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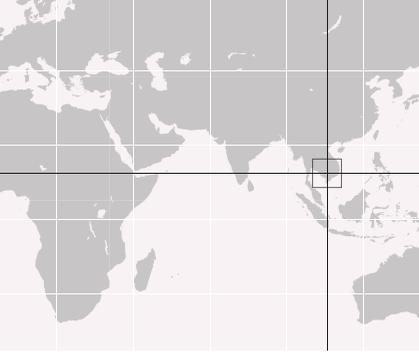
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SIMPLIFIED EDITION



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 2-29, 2018



COVER IMAGE:
CAMBODIA

A Witness couple talk about the good news with a woman who has picked up her son from school. She wears a traditional head scarf

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2,524

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 WEEK OF APRIL 2-8
Imitate the Faith and Obedience of Noah, Daniel, and Job

9 WEEK OF APRIL 9-15
Do You Know Jehovah as Did Noah, Daniel, and Job?

Noah, Daniel, and Job had many of the same kinds of challenges that we have today. What helped them to remain faithful and obedient? How did they come to know Jehovah so well that nothing could stop them from being loyal to him? In these two articles, we will find the answers to those questions.

16 WEEK OF APRIL 16-22
What Does It Mean to Be a Spiritual Person?

22 WEEK OF APRIL 23-29
Move Forward as a Spiritual Person!

In the first of these two articles, we will see what spirituality is and what we can learn from the examples of spiritually-minded people. Then in the second article, we will discuss how we can make our spirituality stronger and how it can help us in our daily life.

28 Joy—A Quality We Acquire From God

31 QUESTIONS FROM READERS

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THE WATCHTOWER®
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Imitate the Faith and Obedience of Noah, Daniel, and Job

“Noah, Daniel, and Job . . . would be able to save only themselves because of their righteousness.”

—EZEKIEL 14:14.

ARE you going through difficult times because you are sick, have money problems, or are being persecuted? Is it sometimes hard for you to stay happy in your service to Jehovah? If you feel this way, examining the examples of Noah, Daniel, and Job can encourage you. These men were imperfect and had the same kinds of challenges that we have today. At times, even their lives were in danger. But they remained loyal to Jehovah, and he viewed them as examples of faith and obedience.—**Read Ezekiel 14:12-14.**

² Ezekiel wrote the words of our theme text in Babylonia

1, 2. (a) Why can examining the examples of Noah, Daniel, and Job encourage us? (b) What were the circumstances when Ezekiel wrote the words found at Ezekiel 14:14?

SONGS: 89, 119

IN WHAT WAYS WILL YOU TRY TO IMITATE THE FAITH OF . . .

Noah?

Daniel?

Job?

in the year 612 before Christ.* (See footnote.) (Ezekiel 1:1; 8:1) That was not long before Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 607. Only a few people in Jerusalem were faithful and obedient like Noah, Daniel, and Job, and they survived. (Ezekiel 9:1-5) Jeremiah, Baruch, Ebed-melech, and the Rechabites were some of them.

³ Similarly today, only people whom Jehovah views as righteous, people who are like Noah, Daniel, and Job, will survive the end of this wicked world. (Revelation 7:9, 14) So let us learn why Jehovah used these three men as examples of people who did what was right in his eyes. We will discuss (1) the challenges each of them had and (2) how we can imitate their faith and obedience.

NOAH WAS FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT FOR MORE THAN 900 YEARS!

4 What were some of Noah's challenges? In the time of Noah's great-grandfather Enoch, people were already very wicked. They said "shocking things" about Jehovah. (Jude 14, 15) The world then became more and more violent. By Noah's time, "the earth was filled with violence." Wicked angels came to earth, made human bodies for themselves, and married women. Their sons were cruel and violent. (Genesis 6:

* Ezekiel was taken to Babylonia in the year 617 before Christ. He wrote the words found at Ezekiel 8:1-19:14 "in the sixth year" after he was taken there, that is, in the year 612.

3. What will we learn in this article?
- 4, 5. What were some of Noah's challenges, and what was amazing about him?

2-4, 11, 12) But everyone could see that Noah was different. The Bible says that "Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah." Unlike the people around him, he did what was right. "Noah walked with the true God."—Genesis 6:8, 9.

⁵ What do those words tell us about Noah? First, think about how long Noah served Jehovah faithfully in that wicked world before the Flood came. It was not just for 70 or 80 years but for almost 600 years! (Genesis 7:11) Second, remember that he did not have a congregation to help and encourage him as we have today. It seems that not even his brothers and sisters supported him.*—See footnote.

⁶ Noah did not think that it was enough just to be a good person. He boldly told others about his faith in Jehovah. The Bible calls him "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) The apostle Paul said about Noah: "Through this faith he condemned the world." (Hebrews 11:7) No doubt people made fun of him and tried to stop him. Perhaps they even threatened to hurt him. But Noah was not afraid of people. (Proverbs 29:25) Rather, he had faith, so Jehovah gave him courage. And he gives the same courage to all his faithful servants today.

⁷ Noah had already been faithful to

* Noah's father, Lamech, had faith in God but died about five years before the Flood. If Noah's mother and brothers and sisters were still alive when the Flood began, they did not survive.

6. How did Noah show great courage?
7. What challenges did Noah have when he built the ark?

Jehovah for more than 500 years when Jehovah told him to build a large ark. It would be used to save some people and animals from the Flood. (Genesis 5:32; 6:14) Building such a huge ark must have seemed very difficult to Noah. And he surely knew that people would mock him even more and make his life very difficult. But Noah had faith and obeyed Jehovah. “He did just so.”—Genesis 6:22.

⁸ Noah had another challenge. He had to provide for his wife and children. Before the Flood, people had to work extra hard to grow food. Noah did too. (Genesis 5:28, 29) Yet, he did not let the needs of his family become his biggest worry. Serving Jehovah was always most important in his life. Even though Noah was busy building the ark for perhaps 40 or 50 years, he remained focused on Jehovah. And he did that for another 350 years after the Flood. (Genesis 9:28) Noah was a fine example of faith and obedience!

⁹ **How can we imitate Noah’s faith and obedience?** We do this when we defend Jehovah’s view of what is right, when we are no part of Satan’s world, and when we put Jehovah first. (Matthew 6:33; John 15:19) Of course, for those reasons, the world does not like us. For example, because we are determined to obey God’s laws about sex and marriage, people may say negative

8. How did Noah trust in Jehovah to provide for his family?

9, 10. (a) How can we imitate Noah’s faith and obedience? (b) If you are determined to obey God’s laws, of what can you be sure?

things about us in the media. (**Read Malachi 3:17, 18.**) Like Noah, we are not afraid of people. We fear Jehovah, that is, we have deep respect for him and do not want to disappoint him. We know that he is the only One who can give us everlasting life.—Luke 12:4, 5.

¹⁰ Ask yourself: ‘Will I keep doing what is right in God’s eyes, even when others make fun of me or criticize me? Do I trust that Jehovah can provide for my family, even when it is hard to make a living?’ If you trust in Jehovah and obey him as Noah did, you can be sure that Jehovah will take care of you.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

DANIEL WAS FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT DESPITE LIVING IN A WICKED CITY

¹¹ **What were some of Daniel’s challenges?** Daniel was forced to live in Babylon, a foreign city that was full of false gods and spiritism. People there disliked the Jews and mocked them and their God, Jehovah. (Psalm 137:1, 3) This must have greatly hurt Daniel and other Jews who loved Jehovah! Also, many people were closely watching Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah because they were going to be trained to work for the king of Babylon. They were expected to eat the king’s food, which included things that Jehovah did not want his people to eat. But Daniel did not “defile himself with the king’s delicacies.”—Daniel 1:5-8, 14-17.

11. What big challenges did Daniel and his three friends have in Babylon? (See opening picture.)



We are precious to Jehovah when we remain loyal to him (See paragraphs 14, 15)

¹² Daniel had another challenge, which at first might not have looked so difficult. He was very capable, and because of that, the king gave him special privileges. (Daniel 1:19, 20) Still, Daniel did not become proud or think that his opinion was always right. He remained humble and modest. He always said that Jehovah was the reason for his success. (Daniel 2:30) Just think: Jehovah mentioned Daniel along with Noah and Job as a good example to follow. At that time, Noah and Job had already served Jehovah faithfully all their lives, but Daniel was still a young man. Jehovah truly had confidence in Daniel! And rightfully so, because Daniel stayed faithful and obedient to God all his life. When Daniel was almost 100 years old, God’s angel said these kind words to him: “O Daniel, you very precious man.”—Daniel 10:11.

¹³ Because of Jehovah’s support,

12. (a) What kind of person was Daniel?
(b) How did Jehovah view Daniel?
13. What could be one reason why Jehovah helped Daniel to get a high position?

Daniel became a very important official, first in the Babylonian Empire and then in the Medo-Persian Empire. (Daniel 1:21; 6:1, 2) Perhaps Jehovah made sure that Daniel got this high position so that he could help his own people, just as Joseph did in Egypt and Esther and Mordecai did in Persia.* (See footnote.) (Daniel 2:48) Can you imagine how Ezekiel and the other Jewish captives felt when they saw how Jehovah used Daniel to help them? It must have greatly encouraged them!

¹⁴ **How can we imitate Daniel’s faith and obedience?** The world we live in today is full of immorality and false worship. People have been influenced by Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, which the Bible calls “a dwelling place of demons.” (Revelation 18:2) But we are like foreigners in this

* It could be that Jehovah did the same for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah so that they could also help the Jewish people.—Daniel 2:49.

- 14, 15. (a) How is our situation similar to Daniel’s? (b) What can parents today learn from Daniel’s parents?

world. As a result, people can see that we are very different, and they may make fun of us. (Mark 13:13) Yet, like Daniel, let us draw close to our God, Jehovah. When we are humble, trust in Jehovah, and obey him, he will view us as precious too.—Haggai 2:7.

¹⁵ Parents can learn important lessons from Daniel’s parents. When Daniel was a small boy in Judah, most people around him were very wicked. Yet, he grew to love Jehovah. Did this just happen by chance? No. His parents must have taught him about Jehovah. (Proverbs 22:6) Even Daniel’s name, which means “My Judge Is God,” shows that his parents loved Jehovah. (Daniel 1:6, footnote) So parents, be patient when you teach your children about Jehovah. Do not give up. (Ephesians 6:4) Pray with them. Pray for them. Do your very best to teach them to love what Jehovah says is right, and Jehovah will greatly bless you.—Psalm 37:5.

JOB WAS FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT WHETHER HE WAS RICH OR POOR

¹⁶ **What were some of Job’s challenges?** Job went through big changes in his life. At first, Job was “the greatest of all the people of the East.” (Job 1:3) He was very rich, and many people knew him and highly respected him. (Job 29:7-16) Despite this, Job did not think that he was better than others or feel that he did not need God. We know this because Jehovah called him “my

16, 17. What challenges did Job have at different times of his life?

servant” and said about him: “He is an upright man of integrity, fearing God and shunning what is bad.”—Job 1:8.

¹⁷ Suddenly, though, Job’s life changed completely. He lost everything, and he became so depressed that he wanted to die. Today, we know that it was Satan who caused Job’s problems. He said that Job served Jehovah only for selfish reasons. (**Read Job 1: 9, 10.**) Jehovah took this wicked accusation very seriously. What would he do to show that Satan is a wicked liar? He gave Job the opportunity to prove his loyalty to God and to show that he served him out of love.

¹⁸ Satan viciously attacked Job over and over again and made him think that these attacks were coming from God. (Job 1:13-21) Then three men who claimed to be Job’s friends said cruel things to Job. They said that he was wicked and that God was punishing him. (Job 2:11; 22:1, 5-10) Despite all of this, Job remained loyal to Jehovah. It is true that Job sometimes said foolish things. (Job 6:1-3) But Jehovah understood that Job did this only because he was hurt and depressed. Jehovah saw that Job never abandoned him, even though Satan, like a big bully, attacked and insulted Job again and again. After this terrible situation ended, Jehovah gave Job double what he had before and 140 more years of life. (James 5:11) During that time, Job continued to serve God with all his

18. (a) What impresses you about Job? (b) What do we learn about Jehovah from the way he treated Job?

heart. How do we know that? Because Ezekiel 14:14, our theme text, was written hundreds of years after Job died.

19 How can we imitate Job's faith and obedience? No matter what our circumstances are, we want to make sure that Jehovah is always the most important Person in our life. We want to trust in him completely and obey him with all our heart. In fact, we have even more reasons to do so than Job had. Think about what we know today. We know a lot about Satan and his methods. (2 Corinthians 2:11) Because of the Bible, especially the book of Job, we know why God allows suffering. From Daniel's prophecy, we know that God's Kingdom is a real government ruled by Jesus Christ. (Daniel 7: 13, 14) And we know that this Kingdom will soon rule over the whole earth and end all suffering.

20 Job's experience also teaches us to show compassion when our brothers are suffering. Like Job, they may say foolish things. (Ecclesiastes 7:7) But we should not think badly of them or accuse them of having done something wrong. Instead, we should try to be understanding. If we are, then we will be

19, 20. (a) How can we imitate Job's faith and obedience? (b) How can we show compassion toward others as Jehovah does?

like our Father, Jehovah, who is loving and merciful.—Psalm 103:8.

JEHOVAH "WILL MAKE YOU STRONG"

21 Noah, Daniel, and Job lived at different times in history and had very different circumstances. Yet, they all endured their challenges. Their experiences remind us of what the apostle Peter said: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness . . . will himself finish your training. He will make you firm, he will make you strong, he will firmly ground you."—1 Peter 5:10.

22 The words at 1 Peter 5:10 are also true for God's people today. Jehovah assures us that he will make his servants firm and strong. We all want Jehovah to make us strong, and we want to remain firm and stay faithful to him. That is why we want to imitate the faith and obedience of Noah, Daniel, and Job. In the next article, we will learn that these men were able to remain faithful to Jehovah because they really knew him. In fact, they were able to "understand everything" that he wanted them to do. (Proverbs 28:5) And we can do the same.

21. How do the words at 1 Peter 5:10 remind us of what Noah, Daniel, and Job experienced?

22. What will we learn in the next article?

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

Imitate the faith and obedience of Noah, Daniel, and Job:

Try to have the same faith and obey
Jehovah the same way as they did



Do You Know Jehovah as Did Noah, Daniel, and Job?

“Evil men cannot understand justice, but those who seek Jehovah can understand everything.”—PROVERBS 28:5.

TODAY we are living near the end of the last days. We see more and more wicked people. They “sprout like weeds.” (Psalm 92:7) So we are not surprised that many people reject what God says is right. Paul told Christians: “Be young children as to badness,” but “become full-grown in your understanding.” (1 Corinthians 14:20) How can we do this?

² We find the answer in our theme text, which says: “Those who seek Jehovah can understand everything.” (Proverbs 28:5) This means they can understand everything that is necessary in order to please Jehovah. Proverbs 2:7, 9 also teaches us that Jehovah gives wisdom to

1-3. (a) What will help us to remain faithful to God during these last days? (b) What will we learn in this article?

SONGS: 126, 150

HOW WERE FAITH
AND GODLY WISDOM
SHOWN BY . . .

Noah?

Daniel?

Job?

those who do what is right. As a result, they can “understand what is righteous and just and fair, the entire course of what is good.”

³ Noah, Daniel, and Job had this godly wisdom. (Ezekiel 14:14) And so do God’s people today. What about you? Do you have godly wisdom? To “understand everything” that you need in order to please Jehovah, you need to know him well. So in this article, we are going to learn (1) how Noah, Daniel, and Job came to know God, (2) how knowing God helped them, and (3) how we can develop faith like theirs.

NOAH WALKED WITH GOD IN A WICKED WORLD

4 How did Noah come to know Jehovah? From the time that Adam and Eve started to have children, people

Noah could have learned about God’s qualities by paying attention to creation

have learned about Jehovah in three ways: through his creation, from other faithful servants of God, and from experiencing the benefits of obeying him. (Isaiah 48:18) By paying attention to creation, Noah could have seen

4. How did Noah come to know Jehovah, and how did knowing God well help him?

proof that God exists and could also have learned about God’s qualities. As a result, Noah would have understood that Jehovah is powerful and that he is the only true God. (Romans 1:20) Thus, Noah did not just believe in God, but he also developed strong faith in him.

⁵ The Bible says that “faith follows the thing heard,” which means that what we hear from others can help us to have faith. (Romans 10:17) Noah probably heard about Jehovah from his relatives. His father, Lamech, had faith in God and was born before Adam died. (See opening picture.) His grandfather was Methuselah, and his great-great-grandfather was Jared, who died 366 years after Noah was born.* (See footnote.) (Luke 3:36, 37) Perhaps those men and their wives taught Noah that Jehovah created humans and that He wanted them to have children, fill the earth, and serve Him. Noah would also have learned that Adam and Eve had disobeyed Jehovah, and he could see the bad results of their decision. (Genesis 1:28; 3:16-19, 24) Noah loved what he learned, and it motivated him to serve Jehovah.—Genesis 6:9.

⁶ Hope strengthens faith. Imagine how Noah’s faith was strengthened

* Noah’s great-grandfather Enoch also “kept walking with the true God.” But he died 69 years before Noah was born.—Genesis 5:23, 24.

5. How did Noah learn about what God wanted for mankind?

6, 7. How did hope strengthen Noah’s faith?

when he learned that his name, which means “Rest” or “Consolation,” included the idea of hope. (Genesis 5:29, footnote) Jehovah inspired Lamech to say about his son Noah: “This one will bring us comfort from our labor and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that Jehovah has cursed.” So Noah had hope that God would make things better. Like Abel and Enoch, he had faith that an “offspring” would bruise the serpent’s head.—Genesis 3:15.

⁷ Noah did not fully understand God’s promise recorded at Genesis 3:15. But he understood that this prophecy gave hope for the future. Enoch had preached a similar message, saying that Jehovah would destroy the wicked. (Jude 14, 15) Certainly, Enoch’s message, which will fully come true at Armageddon, must have strengthened Noah’s faith and hope!

⁸ **How did accurate knowledge of God help Noah?** Because Noah learned about Jehovah, he developed faith and godly wisdom. This protected him, especially from doing anything that would make Jehovah sad. How so? Noah wanted to be God’s friend, so he was not friends with those who did not have faith in Jehovah and who rejected him. Unlike them, Noah was not fooled by the demons who had come to the earth. People were impressed by the pow-

erful demons and might have even tried to worship them. (Genesis 6: 1-4, 9) Also, Noah knew that Jehovah wanted **humans** to have children and fill the earth. (Genesis 1:27, 28) So when the demons took wives and had children with them, Noah knew that this was wrong. It became even clearer when those children grew bigger

Faith and godly wisdom will protect us from Satan’s tricks and from this world’s influence

and stronger than all other children. Eventually, Jehovah told Noah that he would bring a flood to destroy all the wicked people. Because Noah had faith in Jehovah’s warning, he built the ark, and he and his family were saved.—Hebrews 11:7.

⁹ **How can we develop faith like Noah’s?** It is important to study God’s Word carefully, to love what we learn, and to use it to make changes and good choices in our life. (1 Peter 1: 13-15) Then faith and godly wisdom will protect us from Satan’s tricks and from this world’s influence. (2 Corinthians 2:11) Many people in the world love violence and immorality and

8. How did knowing God well protect Noah?

9, 10. How can we develop faith like Noah’s?

follow their wrong desires. (1 John 2: 15, 16) They ignore the fact that we are close to the end of this wicked world. If we do not have strong faith, we could start to think this way too. Do not forget that when Jesus compared our time with Noah's, he did not talk about violence or immorality but about the danger of getting distracted from serving God.—**Read Matthew 24:36-39.**

¹⁰ Ask yourself: 'Does my life show that I truly know Jehovah? Does my faith motivate me to do what Jehovah says is right and to teach others what God wants them to do?' Your answers to these questions will help you to know whether you too are walking with the true God as Noah did.

DANIEL SHOWED GODLY WISDOM IN PAGAN BABYLON

¹¹ **How did Daniel come to know Jehovah?** Daniel's parents must have taught him to love Jehovah and his Word. And Daniel did so all his life. Even when he was old, he still studied the Scriptures carefully. (Daniel 9: 1, 2) Daniel knew Jehovah very well. He also knew all that Jehovah had done for the Israelites. We see this in Daniel's humble and sincere prayer found at Daniel 9:3-19. Read this prayer, and think carefully about it. Ask yourself, 'What does this prayer teach me about Daniel?'

11. (a) What does young Daniel's love for God tell us about his parents? (b) Which of Daniel's qualities would you like to have?

¹² **How did knowing God well help Daniel?** It was not easy for a faithful Jew to serve God in pagan Babylon. For example, Jehovah told the Jews: "Seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you." (Jeremiah 29:7) Yet, he had also commanded them to worship only him with their whole heart. (Exodus 34:14) How could Daniel obey both commands? Godly wisdom helped Daniel to know that he had to obey Jehovah first, then human rulers. Hundreds of years later, Jesus taught the same principle.—Luke 20:25.

¹³ Think about what Daniel did when a law said that nobody could pray to any god or person except the king for 30 days. (**Read Daniel 6:7-10.**) He could have made excuses and said, 'It is only for 30 days.' Instead, Daniel refused to let a human law become more important than his worship to God. Daniel could have prayed to Jehovah in a private place. But he knew that many people saw him pray every day. So even though it was dangerous, Daniel continued to pray where people could see him, because he did not want people to think that he had stopped serving Jehovah.

¹⁴ Jehovah blessed Daniel's courageous and loyal decision. He performed a miracle and saved Daniel from being killed by lions. As a result, people throughout the Medo-Persian

12-14. (a) How did Daniel show godly wisdom? (b) How did Jehovah bless Daniel's courage and loyalty?

Empire learned about Jehovah!—Daniel 6:25-27.

¹⁵ **How can we develop faith like Daniel's?** To get strong faith, it is not enough just to read God's Word. We need to understand it. (Matthew 13:23) We want to know how Jehovah thinks and feels about matters. So we need to think deeply about what we read. It is also very important to pray often, especially when we have difficulties. We

15. How can we develop faith like Daniel's?

can have faith that Jehovah will generously give us the wisdom and strength that we pray for.—James 1:5.

JOB USED GODLY PRINCIPLES IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD

¹⁶ **How did Job come to know Jehovah?** Job was not an Israelite. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were his distant relatives, and Jehovah had taught them about himself and what he wanted for humans. In

16, 17. How did Job come to know Jehovah?

Our faith gets stronger when we look at creation and learn more
about Jehovah's qualities
(See paragraph 17)



some way, Job also learned many of those precious truths. (Job 23:12) He said to Jehovah: “My ears have heard about you.” (Job 42:5) And Jehovah himself said that Job told others the truth about Him.—Job 42:7, 8.

¹⁷ Job also came to know Jehovah’s qualities by looking at creation. (Job 12:7-9, 13) Both Elihu and Jehovah used creation to teach Job how small humans are compared with God. (Job 37:14; 38:1-4) Jehovah’s words affected Job and made him humbly say to God: “Now I know that you are able to do all things and that nothing you have in mind to do is impossible for you.” He added: “I repent in dust and ashes.”—Job 42:2, 6.

¹⁸ **How did knowing God well help Job?** Job understood godly principles very well. He truly knew Jehovah, and this motivated him to act in the right way. For example, Job knew that he could not say that he loved God if he was unkind to others. (Job 6:14) He did not think that he was better than others, but rather, he treated them as if they were his family, whether they were rich or poor. Job said: “Did not the One who made me in the womb also make them?” (Job 31:13-22) Even when Job was rich and powerful, he did not become proud and did not view others as less important than he was. That is very different from the way many people who are rich and powerful act today.

18, 19. How did Job show that he truly knew Jehovah?

¹⁹ Job did not want anything, including material things, to become more important to him than Jehovah. He knew that if that happened, he would reject “the true God above.” (**Read Job 31:24-28.**) Also, Job viewed marriage as a sacred promise between a husband and wife. He even made a promise to himself that he would not look at a woman in an immoral way. (Job 31:1) That is very impressive, because Job lived during a time when Jehovah allowed men to have more than one wife. So Job could have had a second wife if he had wanted to. But he must have known that the first marriage arranged by Jehovah was between one man and one woman, and Job chose to live that way.* (See footnote.) (Genesis 2:18, 24) In fact, about 1,600 years later, Jesus taught the same principle, that sex and marriage are meant to be between one husband and one wife.—Matthew 5:28; 19:4, 5.

²⁰ **How can we develop faith like Job’s?** Again, we need to know Jehovah well and let this knowledge influence all we do. For example, the Bible says that Jehovah “hates anyone who loves violence” and that we should not spend time with people who hide the truth. (**Read Psalm 11:5; 26:4.**)

* Noah did the same. He had only one wife, even though men started taking more than one wife soon after Adam and Eve disobeyed God.—Genesis 4:19.

20. How does knowing Jehovah and his standards well help us to choose the right friends and entertainment?

Now ask yourself: ‘What do these two scriptures tell me about how Jehovah thinks? How should that affect what is most important in my life? How should it affect what I look at on the Internet, whom I choose to be my friends, and what I choose for entertainment?’ Your answers can help you to see how well you know Jehovah. We do not want to be influenced by this wicked world. So we need to train our “powers of discernment,” that is, we need to learn the difference between what is right and wrong and between what is wise and unwise.—Hebrews 5:14; Ephesians 5:15.

²¹ Because Noah, Daniel, and Job

21. What will help us to “understand everything” that we need to know in order to please Jehovah?

did all they could to know Jehovah well, he helped them to “understand everything” that was necessary in order to please him. Their example proves that doing things Jehovah’s way leads to a successful life. (Psalm 1:1-3) So ask yourself, ‘Do I know Jehovah as well as Noah, Daniel, and Job did?’ In fact, today we can know Jehovah even better than those faithful men did because he has given us much more information about himself. (Proverbs 4:18) So study the Bible carefully. Think deeply about it. And pray for holy spirit. Then this wicked world will not influence you. Instead, you will act with godly wisdom and get ever closer to your Father in heaven.—Proverbs 2:4-7.

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

Godly wisdom is wisdom that comes from Jehovah. When we read the Bible carefully and understand what we read, we will get to know Jehovah well. We will know what he views as right and wrong, wise and unwise. And when we act on what we know, we will have godly wisdom

Godly principles are basic truths in the Bible. They will never change, and they help us to know how Jehovah thinks about matters. If we think deeply about these principles, they can help us to make good decisions that will please God

Walking with God means obeying Jehovah so closely and loving him so much that it is as if we walk together with him as friends



What Does It Mean to Be a Spiritual Person?

“May [God] grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had.”—ROMANS 15:5.

SONGS: 17, 13

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can we identify a spiritual, or spiritually-minded, person?

What can we learn from examples of spiritual people?

Why should we do all we can to have “the mind of Christ”?

A SISTER in Canada says that being a spiritual, or spiritually-minded, person has made her happier and has helped her with problems in her life. A brother in Brazil who has been married for 23 years says that being spiritually-minded has helped him and his wife to have a happy marriage. A brother in the Philippines says that being spiritually-minded has given him peace of mind and has helped him to get along with brothers and sisters from different backgrounds.

² It is clear that we benefit in many ways when we are spiritually-minded. What can we do to become more spiritually-minded and enjoy those benefits? First, we need to understand what the Bible says about spiritual people, those who are guided by God’s holy spirit and who think as Jehovah thinks. In this article, we will answer three important questions: (1) What does it mean to

1, 2. (a) How do many brothers and sisters feel about spirituality?
(b) What important questions will we discuss in this article?

be a spiritual, or spiritually-minded, person? (2) What examples will help us to grow in our spirituality? (3) How will our effort to have “the mind of Christ” help us to be spiritual people?

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL PERSON?

³ The apostle Paul helps us to understand the difference between a “spiritual man” and “a physical man.” (**Read 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.**) A physical person “does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot get to know them.” In contrast, a spiritual person “examines all things” and has “the mind of Christ,” which means that he strives to think as Christ does. Paul encourages us to be spiritual people. In what other ways are physical people different from spiritual people?

⁴ How does a physical person think? A physical person adopts the attitude of the world, which focuses on selfish desires. Paul describes this attitude as “the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:2) This attitude influences most people to imitate those around them. They simply do what seems right to them, without caring about God’s standards. A physical, or fleshly-minded, person thinks mainly about physical things and often feels that his position, money, or personal rights are more important than anything else.

3. How does the Bible describe the difference between a physical person and a spiritual person?

4, 5. How can we identify a physical person?

⁵ A physical person often practices what the Bible calls “the works of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:19-21) In Paul’s first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he mentions other things that physical people do. They take sides in disagreements, try to divide people, encourage others to rebel, take one another to court, have no respect for headship, and make food and drink too important in their lives. A physical person does not resist when he is tempted to do something wrong. (Proverbs 7: 21, 22) Jude said that physical people could even lose Jehovah’s spirit. —Jude 18, 19.

⁶ In contrast with a physical person, a spiritual person cares deeply about his relationship with God. He allows himself to be guided by God’s holy spirit and strives to imitate Jehovah. (Ephesians 5:1) He makes an effort to learn how Jehovah thinks and to see things as Jehovah does. God is very real to him. Unlike a physical person, a spiritual person respects Jehovah’s standards in every part of his life. (Psalm 119: 33; 143:10) He does not practice “the works of the flesh” but tries to develop “the fruitage of the spirit.” (Galatians 5:22, 23) To explain further what it means to be spiritually-minded, think of this comparison: Someone who is good at business is called business-minded, and someone who truly cares about his worship of God is called spiritually-minded.

6. How can we identify a spiritual person?

⁷ Jesus said that spiritually-minded people are happy. We read at Matthew 5:3: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.” Romans 8:6 explains that our life depends on thinking as Jehovah thinks: “Setting the mind on the flesh means death, but setting the mind on the spirit means life and peace.” So if we are spiritually-minded, right now we can have peace with God and with ourselves, and we can have the hope of everlasting life.

⁸ However, we live in a dangerous world. Because we are surrounded by people who do not think God’s thoughts, it takes real effort to protect our mind. If we do not fill our mind

7. What does the Bible say about spiritually-minded people?

8. Why can it be difficult to become and remain a spiritual person?

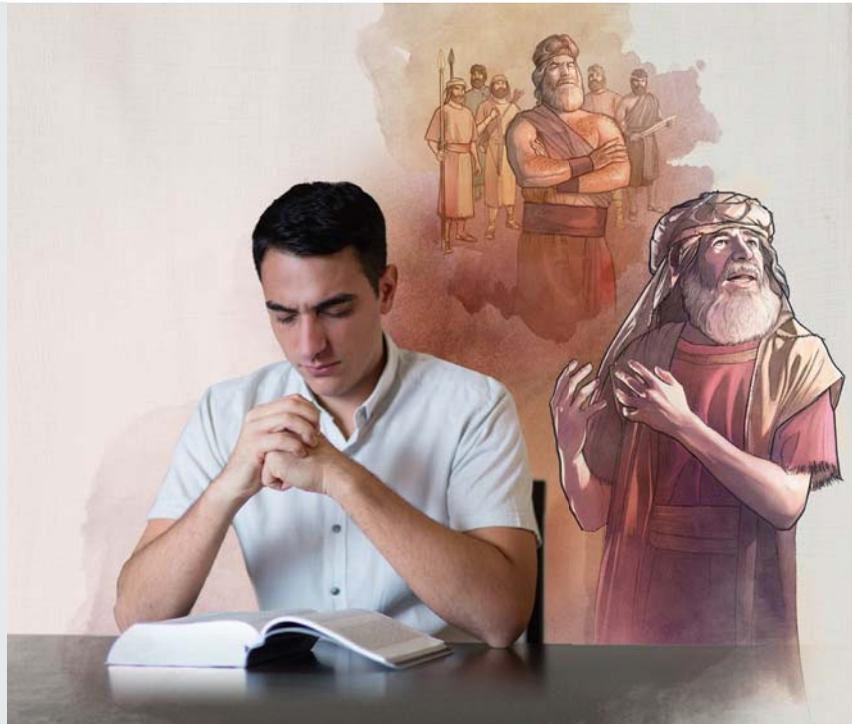
with Jehovah’s thoughts, the world will fill our mind with its fleshly attitudes and thinking. What can we do to avoid that? How can we grow spiritually?

LEARN FROM GOOD EXAMPLES

⁹ Just as a child needs to learn from his parents and imitate their good example, we need to learn from and imitate those who have a close relationship with Jehovah. This will teach us how to become spiritually-minded. On the other hand, we learn what not to do by observing fleshly-minded people. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4) The Bible contains both good and bad examples. Let us examine some good examples that we can learn from: Jacob, Mary, and Jesus.

9. (a) What can teach us to become spiritually-minded? (b) What good examples will we discuss?

What can we learn from the examples of Jacob and Mary?
(See paragraphs 10, 11)



¹⁰ Like many of us, Jacob did not have an easy life. His own brother, Esau, wanted to kill him. His father-in-law kept trying to cheat him. But Jacob's faith in Jehovah's promise to Abraham remained strong. Jacob knew that his family would be part of the fulfillment of this wonderful promise, so he took good care of them. (Genesis 28:10-15) Jacob did not allow the fleshly attitude of the people around him to make him forget Jehovah's promises. For example, Jacob begged Jehovah to save him when he thought he was in danger from his brother. He prayed: "You have said: 'I will certainly deal well with you, and I will make your offspring like the grains of sand of the sea.'" (Genesis 32:6-12)

10. How did Jacob show that he was a spiritual person?

Jacob had strong faith in Jehovah's promises and proved it by how he lived.

¹¹ Now think about Mary. Jehovah chose her to be the mother of Jesus because she was a spiritually-minded person. Read what Mary said when she visited her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth. **(Read Luke 1:46-55.)** We can see that Mary loved God's Word and knew the Hebrew Scriptures well. (Genesis 30:13; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Malachi 3:12) And even after Mary and Joseph were married, they waited until Jesus was born to have sexual relations. Their assignment from God was more important to them than their own desires. (Matthew 1:25) Also, Mary carefully watched everything that happened as Jesus grew up and

11. How do we know that Mary was a spiritually-minded person?



listened to the things he taught. She “kept all these sayings in her heart.” (Luke 2:51) It is clear that she was very interested in God’s promises about the Messiah. Can we imitate Mary and always try to do what God wants us to do?

¹² Of all the people who have ever lived, Jesus is the best example of a spiritually-minded person. During his life and ministry on earth, he proved that he wanted to imitate his Father. Jesus thought, felt, and acted like Jehovah. He did God’s will and respected his standards. (John 8:29; 14:9; 15:10) For example, compare the way that Isaiah described Jehovah’s compassion with the way that Mark described Jesus’ feelings. **(Read Isaiah 63:9; Mark 6:34.)** Do we imitate Jesus by always being ready to show compassion to those who need help? Like Jesus, do we focus on preaching and teaching the good news? (Luke 4:43) Spiritually-minded people are compassionate and try to help others.

¹³ Today, there are many spiritually-minded brothers and sisters who strive to imitate Christ. You may notice that they are zealous in the ministry, hospitable, and compassionate. Even though they are not perfect, they try very hard to develop good qualities and to do what Jehovah wants them to

12. (a) How did Jesus imitate his Father? (b) How can we imitate Jesus? (See opening picture.)

13, 14. (a) What can we learn from spiritually-minded people today? (b) Give an example.

do. Rachel, a sister in Brazil, says: “I loved to follow the world’s fashions. As a result, I did not dress very modestly. But learning the truth moved me to make the needed effort to be a spiritual person. Making changes was not easy, but I became happier and found real purpose in life.”

¹⁴ Reylene, a sister in the Philippines, had a different problem. Even though she was in the truth, she focused on getting higher education and a good job. In time, her spiritual goals became less important to her. She says, “I began to realize that something was missing in my life, something far more important than my job.” Reylene changed her way of thinking and made her service to Jehovah the most important thing in her life. Now she trusts Jehovah’s promise at Matthew 6:33, 34 and says, “I know for sure that Jehovah will take care of me!” You may know brothers and sisters in your congregation who have the same attitude. When we see how they imitate Christ, we want to follow their faithful example.—1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:7.

HAVE “THE MIND OF CHRIST”

¹⁵ How can we imitate Christ? First Corinthians 2:16 explains that we need to have “the mind of Christ.” Romans 15:5 reminds us to develop “the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had.” To be like Christ, we need to learn how he thought, felt, and acted.

15, 16. (a) What do we need to do to be like Christ? (b) How can we allow “the mind of Christ” to affect us?

Jesus cared more about his relationship with God than about anything else. So being like Jesus makes us more like Jehovah. That is why it is very important that we learn to think as Jesus did.

¹⁶ How can we learn to think like Jesus? His disciples watched him perform miracles, listened to him teach large crowds, saw how he treated all kinds of people, and noticed how he was guided by Jehovah's thinking. They said: "We are witnesses of all the things he did." (Acts 10:39) Today, we cannot see Jesus. But we have the Gospel accounts, which help us get to know him very well. When we read and meditate on the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we learn more about how Jesus thinks. This helps us "to follow his steps closely" so that we can have "the same mental disposition" that he had.—1 Peter 2:21; 4:1.

¹⁷ How will we benefit if we think like Christ? Just as eating healthful

17. How will thinking like Christ help us?

food makes our body strong, filling our mind with Christ's thinking makes us spiritually strong. Little by little, we come to know what he would do in any situation. Then we are able to make wise decisions that please God and give us a clean conscience. Do you not think that these are good reasons to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"?—Romans 13:14.

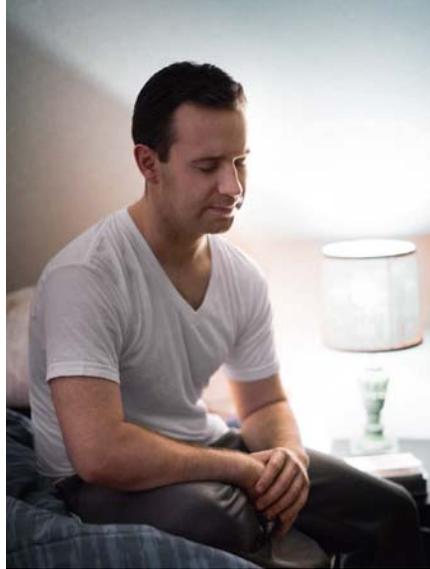
¹⁸ This article has helped us to understand what it means to be a spiritually-minded person. We have learned from the good examples of people who were guided by holy spirit. We also learned that having "the mind of Christ" helps us to think as Jehovah thinks and have a close relationship with him. But there is more that we can learn. For example: How can we know if we are spiritually strong? What can we do to become spiritually stronger? And how does spirituality affect our life? Let us see in the next article.

18. What have you learned about being a spiritually-minded person?

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

A person who is **spiritual**, or **spiritually-minded**, is someone whose thinking is guided by holy spirit. He has a very close relationship with Jehovah. He cares more about pleasing Jehovah than about pleasing anyone else

A person who is **physical**, or **fleshly-minded**, is someone whose thinking is guided by his own desires. He does not have a strong relationship with Jehovah. He cares more about pleasing himself than about pleasing Jehovah



Move Forward as a Spiritual Person!

“Keep walking by spirit.”—GALATIANS 5:16.

SONGS: 22, 75

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

What will help us to
examine our spirituality?

What do we need to do to
grow spiritually stronger?

How will having the mind of
Christ affect your daily life?

ROBERT got baptized when he was a teenager, but the truth was not the most important thing in his life. He says: “I never did anything wrong, but I was just going through the motions. I looked spiritually strong, being at all the meetings and serving as an auxiliary pioneer a few times a year. But something was missing.”

² Robert did not understand what was missing until after he got married. As a game, he and his wife sometimes asked each other Bible questions. His wife knew the Bible well and could answer the questions easily. But Robert often did not know the answers and felt embarrassed. He says: “It was as if I knew nothing. I thought to myself, ‘If I am going to be my wife’s spiritual head, I have to do something.’” So he did. He says: “I studied the Bible and studied and studied some more, and the pieces started to fit together. I got understanding and, most important, developed a close relationship with Jehovah.”

1, 2. What did one brother realize about himself, and what did he do about it?

³ We can learn important lessons from Robert's story. We may have some Bible knowledge and be regular at meetings and in the ministry, but this does not make us spiritually-minded. Or we may have already worked to become more spiritually-minded, but when we examine ourselves, we see ways that we can improve. (Philippians 3:16) In this article, we will answer three important questions: (1) What will help us to know if we are spiritually-minded? (2) How can we become spiritually stronger? (3) How can strong spirituality help us in our daily life?

HOW TO KNOW IF WE ARE SPIRITUALLY-MINDED

⁴ When we began to serve God, we made changes that affected every part of our life. This process did not end when we got baptized. The Bible tells us: “**Continue** to be made new in your dominant mental attitude.” (Ephesians 4:23, 24) Because we are not perfect, we need to keep making changes. Even if we have served Jehovah for many years, we need to keep our relationship with him strong.—Philippians 3:12, 13.

⁵ Whether we are young or old, we need to examine ourselves honestly. We can ask ourselves: ‘Do I notice that I am becoming more spiritually-

3. (a) What can we learn from Robert's story?
(b) What important points will we now discuss?

4. To whom does the counsel at Ephesians 4:23, 24 apply?

5. What questions can help us know if we are spiritually-minded?

What You Can Do to Grow Spiritually

- Carefully study God's Word, and meditate on what you read
- Quickly apply what you learn
- Accept the guidance of Jehovah's holy spirit
- Accept help from others, and be grateful

minded? Am I becoming more like Christ? What do my attitude and the way I behave at meetings reveal? What do my conversations show about what I really want in life? What do my study habits, dress and grooming, and the way I react to counsel reveal about me? How do I react when I am tempted to do something wrong? Have I become a mature Christian?” (Ephesians 4:13) These questions can help us to find out how much we have grown spiritually.

⁶ Sometimes we need others to help us find out if we are spiritually-minded. The apostle Paul explained that a physical, or fleshly, person does not understand that his way of life does not make God happy. But a spiritually-minded person understands how God sees matters. He knows that Jehovah does not approve of a fleshly way of life. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:1-3) Elders who have the mind of Christ quickly notice

6. What else can help us know if we are spiritually-minded?

when brothers start to behave in a fleshly way, and they try to help them. If the elders try to help us, will we accept their help and make necessary changes? If we do, we will show that we really want to become spiritually stronger.—Ecclesiastes 7:5, 9.

BECOME SPIRITUALLY STRONGER

⁷ Bible knowledge is not enough to make us spiritually-minded. King Solomon knew much about Jehovah, and some of Solomon’s wise words even became part of the Bible. But later on, his relationship with Jehovah became weak, and he did not stay faithful. (1 Kings 4:29, 30; 11:4-6) So, what do we need in addition to Bible knowledge? We need to continue to strengthen our faith. (Colossians 2:6, 7) How do we do this?

⁸ In the first century, Paul encouraged Christians to “press on to maturity.” (Hebrews 6:1) How can we apply this counsel today? One important way is to study the book *How to Remain in God’s Love*. This will help you understand how to use Bible principles in

7. How do we know that a spiritually-minded person is not just someone with Bible knowledge?

8, 9. (a) What will help us to strengthen our faith? (b) What is our goal when we study and meditate? (See opening picture.)

your life. If you have already studied that book, there are other publications that you can study to help you make your faith strong. (Colossians 1:23) We also need to meditate on what we learn and ask Jehovah to help us see how to apply it.

⁹ When we study and meditate, our goal should be to develop a deep desire to please and obey Jehovah. (Psalm 40:8; 119:97) We also need to reject anything that will stop us from growing spiritually.—Titus 2:11, 12.

¹⁰ If you are a young person, do you have spiritual goals? One brother who

10. What can young people do to become spiritually stronger?



Will my decisions help me to become more spiritually-minded, to set spiritual goals, and to have peace with others?
(See paragraphs 17-19)

serves at Bethel often speaks with young people who are about to get baptized at circuit assemblies and asks them about their spiritual goals. He can see that many have thought carefully about how they want to serve Jehovah in the future. Some plan to serve Jehovah full-time or to move to a place where more publishers are needed. But some young ones do not know how to answer his question. Could that mean that they feel they do not need to have spiritual goals? If you are a young person, ask yourself: 'Do I go to meetings and in the field ministry just because my parents want me to? Or do I have my own friendship with God?' Of

course, we should all have spiritual goals, whether we are young or old. These goals will help us to become spiritually stronger.—Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13.

¹¹ After we see where we can improve, we need to start making changes. This is so important that it affects whether we will live or die. (Romans 8: 6-8) Jehovah does not expect us to be perfect, and he gives us his holy spirit to help us. But we still need to work hard ourselves. Brother John Barr, who served as a member of the Governing Body, once commented on

11. (a) What do we need to do to become spiritually-minded? (b) What Bible example can we imitate?



Luke 13:24 and said: “Many fail because they are not diligent enough to grow mighty.” We need to be like Jacob, who wrestled with an angel and did not give up until he got a blessing. (Genesis 32:26-28) Although Bible study can be enjoyable, we should not expect the Bible to be entertaining as a novel might be. We need to work to find precious truths that will help us.

¹² When we make the effort to grow spiritually, holy spirit will help us to change the way we think. Little by little, we can learn to think as Christ did. (Romans 15:5) Holy spirit can help us get rid of wrong desires and develop qualities that please God. (Galatians 5:16, 22, 23) If we find that we are focusing on material things or pleasures, we should not give up. We must keep asking Jehovah for holy spirit to help us focus on the right things. (Luke 11:13) Remember the apostle Peter. He did not always think like Christ. (Matthew 16:22, 23; Luke 22:34, 54-62; Galatians 2:11-14) But he did not give up, and Jehovah helped him. Little by little, Peter learned to think like Christ. And so can we.

¹³ Peter later mentioned specific qualities that will help us. (**Read 2 Peter 1:5-8.**) We need to work hard to develop self-control, endurance, brotherly affection, and other good

qualities. Every day we can ask ourselves, ‘What quality can I work on today that will help me to become spiritually stronger?’

APPLY BIBLE PRINCIPLES EVERY DAY

¹⁴ If we think like Christ, it will affect how we behave at work or in school, how we speak, and how we make decisions each day. Our decisions will show that we are trying to imitate Christ. Because we are spiritually-minded, we do not want anything to damage our relationship with Jehovah. When we are tempted to do something wrong, our spirituality will help us resist the temptation. Before we make a decision, we will stop and ask ourselves: ‘What Bible principles can help me? What would Christ do in this situation? What will please Jehovah?’ We need to make it a habit to think this way. So let us discuss some possible situations. For each one, we will look at a Bible principle that can help us to make a wise decision.

¹⁵ **Choosing a marriage mate.** The Bible principle is found at **2 Corinthians 6:14, 15.** (**Read.**) Paul made it clear that spiritually-minded people do not look at things the same way as physical, or fleshly-minded, people do. How could this principle help you to choose a marriage mate?

¹⁶ **Choosing our friends.** The Bible principle is found at **1 Corinthians 15:**

12, 13. (a) What will help us to apply Romans 15:5? (b) How can Peter’s example and counsel help us? (c) What can you do to grow spiritually strong? (See the box “What You Can Do to Grow Spiritually.”)

14. How will being spiritually-minded affect our life?

15, 16. How can thinking like Christ help us make a wise decision about (a) choosing a marriage mate? (b) choosing our friends?

33. (Read.) A spiritually-minded person will not be friends with people who could weaken his faith. Think of how you could apply this principle in different situations. For example, how could it help you make decisions about social networking? How could it help you decide whether you will play online games with strangers?

17 Activities that harm our spirituality. We find an important warning at **Hebrews 6:1. (Read.)** What are the “dead works” that we should avoid? These are worthless activities that do not help us to become spiritually stronger. This warning about dead works can help us to answer questions such as: ‘Is this activity beneficial, or is it worthless? Should I get involved in this business plan? Why should I not join a group that is trying to change world conditions?’

18 Spiritual goals. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us good advice about goals. (Matthew 6:33) A spiritually-minded person puts the Kingdom first in his life. This principle

17-19. How will being a spiritually-minded person help you (a) to avoid worthless activities? (b) to have good goals? (c) to handle disagreements?

will help us to answer questions such as: ‘Should I go on to university after I have completed my basic education? Should I accept a certain job?’

19 Disagreements. Paul’s counsel to the Christians in Rome can help us when we have disagreements with others. (Romans 12:18) We imitate Christ, so we try to “be peaceable with all men.” How do we react when we have disagreements with others? Is it difficult for us to accept someone else’s opinion? Or are we known as a person who tries to make peace?—James 3:18.

20 These examples show how Bible principles can help us make decisions that prove we are guided by God’s spirit. If we are spiritually-minded, our life will be happy and satisfying. Robert, mentioned earlier, says: “After I developed a real relationship with Jehovah, I was a better husband and a better father. I was content and happy.” If we do all we can to move forward as a spiritual person, we will also enjoy many benefits. We will have a happier life now, and in the future we will have “the real life.”—1 Timothy 6:19.

20. Why do you want to move forward spiritually?

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

When we have **strong spirituality**, our relationship with Jehovah is the most important thing in our life. This affects how we think, feel, and live. We **move forward as spiritual people** by getting to know how Jehovah thinks and then trying to imitate him. We set **spiritual goals** when we think of ways we can serve Jehovah more fully and make plans that will help us do so

JOY

A Quality We Acquire From God

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS
GOODNESS
FAITH
MILDNESS
SELF-CONTROL

PEOPLE want to be happy. But these are the last days, and everyone has problems that are “hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1) Some people lose their joy because they are treated unfairly, they get sick, they lose their job, or someone they love dies. Others lose their joy because something else happens that makes them worried or sad. Even Jehovah’s worshippers may become discouraged and gradually lose their joy. If this has happened to you, how can you get your joy back?

To answer that question, we first need to understand what real joy is and how others have kept their joy even when they had difficulties. After that, we will see how we can keep our joy and increase it.

WHAT IS JOY?

Being joyful is not the same as being cheerful. Think about this: A person who gets drunk may laugh a lot. But when he is sober again, he does not laugh anymore and may find that he still has many problems. His cheerfulness was only temporary and was not true joy.—Proverbs 14:13.

On the other hand, joy is the strong feeling we have in our heart when we get or expect something good. Having joy means being happy whether our circumstances are good or bad. (1 Thessalonians 1:6) In fact, we can be upset about something but still

have joy. For example, the apostles were beaten because they were preaching about Jesus. However, they “went out from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name.” (Acts 5:41) They did not rejoice because they were beaten but because they were able to remain faithful to God.

Joy is not something we are born with or something that comes automatically. Why not? Because real joy is part of the fruitage of God’s holy spirit. God’s spirit helps us to develop “the new personality,” which includes joy. (Ephesians 4:24; Galatians 5:22) And when we have joy, it will be easier to cope with our difficulties.

EXAMPLES WE WANT TO IMITATE

Jehovah wanted to see good things happen on the earth, not the bad things we see today. But even though people do wicked things, Jehovah does not lose his joy. The Bible says: “Strength and joy are in his dwelling place.” (1 Chronicles 16:27) In addition, the good things that Jehovah’s servants do make him rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

We imitate, or try to be like, Jehovah when we do not lose our joy if things do not happen as we expected. Instead of worrying, we can focus on the good things we

have now and wait patiently for even better things in the future.*—See footnote.

There are many examples in the Bible of people who kept their joy even though they had many problems. Abraham kept his joy even when his life was in danger and when other people caused problems for him. (Genesis 12:10-20; 14:8-16; 16:4, 5; 20:1-18; 21:8, 9) How did he do this? By thinking about his hope of living in the new world under the Messiah's rule. (Genesis 22:15-18; Hebrews 11:10) Jesus said: "Abraham your father rejoiced greatly at the prospect of seeing my day." (John 8:56) We imitate Abraham when we keep thinking about the joy we will experience in the future.—Romans 8:21.

Paul and Silas also had strong faith and kept their joy despite the many difficulties they went through. For example, after they were badly beaten and thrown into prison, they "were praying and praising God with song." (Acts 16:23-25) They could endure their suffering because they continued to think about God's promises for the future. And knowing that they were suffering because they were followers of Christ gave them joy. We imitate Paul and Silas when we remember the good results that come from serving God faithfully.—Philippians 1:12-14.

Today, too, there are many examples of brothers and sisters who have kept their joy despite facing difficulties. For example, in November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan destroyed the homes of more than 1,000 Witness families in the Philippines. George, whose home in the city of Tacloban was completely destroyed, said: "In spite of what happened, the brothers are happy. It's hard for me to express the joy we feel." If we think about what Jehovah has done for

* We will discuss the quality of patience in a future article in this series on "the fruitage of the spirit."

us and remain grateful to him, we will keep our joy even when we have great difficulties. What other things does Jehovah provide that give us reasons for joy?

OUR REASONS FOR JOY

Our greatest reason for joy is our relationship with Jehovah. We know the King of the universe. He is our Father, God, and Friend!—Psalm 71:17, 18.

We are also grateful that Jehovah has given us life and the ability to enjoy it. (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13) Because he has drawn us to him, we can understand his will for us and we know how to live our lives. (Colossians 1:9, 10) However, most people do not understand what the purpose of life is. To emphasize this difference, Paul wrote: "'Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, nor have there been conceived in the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him.' For it is to us God has revealed them through his spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10) Understanding Jehovah's will and purpose gives us joy.

Jehovah has done even more for us. He has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven. (1 John 2:12) He gives us the hope of life in the new world, which will soon be here. (Romans 12:12) Even now, Jehovah gives us many friends with whom we can worship him. (Psalm 133:1) He also protects us from Satan and the demons. (Psalm 91:11) If we keep thinking about these wonderful things that Jehovah has given us, we will have more joy.—Philippians 4:4.

HOW TO GET MORE JOY

Can a Christian who is already joyful get even more joy? Jesus said: "These things I have spoken to you, so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full." (John 15:11) This shows that we can always

get more joy. We can compare our joy to a fire. If we want a fire to get hotter, we must add more wood to it. Remember: Holy spirit helps us to have joy. So if we want more joy, we need to keep asking for God’s spirit through prayer. We must also keep meditating on the Bible, which was inspired by the holy spirit.—Psalm 1:1, 2; Luke 11:13.

Another thing that will give us more joy is staying busy with things that make Jehovah happy. (Psalm 35:27; 112:1) Why? The Bible says that we were created to “fear the true God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole obligation of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) We were designed to do God’s will. So when we serve Jehovah, we will really enjoy our life.*—See footnote.

THE BENEFITS OF JOY

As we increase our joy, we will experience many other benefits. For example, Jehovah will be more pleased with us as we continue to serve him joyfully even when we have problems. (Deuteronomy 16:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Also, because we have true joy, we will not think that having many ma-

* For more ways to get more joy, see the box “Other Ways to Increase Joy.”

terial possessions is the most important thing in life. Rather, we will try to make even greater sacrifices for God’s Kingdom. (Matthew 13:44) And when we see the good that comes from doing more for Jehovah, we will get more joy, we will feel better about ourselves, and we will make others feel happier.—Acts 20:35; Philippians 1:3-5.

Also, the more joy we have, the healthier we will probably be. The Bible says: “A joyful heart is good medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22) A researcher who studied health at the University of Nebraska in the United States made a statement that agrees with the Bible. He says: “If you are happy and satisfied with your life now, you are more likely to be healthy in the future.”

So even though we live in stressful times, we can have true joy when we receive holy spirit by praying, studying, and meditating on God’s Word. We will also get more joy if we think about the many good things that Jehovah gives us now, if we imitate the faith of others, and if we try to do God’s will. Then we can experience what is described at Psalm 64:10, which says: “The righteous one will rejoice in Jehovah and take refuge in him.”

Other Ways to Increase Joy

- Keep your life simple.—Luke 12:15.
- Do not expect too much from yourself.—Micah 6:8.
- Make sure that your schedule (for work, school, and recreation) allows you time to serve Jehovah more fully.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.
- Be reasonable with yourself and others.—Philippians 4:5.

In ancient Israel, did a man need to be a firstborn son to be an ancestor of the Messiah?

■ In the past we thought this was the case because of what is stated at Hebrews 12:16. There it says that Esau did **“not appreciate sacred things”** and **gave to Jacob “his rights as firstborn** in exchange for one meal.” So we thought that when Jacob received the “rights as firstborn,” these included the privilege of being an ancestor of the Messiah.—Matthew 1:2, 16; Luke 3:23, 34.

However, a careful study of other Bible accounts shows that a man did not need to be the firstborn to be an ancestor of the Messiah. Let us consider some of these accounts:

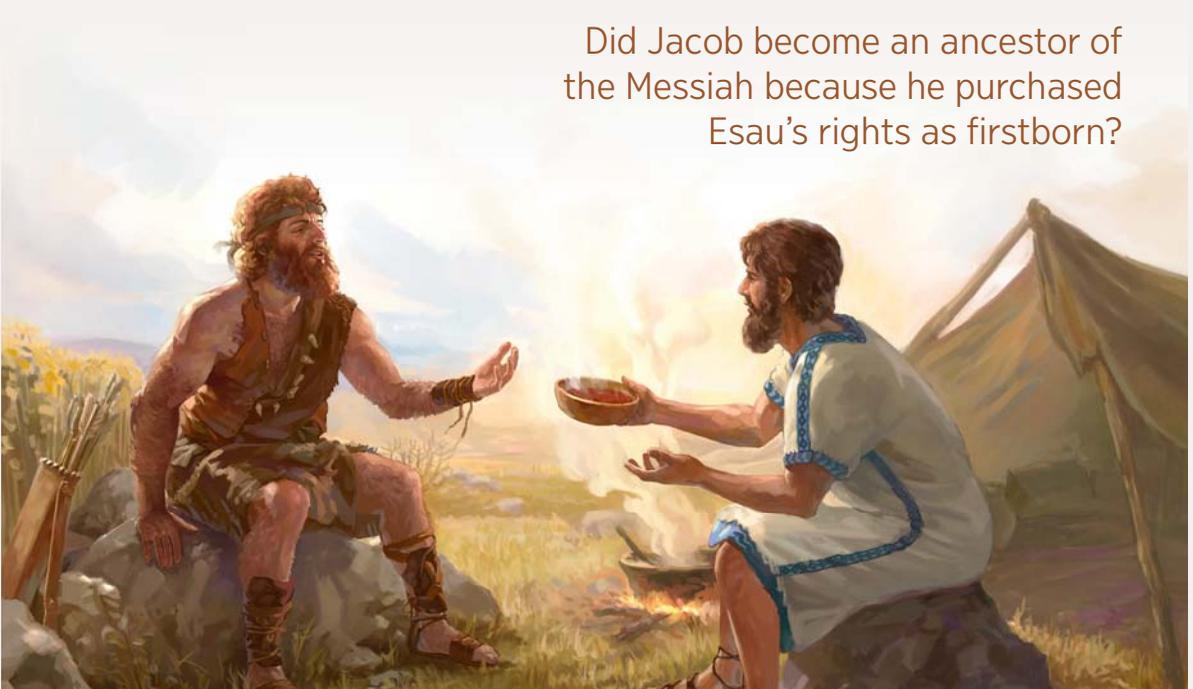
Jacob’s firstborn son was Reuben, by his wife Leah. His first son with Rachel was Joseph. When Reuben committed immoral-

ity, he lost his rights as firstborn, and these rights were passed to Joseph. (Genesis 29:31-35; 30:22-25; 35:22-26; 49:22-26; 1 Chronicles 5:1, 2) Still, the Messiah did not come through Reuben or through Joseph. He came through Judah, Jacob and Leah’s fourth son.—Genesis 49:10.

Luke 3:32 lists five other ancestors of the Messiah, and each one of them seems to have been a firstborn. For example, Boaz was the father of Obed, and Obed was the father of Jesse.—Ruth 4:17, 20-22; 1 Chronicles 2:10-12.

Jesse’s son David was not a firstborn. He was actually the last of eight sons. However, the Messiah came through David. (1 Samuel 16:10, 11; 17:12; Matthew 1:5, 6) Similarly, the next ancestor of the Messiah was

Did Jacob become an ancestor of the Messiah because he purchased Esau’s rights as firstborn?



Solomon, even though he was not David's firstborn.—2 Samuel 3:2-5.

This does not mean that being the firstborn son was not important. The firstborn son received privileges that the other sons did not. Often, he became the next head of the household, and he received a double portion of the inheritance.—Genesis 43:33; Deuteronomy 21:17; Joshua 17:1.

But the rights of the firstborn could be transferred from one son to another. When Abraham sent Ishmael away, his rights as firstborn were transferred to Isaac. (Genesis 21:14-21; 22:2) And as we already discussed, Reuben's rights as firstborn were transferred to Joseph.

What point, then, was the apostle Paul making at Hebrews 12:16? There we read: "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."

Here, Paul was not discussing the ancestors of the Messiah. Rather, he was giving Christians a warning. He told them: "Keep making straight paths for your feet" so that "no one fails to obtain the undeserved kindness of God." Sadly, this could happen if they committed sexual immorality. (Hebrews 12:12-16) And in that case, they would be like Esau, who did "not appreciate sacred things" but wanted to satisfy his own desires.

According to the custom of those times, Esau may occasionally have had the privilege of offering sacrifices to Jehovah. (Genesis 8:20, 21; 12:7, 8; Job 1:4, 5) But Esau was so focused on his own desires that he gave

away his privileges as firstborn for a bowl of stew. Esau may have wanted to avoid the suffering that Jehovah foretold Abraham's offspring would experience. (Genesis 15:13) He also showed that he did not value sacred things when he married two pagan women, something that made his parents very sad. (Genesis 26:34, 35) How different he was from Jacob, who made sure that he married a worshipper of the true God!—Genesis 28:6, 7; 29:10-12, 18.

What do these Bible accounts teach us about the ancestors of the Messiah? Some of them were firstborn sons, and some were not. This was something that the Jews understood and accepted. How do we know this? Because they admitted that the Christ would be a descendant of David, Jesse's last son.—Matthew 22:42.

