

and . . . offer him up . . . as a burnt offering.” (Gen. 22:2) Imagine the feelings that such a command would stir up. Jehovah had promised that through Abraham’s offspring all nations would be blessed. (Gen. 13:14-16; 18:18; Rom. 4:17, 18) Also, Jehovah said that the blessing would come “through Isaac.” (Gen. 21:12) But how could that occur if Abraham put Isaac to death as a sacrifice? Paul was inspired to explain that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. **(Read Hebrews 11:17-19.)** The Bible does not say that Abraham felt that if he obeyed, in a mere few hours, a day, or a week, Isaac would come back to life. Abraham could not know when his son would be raised to life again. But he trusted that Jehovah would resurrect Isaac.

¹⁵ The patriarch Job similarly looked to a future resurrection. He realized that if a mere tree is cut down, it might sprout again and be like a new plant. Not so with a man. (Job 14:7-12; 19:25-27) If a man dies, he cannot raise himself up from the grave and live again. (2 Sam. 12:23; Ps. 89:48) Of course,

15. What hope did the patriarch Job express?



that did not mean that God could not resurrect a person. In fact, Job believed that Jehovah would set a time to remember him. **(Read Job 14:13-15.)** Job could not know when in the future that time would be. Still, he trusted that the One who created human life in the first place could and would remember him and resurrect him.

¹⁶ Daniel is another faithful man whom we know about from the Hebrew Scriptures. He served God loyally for many decades, and Jehovah supported him. At one point, an angelic messenger urged Daniel, that “very precious man,” to “have peace” and “be strong.”—Dan. 9:22, 23; 10:11, 18, 19.

¹⁷ Daniel was almost 100 years old and nearing the end of his life. He might have been thinking about what the future held for him. Would Daniel get to live again? Absolutely! At the end of the book of Daniel, we read God’s assurance to him: “As for you, go on to the end. You will rest.” (Dan. 12:13) Elderly Daniel knew that the dead are at rest, with

no “planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave.” Daniel would soon be going there. (Eccl. 9:10) But that would not be the end of him. He was promised a future.

¹⁸ The message to the prophet Daniel continued: “You will stand up for your lot at the end of the days.” No date or length of time was given. Daniel was to come to his end in death and then rest. Yet, saying that he would ‘stand up for his lot’ in the future amounted to a clear promise of a resurrection to come—long after he had died. That would be “at the end of the days.” The *Jerusalem Bible* renders the promise to Daniel: “You will rise for your share at the end of time.”

¹⁹ Martha clearly had reason to be confident that her faithful brother, Lazarus, would “rise in the resurrection on the last day.” The promise given to Daniel, as well as the certainty reflected in Martha’s reply to Jesus, should reassure Christians today. There will be a resurrection.

²⁰ We have seen that actual events in the past prove that a resurrection is possible—the dead can be brought back to life. And men and women who served God anticipated that a resurrection would occur sometime in the future. Is there any indication, however, that a resurrection could take place long after it was promised? If so, that would give us added reason to look forward, as Martha did, to a time of resurrection. Still, when would that happen? Let us address these aspects in the following article.

16. An angel gave the prophet Daniel what encouragement?

17, 18. Daniel was given what promise about his future?

19, 20. (a) How does what we have considered so far relate to Martha’s statement to Jesus? (b) What will we yet consider?



“I Have Hope Toward God”

“The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”—1 COR. 15:45.

SONGS: 151, 147

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How does Psalm 118 bear out that a resurrection can occur long after being foretold?

How did Psalm 16:10 find fulfillment?

What does the Bible indicate would happen regarding the resurrection during Christ’s presence?

IF YOU were asked, ‘What are the key teachings of your faith?’ what would you say? Surely you would stress that Jehovah is the Creator and Life-Giver. You would likely mention your belief in Jesus Christ, who died as a ransom. And you would happily add that an earthly paradise is ahead, where God’s people will live forever. But would you mention the resurrection as one of your most cherished beliefs?

² We have good reasons to include the resurrection as a key teaching even if we personally hope to survive the great tribulation and live on earth forever. The apostle Paul showed why the resurrection is central to our faith: “If, indeed, there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised up.” Had Christ not been resurrected, he would not be our ruling King, and our teaching about Christ’s rule would be in vain. **(Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.)** However, we know that Jesus was resurrected. In holding that conviction, we differ from the Jewish Sadducees, who strongly denied that the dead are raised. Even in the face of mockery, we hold firm to our belief in the resurrection.—Mark 12:18; Acts 4: 2, 3; 17:32; 23:6-8.

1-3. (a) What should we include among our core beliefs? (b) Why is the resurrection so important? (See opening picture.)

³ When Paul wrote of “the primary doctrine about the Christ,” he included “the teaching on . . . the resurrection of the dead.” (Heb. 6:1, 2) And Paul stressed the resurrection as something he had faith in. (Acts 24:10, 15, 24, 25) But the fact that the resurrection is included as a primary doctrine, one of the “elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God,” does not mean that it is a simplistic teaching. (Heb. 5:12) Why not?

⁴ As people begin to study the Bible, most read accounts of past resurrections, such as the raising of Lazarus. And they learn that Abraham, Job, and Daniel were confident that *in the future* the dead would live again. Still, how would you respond if asked for evidence that resurrection promises are valid many years or even centuries after they were made? And does the Bible really indicate *when* the resurrection will take place? Those aspects have a bearing on our faith, so let us see what we find in the Scriptures.

RESURRECTION AFTER CENTURIES

⁵ It is one thing to imagine bringing to life a person who recently died. (John 11:11; Acts 20:9, 10) Yet, what of a promise that a resurrection will occur years, even centuries, in the future? Could you rely on such a long-term promise, whether the promise was about someone who just died or one who had been dead for a long time? Actually, a resurrection that was promised centuries in advance did take place, and you put faith in it. How so? And how does that relate to what you

can expect regarding a future resurrection?

⁶ With regard to a resurrection being foretold long in advance, consider Psalm 118, which some feel that David composed. It includes the plea: “Jehovah, save us, please, we beg! . . . Blessed is the one who comes in the name of Jehovah.” You likely recall that people quoted this Messianic passage when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Nisan 9, shortly before his death. (Ps. 118:25, 26; Matt. 21:7-9) But how did Psalm 118 point to a resurrection that would occur many years in the future? Note what else that prophetic psalm said: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”—Ps. 118:22.

⁷ “The builders,” the Jewish leaders, rejected the Messiah. Their rejection was far more than just turning their backs on Jesus or refusing to accept him as the Christ. Many Jews rejected him to the point of clamoring for his death. (Luke 23:18-23) Yes, they contributed to Jesus’ being killed.

⁸ If Jesus was rejected and killed, how could he become “the chief cornerstone”? That could come about only by his being resurrected to life again. Jesus himself made such a connection. He gave a parable in which cultivators mistreated those whom the owner sent to them, just as the Israelites mistreated the prophets whom God sent to them. Finally, in the illustration, the owner sent his beloved son and heir. Was the son accepted? Far from it. The

4. What questions might arise regarding the resurrection?

5. What aspect of the resurrection will we first address?

6. How was Jesus involved in the fulfillment of Psalm 118?

7. To what extent did the Jews reject Jesus?

8. How could Jesus become “the chief cornerstone”?

cultivators went to the extreme of putting him to death. Jesus followed that illustration with a reference to the prophetic statement at Psalm 118:22, which he quoted. (Luke 20:9-17) The apostle Peter made a similar connection when speaking to Jewish “rulers, elders, and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem.” He spoke of “Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom *you executed* on a stake but whom *God raised up from the dead.*” Thereupon, Peter clearly stated: “This is ‘the stone that was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the chief cornerstone.’”—Acts 3:15; 4:5-11; 1 Pet. 2:5-7.

⁹ Yes, hundreds of years in advance, the prophetic statement at Psalm 118:22 indicated that a resurrection would occur. The Messiah would be rejected and die, but he would be raised to life again to be the chief cornerstone. This resurrected Son thus became the only one whose name was “given among men by which we must get saved.”—Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:20.

¹⁰ Consider another verse that pointed forward to a resurrection. It was written over a thousand years in advance, a fact that should reinforce your confidence that a resurrection can occur long after it was foretold or promised. In Psalm 16, which is attributed to David, we read: “You will not leave me in the Grave. You will not allow your loyal one to see the pit.” (Ps. 16:10) David was not saying that *he* would never die or be in the common grave of mankind. God’s Word is plain that David did grow old. After he

died, he “was laid to rest with his forefathers and was buried in the City of David.” (1 Ki. 2:1, 10) What, then, is Psalm 16:10 saying?

¹¹ We are not left in the dark. Over a millennium after that psalm was written and weeks after Jesus died and was raised, Peter spoke to thousands of Jews and proselytes about Psalm 16:10. **(Read Acts 2:29-32.)** He mentioned that David had indeed died and been buried. Those listening to Peter knew that. And the record does not say that any of them disputed Peter’s statement that David “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection” of the coming Messiah.

¹² Peter reinforced his point by quoting David’s statement at Psalm 110:1. **(Read Acts 2:33-36.)** Peter’s reasoning in line with the Scriptures helped to convince the large crowd that Jesus was “both Lord and Christ.” More to the point, the people acknowledged that Psalm 16:10 was fulfilled when Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Later, the apostle Paul drew on the same solid reasoning when speaking to Jews in the city of Antioch in Pisidia. His argument impressed them, and they wanted to hear more. **(Read Acts 13:32-37, 42.)** It should also impress us that those Bible prophecies about a coming resurrection were trustworthy, even though centuries had passed since that miracle was foretold.

RESURRECTION—WHEN?

¹³ We should be encouraged that a res-

9. Psalm 118:22 pointed to what outstanding event?

10. (a) What did Psalm 16:10 foretell? (b) Why can we be sure that Psalm 16:10 was not fulfilled in David?

11. When did Peter comment on Psalm 16:10?

12. In what way was Psalm 16:10 fulfilled, confirming what about the promise of the resurrection?

13. What question about the resurrection might arise?



"The builders rejected" the Messiah
(See paragraph 7)



Jesus was resurrected to be
"the chief cornerstone"
(See paragraphs 8, 9)

urrection can occur many centuries after being promised. Still, someone might wonder: 'Does that mean that I may have to wait a long time to see my loved one? When will the resurrection that I am hoping for occur?' Well, Jesus did tell his apostles that there were things they did not and could not know. There are details about "the times or seasons that the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction." (Acts 1:6, 7; John 16:12) However, this does not mean that we have no information about the timing of the resurrection.

¹⁴ As a basis for understanding that, recall what resurrections the Bible foretells. The most important one, of course, is that of Jesus. Had he not been raised, none of us would have any prospect of seeing our dead loved ones again. Those who were raised before Jesus, such as by Elijah and Elisha, did not live on endlessly. They died again and saw corruption in the grave. In contrast, Jesus "has been raised up from the dead, [and] dies no more; death is no longer master over him." In heaven, he lives "forever and ever," never seeing corruption. —Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:5, 18; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 3:18.

14. How did the resurrection of Jesus differ from earlier ones?

¹⁵ The resurrection of Jesus was the first of that sort, and it undoubtedly is first in importance. (Acts 26:23) He is not, though, the only one promised to be resurrected to heaven as a spirit creature. Jesus assured his faithful apostles that they would rule with him in heaven. (Luke 22:28-30) For them to be thus rewarded, they would first have to die. Afterward, like Christ, they could be resurrected with a spirit body. Paul wrote that "Christ has been raised from the dead, the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep in death." Paul went on to indicate that there would be others raised to heavenly life, adding: "Each one in his own proper order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ *during his presence*."—1 Cor. 15:20, 23.

¹⁶ That gives us a general indication of the timing of the heavenly resurrection. It would occur "*during his presence*." Jehovah's Witnesses have long established Scripturally that since 1914 we have been living during Jesus' promised "*presence*." It is still continuing, and the end of this wicked system of things is now very near.

15. Why is it significant that Jesus is "the firstfruits"?

16. What indication do we have about the timing of the heavenly resurrection?

¹⁷ The Bible adds details about the heavenly resurrection: “We do not want you to be ignorant about those who are sleeping in death . . . For if we have faith that Jesus died and rose again, so too God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in death . . . We the living who survive to *the presence* of the Lord will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep in death; because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, . . . and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward we the living who are surviving will, together with them, be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.”—1 Thess. 4:13-17.

¹⁸ The first resurrection would take place sometime after “the presence” of Christ began. Anointed ones who are alive during the great tribulation will be “caught away in clouds.” (Matt. 24:31) Those “caught away” will not “fall asleep in death” in the sense of having a long sleep in death. They “will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, during the last trumpet.”—1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

¹⁹ Today, most faithful Christians are not anointed and called to serve in heaven with Christ. Rather, they await the end of this wicked system of things during “Jehovah’s day.” No one can know the exact timing of that end, but evidence shows that it is close. (1 Thess. 5:1-3) Thereafter, a different type of resurrection will take place, a resurrection to life in an earthly paradise. Those raised will have the prospect of growing to

human perfection and never having to die again. That certainly will be “a better resurrection” than that of those in the past when “women received their dead by resurrection” only for them to die again sometime later.—Heb. 11:35.

²⁰ Speaking of the heavenly resurrection, the Bible says that those who will experience that will be raised “each one in his own proper order.” (1 Cor. 15:23) We can trust that the earthly resurrection will likewise proceed in an orderly manner. That is an intriguing prospect. Will those who died recently be raised near the start of Christ’s Thousand Year Reign and be welcomed by loved ones who know them? Will faithful men of old with leadership abilities come back early to help organize God’s people in the new world? What about people who never served Jehovah? When and where will they be raised? Many questions could be asked. But, frankly, is there any real need to ponder those issues now? Is it not better just to wait and see? We can trust that it will be thrilling to observe personally how Jehovah handles those matters.

²¹ In the meantime, we should bolster our faith in Jehovah, who through Jesus assured us that the dead in God’s memory will rise. (John 5:28, 29; 11:23) Proving that Jehovah is capable of resurrecting the dead, Jesus once said that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “are all living to him.” (Luke 20:37, 38) Meanwhile, we have ample reason to say, as did Paul: “I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection.”—Acts 24:15.

17, 18. What will happen to some anointed ones during Christ’s presence?

19. What “better resurrection” is yet ahead?

20. Why can we trust that the coming resurrection will be orderly?

21. What is your hope about the resurrection?

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

In helping their children spiritually, why should immigrant parents evaluate the matter of language?

The children will likely learn the local language at school and in their environment. It can be useful for a child to know more than one language. Parents should consider where the youths will best grasp the truth and progress spiritually, whether in association with a congregation that uses the local language or with one that uses the immigrant's language. Christian parents put their children's spiritual well-being ahead of personal preferences.—w17.05, pp. 9-11.

When Jesus asked Peter: "Do you love me more than these?" to what did "these" refer? (John 21:15)

It seems that Jesus was referring to the fish lying nearby and/or the fishing business. After Jesus' death, Peter returned to his former occupation—fishing. Christians should weigh the place that secular work has in their heart.—w17.05, pp. 22-23.

Why did Abraham ask his wife to say that she was his sister? (Gen. 12:10-13)

In fact, Sarah was Abraham's half sister. If Sarah had said that she was his wife, Abraham might have been killed and thus

could not have produced the offspring whom God had promised him.—wp17.3, pp. 14-15.

What technique did Elias Hutter introduce to help those wanting to learn Hebrew?

He wanted to enable students to distinguish between the root of Hebrew words in the Bible and any associated prefixes or suffixes. To that end, he printed the root in solid letters but the prefixes or suffixes in outline form. A similar approach is found in footnotes in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.—wp17.4, pp. 11-12.

What factors should affect a Christian's view of keeping a firearm for protection against other humans?

Some are: God views life as sacred. Jesus did not urge his followers to get swords for protection. (Luke 22:36, 38) We are to beat our swords into plowshares. Life is more valuable than material things. We respect the conscience of others, and we want to be exemplary. (2 Cor. 4:2)—w17.07, pp. 31-32.

Why do Matthew's and Luke's accounts differ as to Jesus' early life?

Matthew focuses on Joseph, such as his reaction to Mary's

pregnancy and the divine messages to flee to Egypt and later return. Luke is more focused on Mary; for example, her visit to Elizabeth and her reaction when the boy Jesus remained at the temple.—w17.08, p. 32.

What are some things the Bible has had to endure?

The meaning of words and expressions used in the Bible have changed over time. Political developments have affected the common language. There has been opposition to the translation of the Bible into common languages.—w17.09, pp. 19-21.

Do we have a guardian angel?

No. Jesus spoke of his disciples' angels looking upon the face of God. (Matt. 18:10) He was saying that angels are interested in his disciples, not that angels are miraculously protecting each one of them.—wp17.5, p. 5.

What is the highest form of love?

When it is based on right principles, *a-ga'pe* is the highest form of love. It can include affection and warmth. But it reflects high principles, such as unselfish actions for the good of others.—w17.10, p. 7.

In ancient Israel, was the line leading to the Messiah tied to the right of the firstborn?

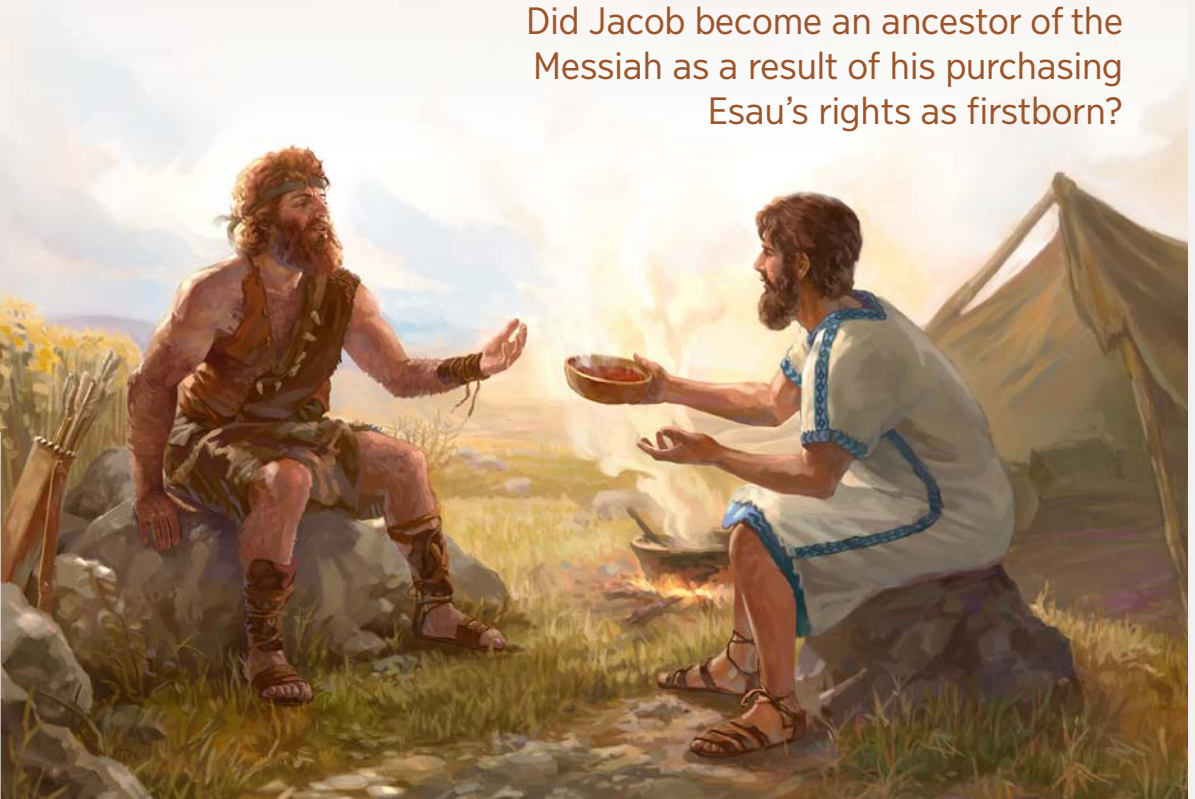
■ We have at times made comments to that effect. That seemed to agree with what we read at Hebrews 12:16. That verse says that Esau did “*not appreciate sacred things*” and “*gave up [to Jacob the] rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal.*” This appeared to suggest that when Jacob gained the “rights as firstborn,” he also came in line to be an ancestor to the Messiah.—Matt. 1:2, 16; Luke 3:23, 34.

However, a review of Bible accounts shows that a man did not need to be a first-

born son to be an ancestor of the Messiah. Consider some of the evidence:

Of the sons of Jacob (Israel), his firstborn by Leah was Reuben. Later, Jacob’s first son by his favored wife, Rachel, was Joseph. When Reuben became guilty of misconduct, the right of firstborn passed to Joseph. (Gen. 29:31-35; 30:22-25; 35:22-26; 49:22-26; 1 Chron. 5:1, 2) Still, the Messianic line came down through neither Reuben nor Joseph. It was through Judah, Jacob’s fourth son by Leah.—Gen. 49:10.

Did Jacob become an ancestor of the Messiah as a result of his purchasing Esau’s rights as firstborn?



Luke 3:32 lists five later links in the line leading to the Messiah. Each man seems to have been a firstborn. Thus Boaz fathered Obed, whose son was Jesse.—Ruth 4:17, 20-22; 1 Chron. 2:10-12.

However, Jesse's son David was not a firstborn. He was the last of eight sons. Yet the line of the Messiah was through David. (1 Sam. 16:10, 11; 17:12; Matt. 1:5, 6) Similarly, the next link was Solomon, though he was not David's firstborn.—2 Sam. 3:2-5.

This is not to say that being firstborn was of no importance. The firstborn son held an honored position and often became the next head of the household. He was also the son who inherited a double portion of property.—Gen. 43:33; Deut. 21:17; Josh. 17:1.

But the right of firstborn could be transferred. Abraham dismissed Ishmael, passing the firstborn's right to Isaac. (Gen. 21:14-21; 22:2) And as noted, the firstborn's right was transferred from Reuben to Joseph.

Now let us return to Hebrews 12:16, which reads: "Watch that among you there is no one who is sexually immoral nor anyone who does not appreciate sacred things, like Esau, who gave up his rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal." What point was being made?

The apostle Paul was not here discussing the ancestry of the Messiah. He had just urged Christians to 'make straight paths for their feet.' Thus they would not 'fail to obtain the undeserved kindness of God,' which sadly could happen if they engaged in sexual immorality. (Heb. 12:12-16) If they did that, they would be like Esau. He failed to "appreciate sacred things," and he literally gave in to what was profane.

Esau lived in patriarchal times, and he may even occasionally have had the privi-

lege of offering sacrifices. (Gen. 8:20, 21; 12:7, 8; Job 1:4, 5) But with his fleshly bent of mind, Esau gave away all such privileges for a bowl of stew. He may have wanted to avoid the suffering foretold to come on Abraham's offspring. (Gen. 15:13) Esau also showed himself inclined toward the profane, lacking appreciation for sacred things, by marrying two pagan women, to his parents' grief. (Gen. 26:34, 35) What a contrast he was to Jacob, who made sure to marry a worshipper of the true God!—Gen. 28:6, 7; 29:10-12, 18.

Consequently, what can we conclude about the line of descent leading to Jesus, the Messiah? Sometimes that line passed to and through the firstborn son—but not always. The Jews recognized this and accepted it, as when they admitted that the Christ was to descend through David, Jesse's last son.—Matt. 22:42.



Might married Christians view the IUD (intrauterine device) as a form of birth control that is compatible with the Scriptures?

■ On this matter, each Christian couple can evaluate the relevant facts and Bible principles. Then they should make a decision in such a way as to maintain a good conscience before God.

Back when there were just two humans (and after the Flood, eight), Jehovah commanded: “Be fruitful and become many.” (Gen. 1:28; 9:1) The Bible does not say that such a command applies to Christians. Hence, it is up to each couple to determine whether to use some form of birth control to limit the size of the family or to determine when to have children. What factors merit their consideration?

Christians ought to weigh any birth control method in the light of Bible principles. Thus, Christians reject abortion as a means

of birth control. Voluntary abortion conflicts with what the Bible says about respect for life. Christians would not choose to terminate a life that in time would normally result in the birth of another human being. (Ex. 20:13; 21:22, 23; Ps. 139:16; Jer. 1:5) What about the use of an IUD?

This matter was addressed in *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1979, pages 30-31. Most IUDs that were then widely available were inert plastic objects inserted in the uterus (womb) to prevent pregnancies. The article noted that it was not fully known how such IUDs functioned. Many specialists said that inert IUDs caused a reaction in the uterus that interfered with sperm reaching and fertilizing a woman’s eggs. If fertilization did not occur, a new life did not begin.



Yet, some evidence suggested that an egg occasionally could get fertilized. The newly fertilized egg might grow in a Fallopian tube (an ectopic pregnancy) or might travel into the womb. In the latter case, the presence of the IUD could interfere with the fertilized egg's implanting in the lining of the womb and progressing as a normal pregnancy would. Ending the developing life would be like an abortion. That article concluded: "The sincere Christian concerned about the propriety of using an IUD should seriously weigh such information in the light of a Bible-based respect for the sanctity of life."—Ps. 36:9.

Have there been significant scientific or medical developments since that article was published in 1979?

Two types of IUDs have come to the fore. One type of IUD that incorporates copper became widely available in the United States by 1988. In addition, IUDs that release a hormone came on the market in 2001. What is understood about how these two types function?

Copper: As mentioned, IUDs seem to make it difficult for sperm to survive passing through the uterus to reach an egg. In addition to that, with copper-releasing IUDs, the copper appears to be toxic to sperm, acting as a spermicide.* Moreover, copper-containing IUDs are said to alter the lining of the uterus.

Hormone: There are different types of IUDs that contain a hormone similar to what is often found in birth control pills. These IUDs release the hormone in the uterus. It appears that such IUDs suppress

ovulation in some women. Of course, if no egg is released, fertilization cannot occur. Beyond that mechanism, it is held that the hormone in these IUDs thins the lining of the uterus.* It also thickens the mucus at the cervix, thus creating a barrier to sperm moving from the vagina into the uterus. These effects are in addition to that produced by inert IUDs.

As noted, both types of IUDs appear to alter the lining of the uterus. Yet, what if ovulation does occur and an egg is fertilized? It might enter the uterus but fail to implant in the less receptive lining. That would end the pregnancy at an early stage. However, instances of such "failed" implantations are thought to be rare, even as seems to be the case occasionally with oral contraceptive pills.

Hence, no one can say with certainty that IUDs that include copper or a hormone never allow for the fertilization of an egg. However, scientific evidence suggests that because of a number of mechanisms mentioned above, pregnancy rarely occurs with the use of such IUDs.

A Christian couple considering the use of an IUD might discuss with a qualified medical professional the IUD products available locally as well as possible benefits and risks to the wife. The couple should not expect or allow a third party, not even a physician, to determine what they will do. (Rom. 14:12; Gal. 6:4, 5) It is a private decision. They should make their decision as a couple interested in pleasing God and maintaining a clean conscience before him.—Compare 1 Timothy 1:18, 19; 2 Timothy 1:3.

* A guide from England's National Health Service reports: "IUDs with more copper are **more than 99% effective**. This means that fewer than one in 100 women who use an IUD will get pregnant in one year. IUDs with less copper will be less effective."

* Because they thin the lining of the uterus, hormone-containing IUDs are sometimes prescribed for married or unmarried women to control very heavy menstruation.



PARENTS

Help Your Children Become “Wise for Salvation”

“From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation.”—2 TIM. 3:15.

SONGS: 141, 134

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO . . .

know the holy writings?

be persuaded to believe?

become wise for salvation?

THOUSANDS of Bible students make their dedication to Jehovah and get baptized. Many are young people who have been raised in the truth and who have chosen the best way of life. (Ps. 1:1-3) If you are a Christian parent, you no doubt look forward to the day when your son or daughter will get baptized.—Compare 3 John 4.

² Still, you might have concerns. Perhaps you have seen some youths get baptized but later question the wisdom of living by God’s standards. A number have even left the way of the truth. Hence, you might worry that your child will start out on the Christian course but then change and lose that original love of the truth. He or she might become like those in the first-century congregation in Ephesus of whom Jesus said: “You have left the love you had at first.” (Rev. 2:4) How can you try to avoid such an outcome and

1, 2. Why might some parents have concerns when their children want to take the steps of dedication and baptism?

help your child to “grow to salvation”? (1 Pet. 2:2) In answer, let us consider the example of Timothy.

“YOU HAVE KNOWN THE HOLY WRITINGS”

³ It was likely in 47 C.E., during the apostle Paul’s first visit to Lystra, that Timothy was introduced to Christianity. Though at the time Timothy was likely a teenager, he must have applied himself well. Two years later he became Paul’s traveling companion. Some 16 years after that, Paul wrote to Timothy: “Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from whom you learned them and that from infancy you have known the holy writings [the Hebrew Scriptures], which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15) Note that Paul mentions (1) *knowing* the holy writings, (2) *being persuaded to believe* the things learned, and (3) *becoming wise for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus.

⁴ As a Christian parent, you want your child to know the holy writings, which today include the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the Christian Greek Scriptures. Depending on their ability, even very young children can gain a basic education about the people and events of the Bible. Jehovah’s organization has provided a number of tools that parents can use to help their children. Can you think of some that are available in your

language? Remember, knowledge of the Scriptures is the foundation on which a strong relationship with Jehovah is built.

“PERSUADED TO BELIEVE”

⁵ Knowledge of the holy writings is important. However, more is involved in imparting spiritual education to children than simply teaching them about the people and events of the Bible. Timothy was also “persuaded to believe.” In the original language, that phrase means “to be assured of” or “to be convinced and certain of the truth of something.” Timothy knew the Hebrew Scriptures from infancy. But at some point he was convinced by compelling evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Put another way, his knowledge was reinforced with conviction. In fact, Timothy’s conviction about the good news was so strong that he became a baptized disciple and joined Paul in the missionary work.

⁶ How can you help build conviction in your children so that they are persuaded to believe, as Timothy was? First, be patient. Conviction does not come about overnight; nor does it pass from you to your offspring simply because *you* have been persuaded to believe. Each child needs to use his or her own “power of reason” to develop conviction about Bible truth. **(Read Romans 12:1.)** You as a parent play an important role in that process, especially when your child asks questions. Consider an example.

3. (a) Under what circumstances did Timothy become a Christian, and how did he respond to Christian teachings? (b) Paul admonished Timothy about what three aspects of learning?

4. What tools have you found to be effective when you teach your young children? (See opening picture.)

5. (a) What does “persuaded to believe” mean? (b) How do we know that Timothy was persuaded to believe the good news about Jesus?

6. How can you help your children to be persuaded to believe what they learn from God’s Word?

⁷ Thomas, the father of an 11-year-old girl, relates: “My daughter might ask, ‘Could Jehovah have used evolution to develop life on earth?’ or, ‘Why don’t we get involved in the community—with elections, for example—to try to improve things?’ Sometimes I have to bite my tongue so as not to give a dogmatic answer. After all, conviction isn’t the result of one large chunk of truth. It comes from many small pieces of evidence.”

⁸ As Thomas knows, teaching takes patience. Actually, patience is important for all Christians. (Col. 3:12) Thomas realizes that there may be a need for many discussions over a period of time. He needs to reason on the Scriptures so that his daughter develops conviction about what she learns. “Especially on important points,” says Thomas, “my wife and I want to know if our daughter really believes what she is learning and if it makes sense to her. If she has questions, that’s good. Frankly, I would worry if she accepted something without asking questions.”

⁹ With patient teaching from their parents, children will be able gradually to begin to grasp “the breadth and length and height and depth” of faith. (Eph. 3:18) We can look for what is appropriate to their age and ability. As they become convinced of what they learn, they will increasingly be able to defend their beliefs before others, including schoolmates. (1 Pet. 3:15) For example, can your children explain from the Bible what happens at death? Does the Bible’s

explanation make sense to them?* Yes, inculcating God’s Word in your child will require patience, but it is worth the effort.—Deut. 6:6, 7.

¹⁰ Of course, your example is also important when it comes to building conviction. Stephanie, the mother of three daughters, says: “Ever since my children were very young, I have had to ask myself, ‘Do I talk to my children about why I am convinced of Jehovah’s existence, his love, and the rightness of his ways? Can my children clearly see that I really love Jehovah?’ I can’t expect my children to be persuaded unless I am.”

“WISE FOR SALVATION”

¹¹ As we have seen, Timothy had (1) knowledge of the Scriptures and (2) conviction about his beliefs. But what did Paul mean by saying that the holy writings could make Timothy “wise for salvation”?

¹² *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, explains that, in the Bible, wisdom includes “the ability to use knowledge and understanding successfully to solve problems, avoid or avert dangers, attain certain goals, or counsel others in doing so. It is the opposite of foolishness.” The Bible says that “foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.” (Prov. 22:15, fn.) Logically, then, wisdom—the oppo-

* The “What Does the Bible Really Teach?” study guides are excellent tools to help both young ones and adults to understand and explain Bible truths. They can be found on jw.org in many languages. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE STUDY TOOLS.

7, 8. (a) How does one Christian father show patience in teaching his daughter? (b) How have you found the need for similar patience?
9. How can you inculcate God’s Word in your children?

10. What should be an important part of your teaching?

11, 12. What is wisdom, and why can we conclude that it is not measured solely by a person’s age?



Why is a parent's continued effort important?
(See paragraphs 14-18)

site of foolishness—would be one evidence of maturity. Spiritual maturity is not determined primarily by age but by a person's healthy fear of Jehovah and readiness to obey his commands.—**Read Psalm 111:10.**

¹³ Young ones who are reasonably mature spiritually are not “tossed about as by waves and carried here and there” by their desires or by pressure from their peers. (Eph. 4:14) Rather, they are making progress in having “their powers of discernment trained to distinguish both right and wrong.” (Heb. 5:14) They demonstrate that they are progressing toward maturity by making wise decisions—even when their parents or other adults are not watching. (Phil. 2:12) That kind of wisdom is necessary for salvation. (**Read Proverbs 24:14.**) How can you help your children to acquire it? First of all, make sure that you clearly

13. How can a young person demonstrate that he or she is wise for salvation?

state your Bible-based values to your children. By your words and by your example, let them know that the values found in God's Word are also your values.—Rom. 2:21-23.

¹⁴ However, more is involved than simply *telling* your children what is right and what is wrong. You would also do well to help them reason on such questions as: ‘Why does the Bible forbid things that can be appealing to the flesh? What convinces me that Bible standards are always for my own good?’—Isa. 48:17, 18.

¹⁵ A child who expresses interest in getting baptized should be helped to reason on yet another matter—how he or she feels about the responsibilities that come with being a Christian. What are the benefits? What are the costs? How do the benefits greatly outweigh the costs? (Mark 10:29, 30) Those are

14, 15. (a) A young person contemplating baptism should consider what weighty issues? (b) How can you help your children ponder blessings that come from obeying God's laws?

issues that one is likely to face after baptism. Therefore, it is crucial to think these matters through before taking that serious step. When children are helped to consider deeply the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience, they are more likely to develop a personal conviction. Which one? That Bible standards are *always* in their best interests.—Deut. 30:19, 20.

WHEN A BAPTIZED YOUTH STRUGGLES

¹⁶ What, though, if your son or daughter begins to express doubts at some point after baptism? For example, a baptized adolescent may seem attracted to the things of the world or may begin to question the wisdom of living by Bible principles. (Ps. 73:1-3, 12, 13) As a parent, realize that how you handle such questioning on the part of your son or daughter may influence whether your child will choose to draw closer to your faith or he will draw away from it. Be determined not to declare war with your child over this issue, whether he is still quite young or he is now an adolescent. Your goal should be to provide loving support and help in a winning way.

¹⁷ Of course, a youth who is baptized has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah. That dedication is a promise to love God and to put his will above everything else. (**Read Mark 12:30.**) Jehovah does not take that promise lightly, and it should not be taken lightly by anyone who has made it. (Eccl. 5:4, 5) At an appropriate time and in a kind manner, remind your child of those facts. Before

16. What should parents consider if a child who is already baptized begins to waver in faith?

17, 18. If a young person has doubts, how can parents provide assistance?

doing that, however, make good use of material that Jehovah's organization has provided for parents. Your doing so may lay the groundwork for stressing both the seriousness and the blessings of being dedicated to Jehovah and of being a baptized Christian.

¹⁸ For example, helpful advice can be found in the appendix entitled "Questions Parents Ask," at the back of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1. It says: "Don't hastily conclude that your teen has *rejected your faith*. In many cases, there is an underlying issue." It could be peer pressure. Other possible causes may be loneliness or the feeling that other Christian youths are doing better spiritually. "Significantly," the appendix continues, "issues such as these have little to do with the *tenets* of your faith. They have more to do with circumstances that make practicing faith a challenge—at least for now." The appendix then provides several suggestions about how a Christian parent might help a youth whose conviction is wavering.

¹⁹ As a parent, you have the weighty responsibility—and privilege—to bring up your children "in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) As we have seen, that requires not only teaching them what the Bible says but also helping them to develop conviction about what they learn. Yes, they need a conviction that is so strong that it moves them to dedicate themselves to Jehovah and to serve him wholeheartedly. May Jehovah's Word, his spirit, and your efforts as a parent help your children to become "wise for salvation."

19. How can parents help their children to become "wise for salvation"?



YOUNG ONES

“Keep Working Out Your Own Salvation”

“Just as you have always obeyed, . . . keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”—PHIL. 2:12.

EACH year thousands of Bible students get baptized. Many are young people—teenagers and preteens. They may have been raised in the truth. Are you one of them? If so, you are to be commended. Baptism is a requirement for Christians, and it is an essential step to gaining salvation.—Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Pet. 3:21.

² Although baptism opens the door to many blessings, it also involves responsibility. In what way? On the day of your baptism, you answered yes to the question, “On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?” Your baptism symbolizes your dedication. It is a solemn promise that you made to Jehovah to love him and to put his will above everything else. That is a serious commitment. Should you regret making it? No, you definitely should not. Putting

1. Why is baptism such an important step? (See opening picture.)
2. Why is the step of dedication not to be feared or avoided?

SONGS: 133, 135

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Although baptism is a serious step, why should it not be feared or avoided?

How can you work out your own salvation?

Why do you treasure your dedication to Jehovah?

yourself in Jehovah's hands is *never* a wrong move. Consider the alternative! A person who lives apart from Jehovah is under Satan's rule. The Devil has no interest in your salvation. In fact, he would be happy if you lost out on everlasting life by siding with him in rejecting Jehovah's sovereignty.

³ In contrast to supporting Satan, consider the blessings you have as a dedicated and baptized Christian. Now that you have given your life to Jehovah, you can say with greater confidence than ever before: "Jehovah is on my side; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Ps. 118:6) You could have no greater privilege in life than being on God's side and having him approve of you.

A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

⁴ As a baptized Christian, your relationship with Jehovah is not a 'family plan,' such as some people have for cellular telephone service. On the contrary, you are now responsible for your own salvation, even if you still live under your parents' roof. Why is it important to remember that? Because you cannot always predict what challenges you will face in the future. For example, if you were baptized as a preteen, you likely will face new feelings and pressures as you enter and pass through adolescence. One teenage girl put it this way: "A child usually won't resent being one of Jehovah's Witnesses just because of not having a piece of birthday cake at school. But in a few years when the urge to have

sex becomes stronger, he or she needs to be thoroughly convinced that obeying Jehovah's laws is always the best choice."

⁵ Of course, being confronted with new challenges is not unique to young people. Even those who got baptized as adults face many unanticipated tests of faith. Such tests may have to do with marriage, health issues, or employment. Really, everyone, regardless of his or her age, will encounter situations that require faithfulness to Jehovah.—Jas. 1: 12-14.

⁶ To help you stay faithful in any circumstance, never forget that your promise to Jehovah is unconditional. That means that you have told the Sovereign of the universe that you will continue to serve him even if your friends or parents stop doing so. (Ps. 27:10) In all situations, you can summon the strength—with Jehovah's help—to live up to your dedication.—**Read Philippians 4:11-13.**

⁷ Jehovah wants you to be his friend. But maintaining that friendship and working out your own salvation will require effort. In fact, Philippians 2:12 says: "Keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Those words indicate that you need to consider how you will maintain your friendship with Jehovah and remain faithful to him despite any challenges. You cannot become overconfident. Even some of God's longtime servants have gone astray. Hence, what steps can you take to work out your own salvation?

3. What blessings come from dedicating yourself to Jehovah?

4, 5. (a) In what way is dedication a personal responsibility? (b) What challenges are not unique to young people?

6. (a) In what way is your dedication to Jehovah unconditional? (b) What can you learn from Philippians 4:11-13?

7. What does it mean to work out your own salvation "with fear and trembling"?



How well are you communicating with Jehovah?
(See paragraphs 8-11)

BIBLE STUDY IS IMPORTANT

⁸ Friendship with Jehovah involves two-way communication—listening and talking. Personal study of the Bible is the prime way we *listen* to Jehovah. That includes taking in knowledge by reading and meditating on God’s Word and Bible-based publications. As you do that, remember that study of the Bible is not a mere academic exercise. It should not be as if you were memorizing facts just to pass a school exam. Fruitful study is more like an expedition on which you can explore and discover new aspects of Jehovah’s personality. This will help you to draw close to God, and then he will draw close to you.—Jas. 4:8.

⁹ Jehovah’s organization has provided a number of tools to help you put together an effective study program. For example, “Bible Study Activities” found on the “Teenagers” section of jw.org can help you to learn practical lessons from Bible events. Also on jw.org, the study

guides “What Does the Bible Really Teach?” can help you to build your conviction about your beliefs. Those study guides can help you to learn how to explain your beliefs to others. Other ideas for study can be found in the article “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Make Bible Reading Enjoyable?” in the April 2009 issue of *Awake!* Study and meditation play an important role in working out your own salvation.—**Read Psalm 119:105.**

PRAYER IS VITAL

¹⁰ While personal study is one way we listen to Jehovah, prayer is a way in which we speak to him. A Christian should not view prayer as a meaningless ritual; nor is it a ‘good luck charm’ to increase the chances of success at some endeavor. Rather, prayer is real communication with our Creator. Jehovah *wants* to hear from you. **(Read Philippians 4:6.)** When you experience any kind of anxiety, the Bible’s wise advice is to “throw your burden on

8. What does personal study include, and why is it important?

9. What tools have helped you in your personal study?

10. Why is prayer vital for a baptized Christian?

Jehovah.” (Ps. 55:22) Do you really believe that? There are millions of brothers and sisters who can assure you that it has helped them. It can help you too!

¹¹ Prayer offers you the opportunity to do more than simply ask Jehovah for help. The Bible says: “Show yourselves thankful.” (Col. 3:15) Sometimes we can become so consumed by our problems that we overlook the many blessings we have. Why not determine that each day you will think of at least three things for which you can be thankful? Then thank Jehovah in prayer for those blessings. A teenager named Abigail, who got baptized at age 12, says: “I feel that Jehovah deserves our thanks more than anyone else in the universe. We should thank him at every opportunity for the gifts he has given us. I once heard an excellent reminder: If we woke up tomorrow with only the things we thanked Jehovah for today, what would we end up with?”*

THE VALUE OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

¹² Ancient King David, who had been delivered from many grievous trials, expressed these words in song: “Taste and see that Jehovah is good; happy is the man who takes refuge in him.” (Ps. 34:8) That verse highlights the value of personal experience. When you read the Bible and our publications and when you attend Christian meetings, you hear encouraging experiences of how God has

* For more suggestions, see “Young People Ask—Why Should I Pray?” and its accompanying worksheet on jw.org.

11. Why should you always give thanks to Jehovah?

12, 13. Why is it important to think of how you personally have tasted Jehovah’s goodness?

helped others to stay faithful. But as you grow spiritually, you need to see Jehovah’s hand in your own life. How have you personally tasted Jehovah’s goodness?

¹³ There is one way that all Christians have tasted Jehovah’s goodness. It is by being invited to draw close to God and his Son. Jesus said: “No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him.” (John 6:44) Do you feel that those words apply to you? A youth might reason, ‘Jehovah drew *my* parents, and I merely followed.’ But when you dedicated yourself to Jehovah and got baptized, you showed that you had come into a privileged relationship with him. Now you are truly known by him. The Bible assures us: “If anyone loves God, this one is known by him.” (1 Cor. 8:3) Try always to treasure, to appreciate, your place in Jehovah’s organization.

¹⁴ Another way you can taste Jehovah’s goodness is by experiencing his support as you share your faith with others. You can do that in the ministry as well as at school. Some find it difficult to preach to their peers at school. You likely can understand why. You have no idea how they will react. It can be especially challenging when speaking to a large group rather than to a classmate one-on-one. What can help you?

¹⁵ First, think about why you are convinced of your beliefs. Are the study guides found on jw.org available in your language? If you are not sure, take the time to look for them. They are designed to help you reflect on what you believe, why you believe it, and how you can ex-

14, 15. How can the ministry help you to strengthen your faith?

plain your beliefs to others. When your conviction is strong and you are well-prepared, you will feel impelled to give a witness for Jehovah's name.—Jer. 20: 8, 9.

¹⁶ Even with preparation, however, you may be hesitant to speak up about your beliefs. An 18-year-old sister, baptized when she was 13, admits, "I know what I believe, but sometimes I have trouble putting my thoughts into words." How does she deal with this obstacle? "I just try to be casual," she says. "My classmates talk freely about the things that they do. I should feel free to do the same. So I'll mention something in passing, such as, 'I was teaching the Bible the other day, and . . . ' Then I continue with the point of my story. Although the immediate point is not in itself about the Bible, often others are curious about what I do when teaching the Bible. Sometimes they ask questions about it. The more I use this approach, the easier it gets. And afterward, I always feel great!"

¹⁷ As you show respect for others and take a personal interest in them, it is more likely that they will respond in kind. "I had always been afraid that if I worked the Bible into a conversation, people would view me as a fanatic." That is a comment made by Olivia, who is 17 and who got baptized as a preteen. Then she started to think differently. Rather than give too much thought to her fears, Olivia reasoned: "A lot of young people don't know anything about Jehovah's Witnesses. We are the only Witnesses

they are exposed to. So the way we act can determine how they will respond. What if we are shy or timid or have a hard time speaking up about our faith, or what if we cringe when we do speak up? Then they may look at us as if we aren't proud of who we are. They may even respond unkindly because of our lack of confidence. However, if we talk with ease and assurance about what we believe, making it a normal part of conversation, it's more likely that they will respect us."

KEEP WORKING OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

¹⁸ As we have seen, working out your own salvation is a serious responsibility. Some of the things involved are reading God's Word and meditating on it, praying to Jehovah, and thinking of ways that Jehovah has blessed you as an individual. Applying yourself in those aspects will boost your confidence in your privilege of having a friendship with Jehovah. That, in turn, will move you to speak up about your beliefs.—**Read Psalm 73:28.**

¹⁹ Jesus said: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and keep following me." (Matt. 16:24) Clearly, discipleship—including dedication and baptism—is an obligation for you as a Christian. Yet, it opens the door to countless blessings now and to everlasting life in God's new world. You have every reason, then, to keep working out your own salvation!

16. What might help you overcome hesitancy to speak up about your beliefs?

17. How can your view of your faith help you to speak to others?

18. What is involved in your working out your own salvation?

19. Why is the effort you put into your salvation worthwhile?



Leaving Things Behind to Follow the Master

AS TOLD BY FELIX FAJARDO

“If you go preaching, don’t come back. If you come back, I will break your legs.” With my father’s threat ringing in my ears, I decided to leave. That was my first experience in leaving things behind to follow the Master. I was just 16 years old.

HOW did that situation come about? Let me explain. I was born on July 29, 1929, and grew up in a village in the province of Bulacan in the Philippines. Life there was simple because it was a time of economic depression. War broke out when I was a youth. The Japanese army invaded the Philippines. However, our village was relatively remote, so we were not directly affected by the armed conflict. We lacked radio, television, and newspapers; thus, we received news about the war only by word of mouth.

I was the second of eight children, and my grandparents had taken me to live with them when I was eight years old. Although we were Catholic, Grandfather was open-minded about religion and collected religious literature that his friends gave him. I remember that he showed me the booklets *Protection*, *Safety*, and *Uncovered* in the Tagalog language,* as well as a Bible. I enjoyed reading the Bible, especially the four Gospels. Doing so made me want to follow Jesus’ example.—John 10:27.

LEARNING TO FOLLOW THE MASTER

The Japanese occupation ended in 1945. About that time, my parents asked me to come back home. My grandfather urged me to go. So I went.

Shortly afterward, in December 1945, a group of Jehovah’s Witnesses from the town of Angat came to preach in our village. One older Witness came to our house and explained what the Bible says about “the last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5) He invited us to attend a Bible study in a nearby village. My parents did not go, but I did. About 20 people were there, and some asked Bible questions.

Because I did not really understand all that they were talking about, I decided to leave. At that point, however, they started singing a Kingdom song. The song really impressed me, so I stayed. After the song and prayer, all were invit-

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses but now out of print.

ed to attend a meeting in Angat the following Sunday.

Several of us walked about five miles (8 km) to get to the meeting in the home of the Cruz family. I was impressed that even the young children who were among the 50 present commented on deep Bible subjects. After several more meetings, Brother Damian Santos, an elderly pioneer who was an ex-mayor, invited me to stay overnight. We spent most of that night discussing the Bible.

In those days, many of us responded quickly upon learning basic Bible truths. After just a few meetings, the brothers asked me and others, “Do you want to get baptized?” I replied, “Yes, I do.” I knew that I wanted to “slave for the Master, Christ.” (Col. 3:24) We went to a nearby river, and two of us got baptized on February 15, 1946.

We realized that as baptized Christians, we needed to preach regularly in imitation of Jesus. My doing so did not please my father, who said, “You are too young to preach. Besides, being dipped in the river does not make you a preacher.” I explained that it is God’s will that we preach the good news of God’s Kingdom. (Matt. 24:14) I added, “I need to fulfill my vow to God.” That is when my father made the threat that I related at the outset. Yes, he was intent on preventing me from preaching. And that is what led to my first experience in leaving things behind to pursue spiritual goals.

The Cruz family invited me to live with them in Angat. They also encouraged me and their youngest daughter, Nora, to enroll as pioneers. Both of us began our pioneer service on November 1, 1947. Nora served in another town, while I continued to support the preaching activity in Angat.

ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE THINGS BEHIND

In my third year of pioneering, Earl Stewart, a brother from the branch office, delivered a talk to over 500 people in the public plaza of Angat. He spoke in English, and afterward I gave a summary of his talk in Tagalog. I had only seven years of

education, but our teachers regularly used English. Another thing that helped me to improve my English was the fact that we had very few Bible publications in Tagalog. So I studied many of them in English. Thus, I had picked up enough English to interpret that talk and others on later occasions.

On the day that I interpreted for Brother Stewart, he mentioned to the local congregation that the branch office wanted to invite one or two pioneer brothers to come to Bethel. They were to help out while the missionaries were attending the 1950 Theocracy’s Increase Assembly in New York, U.S.A. I was one of the brothers invited. Again I left familiar surroundings behind, this time to help with Bethel work.

I arrived at Bethel on June 19, 1950, and started my new assignment. Bethel was in a large, old house surrounded by big trees on a two-and-a-half acre (1 ha) lot. About a dozen single brothers were serving there. In the early morning, I helped in the kitchen. Then, from about nine o’clock, I worked in the laundry, ironing clothes. I followed a similar routine in the afternoon. Even after the missionaries returned from the international assembly, I continued to serve at Bethel. I wrapped magazines for mailing, processed subscriptions, and served as a receptionist; I did whatever I was asked to do.

LEAVING THE PHILIPPINES FOR GILEAD SCHOOL

In 1952, along with six others from the Philippines, I was thrilled to receive an invitation to the 20th class of Gilead School. Many of the things we saw and experienced in the United States were new and strange to us. Truly, it was quite different from what I had known back in our small village.

For example, we had to learn to use appliances and utensils that were unfamiliar to us. And, yes, the weather was different for sure! One morning I stepped outside to a beautiful world of white. It was the first time I saw snow. Then I discovered that it was cold—very cold!

However, those adjustments faded into nothing as I enjoyed the wonderful training at Gilead. The instructors used effective teaching methods. We learned to do meaningful research and study. The training at Gilead definitely helped me to improve my spirituality.

After I graduated, I was temporarily assigned as a special pioneer in the Bronx in New York City. Thus in July 1953, I could attend the New World Society Assembly, which was held in the same borough of the city. After the assembly, I returned to an assignment in the Philippines.

LEAVING THE COMFORTS OF THE CITY

The brothers at the branch office said, “Now you will go out in the circuit work.” That would give me a new opportunity to follow in a literal sense the steps of the Master, who traveled to distant towns and cities to help Jehovah’s sheep. (1 Pet. 2:21) I was assigned to a circuit that covered a huge area of central Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines. That included the provinces of Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, and Zambales. To visit some towns, I had to cross the rugged Sierra Madre Mountains. No public transportation reached those places. As a result, I had to ask truck drivers if I could sit on top of the logs

they were hauling in their big trucks. Often they let me, but it was not the most comfortable means of transport.

Most of the congregations were relatively small and new. So the brothers appreciated it when I helped them organize meetings and field service more efficiently.

I was later transferred to a circuit that covered the entire Bicol region. It was made up mostly of isolated groups where special pioneers were opening up untouched territories. At one home, the only toilet available was a hole in the ground with two logs across the middle. When I stepped on the logs, they fell into the hole, and I fell with them. It took me quite some time to clean myself up and get ready for breakfast!

It was during that assignment that I began to think about Nora, who had started pioneering back in Bulacan. By this time, she was a special pioneer in Dumaguete City, and I went to visit her. After that, we corresponded for a while, and in 1956, we got married. We spent the first week after our wedding visiting a congregation on Rapu Rapu Island. There we had to climb mountains and do a lot of walking, but what a joy it was to serve the brothers in remote locations as a married couple!



With fellow students
at Gilead

Delivering a talk
at a convention with
a Cebuano interpreter



Interpreting a talk
for Brother Albert Schroeder

INVITED TO SERVE AT BETHEL AGAIN

After almost four years in the traveling work together, we received an invitation to serve at the branch office. Thus, January 1960 marked the start of a long career at Bethel. Over the course of time, I have learned much from serving alongside brothers who care for heavy responsibilities, and Nora has had a variety of assignments at Bethel.

From my vantage point at Bethel, I have been blessed to witness outstanding spiritual growth in the Philippines. When I first came to Bethel as a young, single brother, there were about 10,000 publishers in the whole country. Now there are well over 200,000 publishers in the Philippines, with hundreds of Bethelites serving to support the vital preaching activities.

As the work grew over the years, the Bethel facilities became too small. Then the Governing Body asked us to look for property on which to build a new, larger facility. The printery overseer and I went from house to house in the neighborhood of the branch, asking whether anyone wanted to sell his property. No one did; one owner even told us: “Chinese do not sell. We buy.”

However, one day a property owner unexpectedly asked whether we would like to buy his land;

he was moving to the United States. That set off a chain of events that was hard to believe. Another neighbor decided to sell, and he encouraged the others around him to do the same. We were even able to buy the property from the man who had said that “Chinese do not sell.” In a short time, the size of the branch property had more than tripled. I am convinced that Jehovah God wanted that to happen.

Back in 1950, I was the youngest member of the Bethel family. Now my wife and I are the oldest members. I have no regrets about following the Master wherever he has directed me. True, my parents drove me out of their home, but Jehovah has given me a big family of fellow believers. I do not have the slightest doubt that Jehovah provides everything we need, no matter what assignment we receive. Nora and I are very grateful to Jehovah for all his kind provisions, and we encourage others to test Jehovah out.—Mal. 3:10.

Jesus once invited a tax collector named Matthew Levi, saying: “Be my follower.” How did he respond? “Leaving everything behind, he rose up and began to follow [Jesus].” (Luke 5:27, 28) I too have had similar opportunities, and I heartily urge others to do the same and experience many blessings.

Happy to continue
sharing in the growth
in the Philippines



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