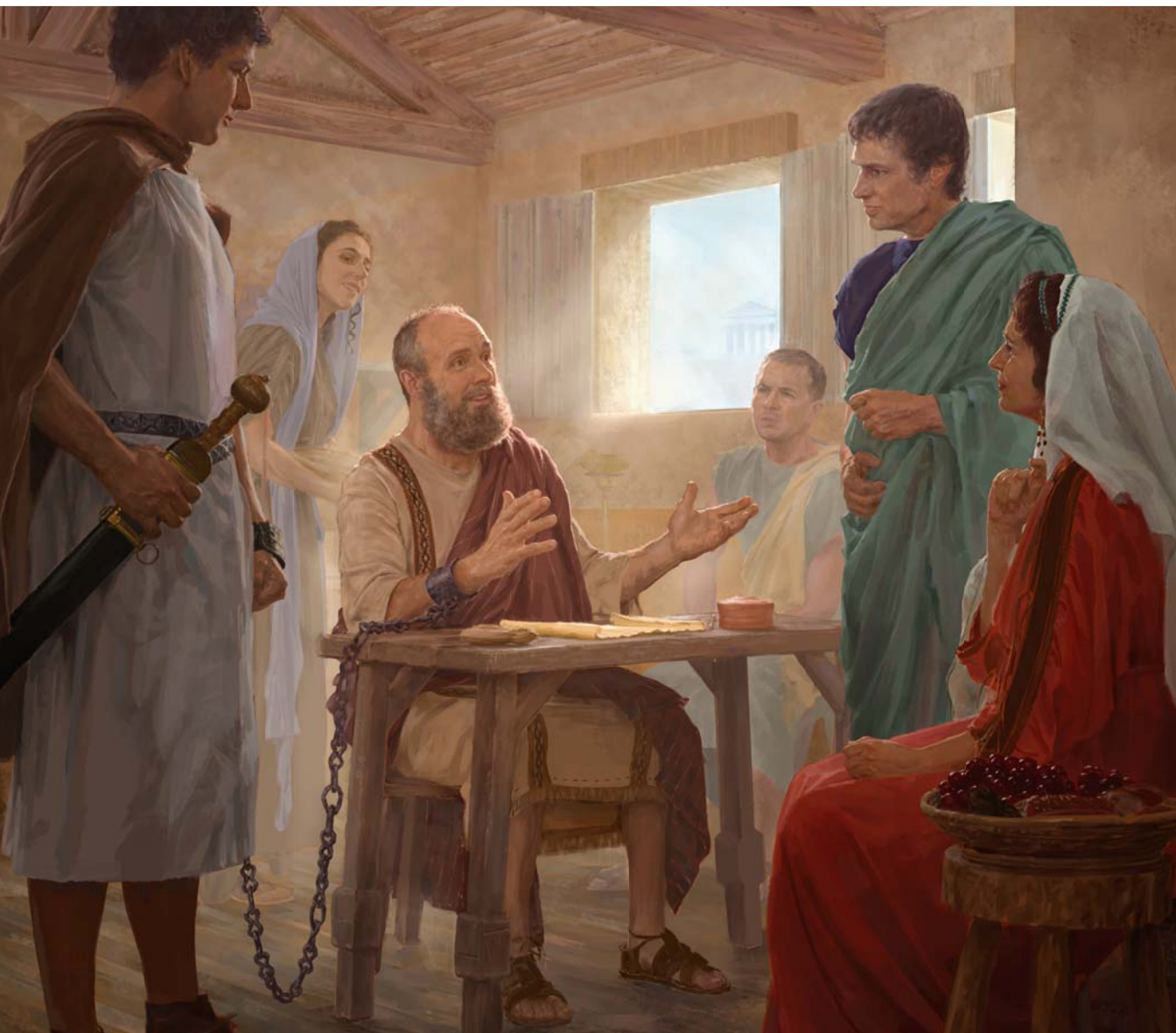


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SONG 128

Enduring to the End

PREVIEW

No matter how long we have been serving Jehovah, we want to keep on growing and improving as Christians. The apostle Paul urged his fellow believers never to give up! His letter to the Philippians contains motivating encouragement to help us endure in our race for life. This article will show us how to apply Paul's inspired words.

“We Do Not Give Up”!

“Therefore, we do not give up.”—2 COR. 4:16.

CHRISTIANS are in a race for life. Whether we have just started running or we have been in the race for years, we need to keep running until we cross the finish line. The counsel that the apostle Paul gave to Christians in Philippi can spur us on to complete the race. Some members of that first-century congregation had been serving Jehovah for years when they received Paul's letter. They were running well, but Paul reminded them of the need to keep running with endurance. He wanted them to keep following his example of “pressing on toward the goal.” —Phil. 3:14.

² Paul's advice to the Philippians was timely. The congregation faced hostility from the start. It all began when, in response to the divine invitation to “step over into Macedonia,” Paul and Silas arrived in Philippi about 50 C.E. (Acts 16:9) There they found a woman named Lydia, who “was listening, and Jehovah opened her heart wide” to the good news. (Acts 16:14) She soon got baptized along with her household. However, the Devil was not idle. Men of the city dragged Paul and Silas before the civil magistrates and falsely accused them of causing a disturbance. As a result, Paul and Silas were beaten, imprisoned, and later urged to leave the city. (Acts 16:16-40) Did they give up? Never! And what about the brothers and sisters in the newly formed congregation? Commendably, they too endured! No doubt they were greatly

1. What must Christians do to finish the race for life?
2. Why was Paul's advice to the Philippians timely?

encouraged by the good example that Paul and Silas set for them.

³ Paul was determined not to give up. (2 Cor. 4:16) He knew, however, that in order to run the race to the finish, he would have to stay focused on the goal. What can we learn from Paul's example? What modern-day examples of faith show us that we can overcome obstacles to endurance? And how can our hope for the future strengthen our resolve never to give up?

HOW PAUL'S EXAMPLE CAN BENEFIT US

⁴ Consider how Paul was exerting himself when he wrote to the Philippians. He was under house arrest in Rome. His freedom to preach was severely limited. Yet, he kept busy by witnessing to visitors and writing letters to distant congregations. Likewise today, many Christians who are housebound take advantage of every opportunity to share the good news with those who come to their home. They also write encouraging letters to householders who cannot be reached by a personal visit.

⁵ Paul did not allow himself to be distracted, either by past accomplishments or by past mistakes. In fact, he said that "forgetting the things behind" was essential to "stretching forward to the things ahead," that is, to completing the race successfully. **(Read Philippi-**

3. What did Paul realize, and what questions will we consider?

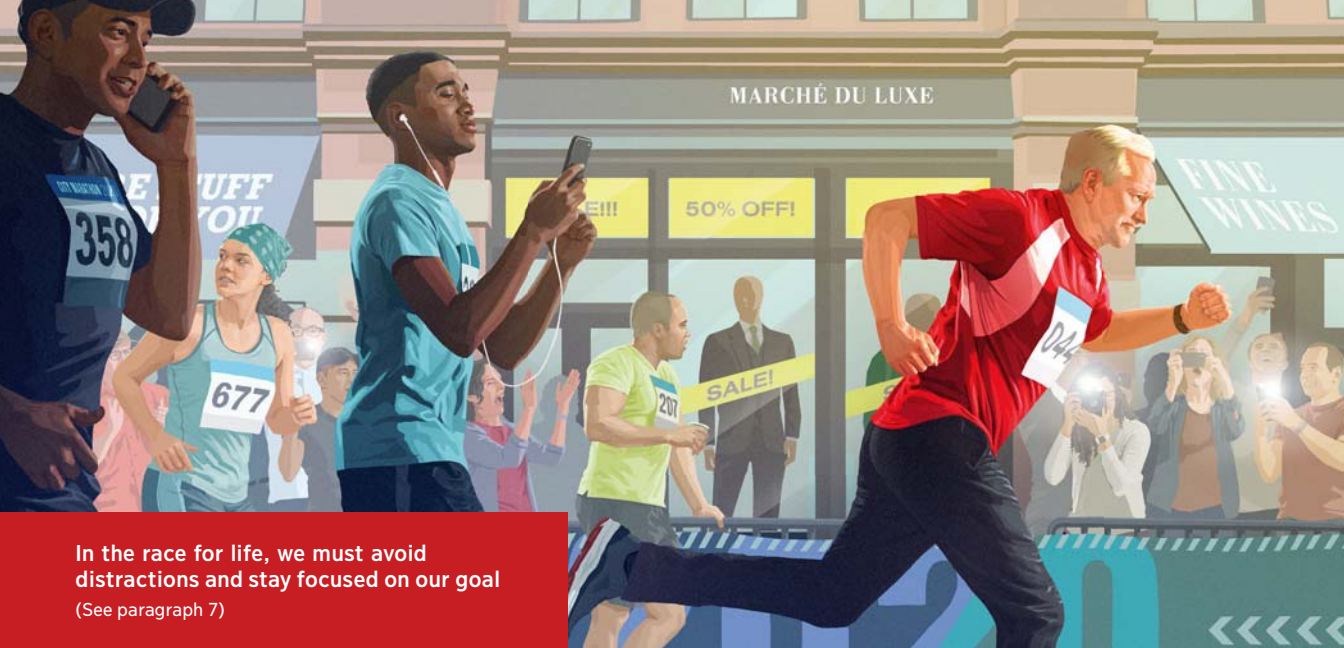
4. How did Paul stay active in spite of his circumstances?

5. According to his words found at Philippians 3:12-14, what helped Paul to keep his eyes on the goal?

ans 3:12-14.) What were some of the things that could have distracted Paul? First, his accomplishments in Judaism were impressive. Yet, he viewed those things as "a lot of refuse." (Phil. 3:3-8) Second, he did not allow guilt over his earlier persecution of Christians to paralyze him. And third, he did not reason that he had already done enough for Jehovah. Paul had a productive ministry despite being imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and shipwrecked, as well as lacking food and clothing. (2 Cor. 11:23-27) However, regardless of what he had already accomplished and suffered, Paul knew that he must press on. The same is true of us.

⁶ How can we imitate Paul's example in "forgetting the things behind"? Some of us may need to overcome feelings of guilt because of past sins. If so, why not start a personal study project that focuses on Christ's ransom sacrifice? If we study, meditate, and pray about that upbuilding subject, we may do much to relieve unnecessary guilt. We may even stop punishing ourselves for sins that Jehovah has forgiven. Consider another lesson we can learn from Paul. Some may have given up a potentially lucrative career in order to pursue Kingdom interests. If so, can we forget the things behind by refusing to look back longingly at material opportunities we might have missed? (Num. 11:4-6; Eccl. 7:10) "The things behind" might even include things that we accomplished or trials that we endured in the past. Of course, looking back on the way Jehovah has blessed and supported

6. What are some of "the things behind" that we may need to forget?



In the race for life, we must avoid distractions and stay focused on our goal (See paragraph 7)

us over the years can draw us closer to our Father. However, we never want to become self-satisfied, imagining that our work is done.—1 Cor. 15:58.

⁷ Paul well understood Jesus’ words: “Exert yourselves vigorously.” (Luke 13:23, 24) Paul knew that, like Christ, he must exert himself to the very end. He thus compared the Christian course to a race. **(Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.)** A runner in a race stays focused on the finish line and avoids distractions. For example, runners in an urban race today may follow a course that is lined with businesses and other potential diversions. Can you imagine that a runner would stop to examine the goods displayed in the store windows? Not if he wants to win! In the race for life, we too must avoid distractions. If we stay focused on our goal, exerting ourselves vigorously as Paul did, we will win the prize!

7. According to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, what is necessary in order to win the race for life? Illustrate.

MEETING CHALLENGES TO OUR FAITH

⁸ Let us now consider three challenges that could cause us to slow down. They are postponed expectations, declining physical strength, and long-lasting trials. We can benefit from learning how others have coped with these circumstances.—Phil. 3:17.

⁹ **Postponed expectations.** We naturally long for the good things that Jehovah has promised. In fact, when Jehovah’s prophet Habakkuk expressed a yearning for Jehovah to bring an end to the wicked conditions in Judah, Jehovah instructed him to “keep in expectation.” (Hab. 2:3) However, when the fulfillment of our expectations appears to be delayed, it may dampen our enthusiasm. We could even lose heart. (Prov. 13:12) This happened at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, many anointed Christians expected to receive

8. What three challenges will we consider?

9. How can postponed expectations affect us?

their heavenly reward in 1914. When that did not happen, how did faithful ones deal with their delayed expectations?

¹⁰ Consider the example of two loyal ones who met such a challenge. Brother Royal Spatz was baptized in 1908 at the age of 20. He was very confident that he would soon receive his reward. In fact, when he proposed marriage in 1911, he told his prospective bride, Pearl: “You know what is going to happen in 1914. If we are going to get married, we better do it soon!” Did this Christian couple give up the race for life when they did not receive their heavenly reward in 1914? No, because their primary focus was on faithfully doing God’s will, not on gaining their reward. They were determined to run the race with endurance. And, indeed, Royal and Pearl remained active and faithful until they finished their earthly course many decades later. No doubt you long to see Jehovah vindicate his name and sovereignty and fulfill all his promises. Be assured that these things will happen in Jehovah’s due time. Until then, may we keep busy serving our God, never allowing postponed expectations to discourage us or slow us down.

¹¹ **Declining physical strength.** Unlike a literal runner, you do not need to be physically strong in order to continue growing stronger spiritually. In fact, many whose physical strength has declined still maintain a fiery determi-

nation to keep progressing spiritually. (2 Cor. 4:16) For example, Brother Arthur Secord* was 88 years old and infirm after having served at Bethel for 55 years. A nurse approached his bed to care for his needs. She looked at him and affectionately said: “Brother Secord, this body has traveled many miles in Jehovah’s service.” Arthur, however, was not living in the past. He gazed into her eyes, smiled, and replied: “Yes, that’s true. But it’s not what we have done that is important. It’s what we do from here on that counts.”

¹² Perhaps you have served Jehovah for many years and now find that failing health prevents you from doing as much as you once did. If so, do not despair.

* See Brother Secord’s life story, “My Part in Advancing Right Worship,” in *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1965.



Royal and Pearl Spatz did not see their hope fulfilled in 1914, but they continued faithful for many decades

(See paragraph 10)

10. How did one couple deal with delayed expectations?

11-12. Why can we keep moving forward even if our physical strength has declined? Give an example.



Even in old age, Arthur Secord (far left) was eager to keep progressing. Anatoly and Lidiya Melnik endured faithfully despite many hardships (See paragraphs 11, 13)

Be assured that Jehovah cherishes the faithful service you have accomplished in the past. (Heb. 6:10) And as for the present, remember that whole-souled devotion is not measured by how much we do in Jehovah's service. Rather, we reveal the depth of our devotion by showing a positive spirit and by doing all that we physically can. (Col. 3:23) Jehovah understands our limitations and does not require more than we can give.—Mark 12:43, 44.

¹³ **Long-lasting trials.** Some of Jehovah's servants have endured decades of hardship and persecution. For example, Anatoly Melnik* was just 12 years old when his father was arrested, imprisoned, and exiled to Siberia, more than 4,000 miles (7,000 km) away from his family in Moldova. One year later, Anatoly, his mother, and his grandparents were also exiled to Siberia. In time, they were able to attend meetings in another village, but they had to walk 20 miles

* See Brother Melnik's life story, "Taught From Childhood to Love God," in *Awake!*, October 22, 2004.

13. How does the experience of Anatoly and Lidiya encourage us to press forward in spite of many trials?

(30 km) in the snow, enduring sub-zero temperatures. Later, Brother Melnik spent three years in prison, away from his wife, Lidiya, and their one-year-old daughter. In spite of years of hardship, Anatoly and his family continued to move steadily forward. Now 82 years of age, Anatoly serves on a Branch Committee in Central Asia. Like Anatoly and Lidiya, may we do all we can in Jehovah's service, continuing to endure as we have done in the past.—Gal. 6:9.

MOTIVATED BY OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

¹⁴ Paul was confident that he would finish the race and reach his goal. As an anointed Christian, he looked forward to gaining "the prize of the upward call of God." However, to reach that goal, he realized that he had to keep "pressing on." (Phil. 3:14) Paul shared with the Philippians an interesting comparison to help them keep focused on their goal.

¹⁵ Paul reminded the Philippians of

14. What did Paul realize he had to do to reach his goal?

15. How did Paul use the subject of citizenship to encourage the Philippian Christians to keep "pressing on"?

their heavenly citizenship. (Phil. 3:20) Why did such citizenship matter? In those days, Roman citizenship was highly prized.* However, anointed Christians had a much better citizenship, one that would bring far greater advantages. Roman citizenship paled in comparison! For this reason, Paul encouraged the Philippians to “carry on as citizens in a manner worthy of the good news about the Christ.” (Phil. 1:27, fn.) Anointed Christians today set a fine example as they press on toward their goal of everlasting life in heaven.

¹⁶ Whether our hope is everlasting life in heaven or on a paradise earth, we must keep pressing on toward that goal. No matter what our circumstances, we must not look at the things behind; nor should we let anything hinder our prog-

* Because Philippi was a Roman colony, the city’s inhabitants enjoyed a form of Roman citizenship. So Paul’s illustration was meaningful to his audience.

16. Whether our hope is to live in heaven or on earth, what must we continue to do according to Philippians 4:6, 7?

ress. (Phil. 3:16) The fulfillment of our expectations may seem to be delayed, or our physical strength may be declining. We may have endured hardship and persecution for many years. Whatever the case, “do not be anxious over anything.” Rather, let your petitions and supplications be made known to God, and he will give you a peace that is beyond your imagination.—**Read Philippians 4:6, 7.**

¹⁷ Like a runner who exerts himself as he races down the homestretch, may we stay fully focused on the goal of finishing the race for life. To the extent that our strength and circumstances allow, may we exert ourselves and progress eagerly toward the wonderful things ahead. What must we do in order to press on in the right direction and at a pace that we can maintain? The next article will help us to set proper priorities and to “make sure of the more important things.”—Phil. 1:9, 10.

17. What will we consider in the next article?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- How does Paul’s example motivate us to press on with our eyes on the goal?
- How can we continue running in the race for life in spite of postponed expectations, declining strength, and long-lasting trials?
- What moved Paul to exert himself vigorously?

SONG 106

Cultivating the Quality
of Love

PREVIEW

Now more than ever, we need to strengthen our love for our brothers. The letter to the Philippians helps us to see how we can abound in love, even when we face challenges.

Let Your Love Abound

“This is what I continue praying, that your love may abound still more and more.”—PHIL. 1:9.

WHEN the apostle Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy arrived in the Roman colony of Philippi, they found many people who were interested in the Kingdom message. These four zealous brothers helped form a congregation, and all the disciples began meeting together, likely at the home of a hospitable believer named Lydia.—Acts 16:40.

² The young congregation soon faced a challenge. Satan stirred up enemies of the truth who fiercely opposed the preaching activity of these loyal Christians. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten with rods, and imprisoned. After they were released from prison, they visited the new disciples and encouraged them. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left the city while Luke apparently remained there. How did the newly formed congregation fare? With the help of Jehovah’s spirit, the new believers forged ahead in Jehovah’s service. (Phil. 2:12) Paul had every reason to be proud of them!

³ Some ten years later, Paul wrote a letter to the congregation in Philippi. As you read that letter, you can easily discern the love Paul had for his brothers. “I am longing for all of you with such tender affection as Christ Jesus has,” he wrote. (Phil. 1:8) He wrote them that he

1. Who helped form the congregation in Philippi?
2. What challenge did that congregation soon face?
3. As described at Philippians 1:9-11, what did Paul make a matter of prayer?

prayed in their behalf. He asked Jehovah to help them to abound in love, to make sure of the more important things, to be flawless, to avoid stumbling others, and to continue bearing righteous fruit. No doubt you will agree that we can benefit from Paul's heartfelt words today. So let us read what Paul wrote to the Philippians. **(Read Philippians 1:9-11.)** We will then consider the points he mentioned and discuss how we can apply each of them.

ABOUND IN LOVE

⁴ Jehovah expressed his great love for us by sending his Son to earth to die for our sins. **(Read 1 John 4:9, 10.)** God's unselfish love moves us to love him. (Rom. 5:8) How much should we love God? Jesus answered that question when he told a Pharisee: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matt. 22:36, 37) We do not want our love for God to be half-hearted. Rather, we want our love for him to grow stronger each day. Paul told the Philippians that their love should "abound still more and more." What can we do to strengthen our love for God?

⁵ We need to know God in order to love him. The Bible says: "Whoever does not love has not come to know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8) The apostle Paul indicated that our love for God would grow stronger as we gain "accurate knowledge and full discernment" of Him. (Phil. 1:9) When we first

studied the Bible, we developed love for God based on a limited knowledge of his wonderful qualities. Then the more we learned about Jehovah, the stronger our love for him became. No wonder we view regular Bible study and meditation on God's Word as being among the most important things in our life!—Phil. 2:16.

⁶ God's great love for us will move us to love our brothers. **(Read 1 John 4:11, 20, 21.)** We might think that love for our brothers and sisters will come naturally. After all, we worship Jehovah and strive to imitate his fine qualities. We follow the example of Jesus, whose love was so great that he gave his life in our behalf. Yet, we may at times find it difficult to obey the commandment to love one another. Consider an example in the Philippian congregation.

⁷ Euodia and Syntyche were zealous sisters who had served "side by side" with the apostle Paul. Yet, they had perhaps allowed personal differences to cause a rift between them. In his letter to the congregation where those sisters served, Paul specifically named Euodia and Syntyche and gave them pointed admonition "to be of the same mind." (Phil. 4:2, 3) Paul felt compelled to instruct the entire congregation: "Keep doing all things free from murmuring and arguments." (Phil. 2:14) No doubt Paul's straightforward counsel helped not only these loyal sisters but also the entire congregation to strengthen their bond of love for one another.

4. (a) According to 1 John 4:9, 10, how has Jehovah expressed his love for us? (b) How much should we love God?

5. How can our love grow stronger?

6. According to 1 John 4:11, 20, 21, in what way can we abound in love?

7. What do we learn from Paul's admonition to Euodia and Syntyche?

⁸ Like Euodia and Syntyche, we may face a major obstacle to cultivating a close bond of love with others—the tendency to focus on imperfections. All of us make mistakes every day. If we stay focused on the imperfections of others, our love for them will cool. For example, if a brother forgets to help us clean the Kingdom Hall, we may become irritated. If we then begin to list all the other mistakes we know our brother has made, our irritation will grow and our love for him will diminish. If you find yourself in a similar situation, it would be good to reflect on this fact: Jehovah sees our imperfections as well as those of our brother. Yet, in spite of these imperfections, he still loves our brother and he still loves us. For that reason, we need to imitate Jehovah’s love and keep a positive view of our brothers. When we work hard to love our brothers, we strengthen our bond of unity with them.—Phil. 2:1, 2.

“THE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS”

⁹ Holy spirit inspired Paul to instruct those in Philippi—and all Christians—to “**make sure of the more important things.**” (Phil. 1:10) These important things include the sanctification of Jehovah’s name, the fulfillment of his purposes, and the peace and unity of the congregation. (Matt. 6: 9, 10; John 13:35) When we build our life around these important things, we prove that we love Jehovah.

8. What is a major obstacle to loving our brothers, and how can we overcome it?

9. What are among “the more important things” Paul mentions in his letter to the Philippians?

¹⁰ Paul also said that we must “**be flawless.**” This does not mean that we must be perfect. We cannot be flawless to the degree that Jehovah God is flawless. But Jehovah will view us as flawless if we do our very best to deepen our love and make sure of the more important things. One way in which we show our love is by doing our utmost to avoid stumbling others.

¹¹ The instruction to **avoid stumbling others** is really a warning. How might we stumble someone? We could do so by our choice of entertainment, our choice of clothing, or even our choice of employment. What we do may not be wrong in itself. But if the choices we make offend someone else’s conscience and he or she is stumbled, that matters. Jesus said that we would be better off having a heavy stone tied around our neck and being tossed into the sea than we would be if we stumbled one of his sheep!—Matt. 18:6.

¹² Note how one pioneer couple took Jesus’ warning to heart. They served in a congregation along with a newly baptized couple who came from a very conservative background. This new couple believed that Christians should not go to the movies—even to see wholesome movies. They were shocked when they learned that the pioneer couple had seen a movie. After that, the pioneer couple refrained from going to the movies until the new disciples were able to

10. What must we do to be viewed as flawless?

11. Why must we avoid stumbling others?

12. What do we learn from the example set by one pioneer couple?

train their own consciences to be more balanced. (Heb. 5:14) By their unselfish action, the pioneer couple proved that they loved their new brother and sister not just in word but in deed.—Rom. 14:19-21; 1 John 3:18.

¹³ Another way we could stumble someone is to induce him to commit a sin. How could that happen? Consider this scenario. After a long, hard struggle, a Bible student is finally able to control his addiction to alcohol. He realizes that he must abstain from it completely. He makes rapid progress and gets baptized. Later, a well-meaning host of a Christian gathering urges the new broth-

13. How might we induce someone to commit a sin?

er to accept an alcoholic beverage, saying: “You are a Christian now; you have Jehovah’s spirit. One aspect of the holy spirit is self-control. If you exercise self-control, you should be able to make moderate use of alcohol.” We can only imagine what the consequences would be if the new brother were to listen to that misguided advice!

¹⁴ Our Christian meetings help us to apply the instructions given at Philip-
pians 1:10 in a number of ways. First, the program of rich spiritual food reminds us of what Jehovah considers to be more important. Second, we learn how to apply what we learn so that

14. How do Christian meetings help us to apply the instructions given at Philip-
pians 1:10?

Why do we need to keep a positive view of our brothers?

(See paragraph 8)





Always look for ways to have a full share in the ministry
(See paragraph 17)

we may be flawless. And third, we are incited “to love and fine works.” (Heb. 10:24, 25) The more we are encouraged by our brothers, the more our love for our God and for our brothers will grow. When these two great loves fill our heart, we will do our very best to avoid stumbling our brothers.

CONTINUE TO “BE FILLED WITH RIGHTEOUS FRUIT”

¹⁵ Paul prayed earnestly that the Philippians would “*be filled with righteous fruit.*” (Phil. 1:11) No doubt this “righteous fruit” included their love for Jehovah and his people. That would also include their speaking to others about their faith in Jesus and their wonderful hope. Philippians 2:15 uses another il-

15. What does it mean to “be filled with righteous fruit”?

lustration, namely, “shining as illuminators in the world.” That is fitting because Jesus called his disciples “the light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14-16) He also commanded his followers to “make disciples,” and he said that they would “be witnesses . . . to the most distant part of the earth.” (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) We bear “righteous fruit” when we actively share in this most important work.

¹⁶ No matter what our circumstances, we can shine as illuminators. In some cases, what seems to be an obstacle to declaring the good news may turn out to be an opportunity for us to preach. The apostle Paul, for example, was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote his letter to the Philippians. But his chains

16. How does Philippians 1:12-14 show that we can shine as illuminators even under challenging circumstances? (See cover picture.)

did not hold him back from preaching to his captors and to visitors. Paul preached zealously under these circumstances, and this gave the brothers confidence and courage “to speak the word of God fearlessly.”—**Read Philippians 1: 12-14; 4:22.**

¹⁷ Many of our brothers and sisters have the opportunity to follow Paul’s courageous example. They live in countries where they cannot preach openly or from door to door, so they find other ways to declare the good news. (Matt. 10:16-20) In one such country, a circuit overseer suggested that each publisher cover his own preaching “territory” made up of relatives, neighbors, schoolmates, workmates, and acquaintances. Within two years, the number of congregations in that circuit increased significantly. We may not live in a country where we cannot preach openly. However, we can learn a valuable lesson from the example of our resourceful brothers and sisters: Always look for ways to have

17. Give a modern-day example of bearing fruit under difficult circumstances.

a full share in the ministry, confident that Jehovah will give you the power you need to overcome any obstacle.—Phil. 2:13.

¹⁸ At this momentous time, may we be determined to apply the inspired counsel found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. May we make sure of the more important things, be flawless, avoid stumbling others, and bear righteous fruit. Then we will abound in love and bring honor to our caring Father, Jehovah.

18. What should we be determined to do?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 11: During Kingdom Hall cleaning, one of the brothers, Joe, stops working to talk with a brother and his son. This irritates Mike, the brother who is vacuuming. He thinks, ‘Joe should be working, not talking.’ Later, Mike observes how Joe gently assists an elderly sister. This heartwarming scene reminds Mike to think more about his brother’s good qualities. **Page 12:** In a country where Witnesses cannot preach openly, a brother discreetly shares the Kingdom message with an acquaintance. Later, during a break at his place of work, the brother witnesses to a workmate.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What are some of “the more important things”?
- How can we “be flawless”?
- How can we “be filled with righteous fruit”?

SONG 67

“Preach the Word”

PREVIEW

We would like our relatives to come to know Jehovah, but they must decide if they will serve him or not. This article will consider what we can do to make it easier for our relatives to listen to us.

“Those Who Listen to You” Will Be Saved

“Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.”—1 TIM. 4:16.

“FROM the moment I learned the truth, I’ve wanted everyone in my family to be with me in Paradise,” says a sister named Pauline.* “I especially wanted my husband, Wayne, and our young son to join me in serving Jehovah.” Do you have relatives who have not yet come to know and love Jehovah? You likely feel the same way about them as Pauline felt about her family.

² We cannot force our relatives to accept the good news, but we can encourage them to open their minds and hearts to the Bible’s message. (2 Tim. 3:14, 15) Why should we witness to our relatives? Why do we need to show empathy? What can we do to help our relatives to come to love Jehovah as we do? And how can all in our local congregation help us?

WHY WITNESS TO OUR RELATIVES?

³ Soon, Jehovah will bring this system to an end. Only those who are “rightly disposed for everlasting life” will survive. (Acts 13:48) We spend much time and energy preaching to strangers in our community, so it is natural that we would also want our relatives to serve Jehovah with us. Our loving Father, Jehovah, “does not desire

* Some names have been changed. In this article the term “relatives” is used to refer to family members who are not yet serving Jehovah.

1. What do all of us desire for our relatives?
2. What questions will we discuss in this article?
3. According to 2 Peter 3:9, why should we witness to our relatives?

anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.”—**Read 2 Peter 3:9.**

⁴ We need to keep in mind that there is a right way and a wrong way to share the message of salvation. Although we may be tactful when witnessing to a stranger, we may be too blunt when talking with our relatives.

⁵ Many of us may look back with regret on our initial attempt to witness to our relatives and wish we had dealt with them differently. The apostle Paul counseled Christians: “Let your words *always* be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should answer each person.” (Col. 4:5, 6) It is good to remember this advice when we approach our relatives. Otherwise, we might end up alienating them rather than persuading them.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP OUR RELATIVES?

⁶ **Show empathy.** Pauline, mentioned earlier, says: “At first, I wanted to talk to my husband only about spiritual things. We had no ‘normal’ conversation.” However, Pauline’s husband, Wayne, had little Bible knowledge and did not understand what Pauline was talking about. To him, it seemed that all she thought about was her religion. He worried that she was joining a dangerous sect and was being deceived.

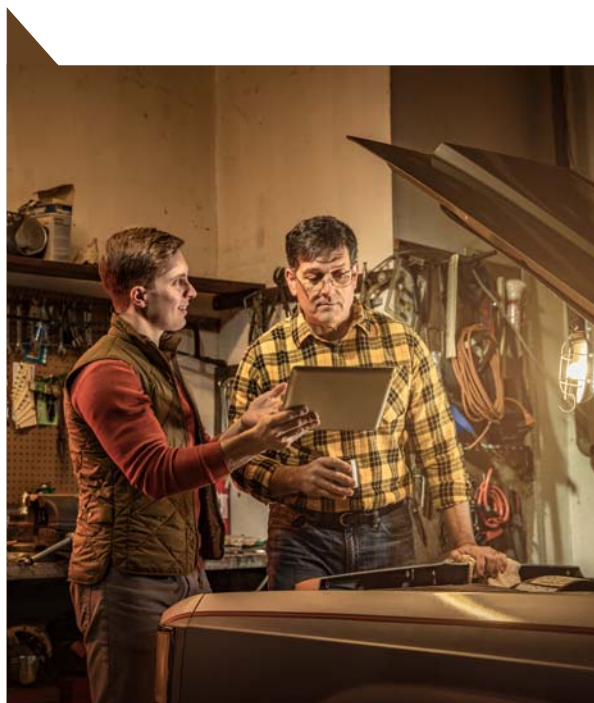
4. What mistake might we make when witnessing to our relatives?

5. What should we keep in mind before trying to share the truth with our relatives?

6-7. Give an example that illustrates the need to show empathy to an unbelieving mate.

USE OUR WEBSITE TO TEACH

We can help draw our relatives to Jehovah by what we say and do and also by sharing our Bible-based publications. In the past, people liked reading printed books, magazines, and tracts. However, many now enjoy reading material online. And a large number like to watch videos. To help your relatives learn about Jehovah’s people at their own pace and at a time convenient for them, invite them to visit jw.org® or watch some of the monthly programs presented on JW Broadcasting®.





Your empathy and conduct can be the greatest witness you give
(See paragraphs 6-8)

⁷ Pauline admits that for a while she spent a great deal of time during her evenings and weekends with her spiritual brothers and sisters—at meetings, in preaching, and at social gatherings. “Wayne sometimes came home to an empty house and felt lonely,” says Pauline. Understandably, Wayne missed his wife and son. He did not know the people they were with, and it seemed that his wife’s new friends had become more important to Pauline than he was. Wayne reacted by threatening to divorce Pauline. Can you see ways in which Pauline could have been more empathetic?

⁸ **Let your conduct speak for you.** Often, what we **do** makes a bigger impres-

8. According to 1 Peter 3:1, 2, what is likely to make the biggest impression on our relatives?

sion on our relatives than what we **say**. **(Read 1 Peter 3:1, 2.)** Pauline eventually realized that fact. “I knew that Wayne loved us and didn’t really want a divorce,” she says. “But his threat made me realize that I had to start doing things Jehovah’s way. Instead of talking so much, I needed to set a good example through my conduct.” Pauline stopped pressuring Wayne to talk about the Bible, and she began conversing with him about everyday matters. Wayne saw her become more peaceable, and he saw their son become better behaved. (Prov. 31:18, 27, 28) When Wayne observed the good effect the Bible’s message was having on his family, he opened his mind and heart to the message from God’s Word.—1 Cor. 7:12-14, 16.

⁹ **Persevere in trying to help your relatives.** Jehovah sets the example for us. “Again and again” he gives people the opportunity to respond to the good news and gain life. (Jer. 44:4) And the apostle Paul told Timothy to persevere in helping others. Why? Because by doing so, he would save himself and those who listened to him. (1 Tim. 4:16) We love our relatives, so we want them to know the truths found in God’s Word. Pauline’s words and actions eventually had a good influence on her family. She now has the joy of serving Jehovah along with her husband. Both of them are pioneers, and Wayne serves as an elder.

¹⁰ **Be patient.** When we conform our life to God’s standards, our relatives may find it difficult to adjust to our new beliefs and lifestyle. Often, the first thing they notice is that we no longer join with them in celebrating religious festivals and no longer engage in political activities. Some relatives might initially be angry with us. (Matt. 10:35, 36) But we should not give up on them. If we stop trying to help them understand our beliefs, we have, in effect, judged them as being unworthy of gaining everlasting life. Jehovah has not given us the job of judging—he has assigned that task to Jesus. (John 5:22) If we are patient, our relatives may eventually be willing to listen to our message.—See the box “Use Our Website to Teach.”

¹¹ **Be firm but tactful.** (Prov. 15:2) Con-

9. Why must we persevere?

10. Why do we need to be patient?

11-13. What do you learn from the way Alice dealt with her parents?

sider the example of Alice. She learned about Jehovah when she was living far away from her parents, who were politically active atheists. She realized that as soon as possible, she needed to tell them about the good things she was learning. “If you wait until later to announce changes in your beliefs and practices,” says Alice, “the shock to your family will be greater.” She wrote letters to her parents, asking what they thought of the Bible’s teachings on topics she hoped would interest them, such as love. (1 Cor. 13:1-13) She thanked her parents for raising her and taking care of her, and she sent them gifts. During visits to her parents’ home, she went out of her way to help her mother around the house. At first, her parents did not respond favorably when Alice told them about her new beliefs.

¹² When Alice was at home with her parents, she stuck to her schedule of Bible reading. “This helped my mother to understand how important the Bible was to me,” says Alice. Meanwhile, Alice’s father decided to learn something about the Bible in order to understand his daughter’s changed thinking, and he wanted to find fault with the Bible. “I gave him a Bible,” says Alice, “and I inscribed it with a personal note.” What was the result? Rather than finding fault, Alice’s father was deeply moved by what he read in God’s Word.

¹³ We need to be firm but tactful, even if we must endure trials. (1 Cor. 4:12b) Alice, for example, had to endure opposition from her mother. “When I got baptized, Mom called me a ‘bad daughter.’” How did Alice respond? “Rather

than avoiding the issue, I respectfully explained that I had made up my mind to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses and would stick to that decision. I tried to reassure my mother that I really loved her. We both cried, and I cooked her a nice meal. From then on, my mother began to acknowledge that the Bible was making me a better person.”

¹⁴ It may take time before our relatives fully understand just how serious we are about serving Jehovah. For instance, when Alice decided to pioneer rather than to pursue the career her parents had chosen for her, her mother cried again. But Alice remained firm. “If you give in to pressure in one area,” says

14. Why must we never give in to pressure to compromise?

Alice, “your family will likely pressure you on other matters. But if you are kind yet firm with your family, some of them may listen to you.” That is what happened in Alice’s case. Both of her parents are now pioneers, and her father is an elder.

HOW CAN ALL IN THE CONGREGATION HELP?

¹⁵ Jehovah draws people to him by means of the “fine works” of the Christian congregation. (Read **Matthew 5:14-16**; **1 Peter 2:12**.) If your mate is not one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, has he or she met members of your congregation? Pauline, mentioned earlier, invited

15. According to Matthew 5:14-16 and 1 Peter 2:12, how may the “fine works” of others help our relatives?



How can the congregation help our unbelieving family members?

(See paragraphs 15-16)

brothers and sisters to her home so that her husband, Wayne, could get to know them. Wayne recalls how one brother helped to break down barriers of misunderstanding: “He took a day off from work just to watch a ball game with me. And I thought, ‘He’s normal!’”

¹⁶ One excellent way to help our relatives is to invite them to attend congregation meetings with us. (1 Cor. 14:24, 25) Wayne attended his first meeting—the Memorial—because it was after work and the program was relatively short. “I did not understand what the talk was all about,” he says, “but I remembered the people. They came up and welcomed me and shook my hand firmly. I could tell they were sincere.” One couple had already been especially kind to Pauline, helping her with her son at meetings and in the ministry. So when Wayne eventually decided that he needed to understand more about Pauline’s new beliefs, he asked the husband to study the Bible with him.

16. Why should we invite our relatives to attend meetings?

¹⁷ We hope that all our relatives will join us in serving Jehovah. However, despite all our efforts to help our relatives to become God’s servants, they may not come into the truth. If that is the case, we should not blame ourselves for their decision. After all, we cannot force anyone to accept our beliefs. Even so, do not underestimate the influence you can have on your relatives as they see how happy you are serving Jehovah. Pray for them. Tactfully speak to them. Do not hold back! (Acts 20:20) Be confident that Jehovah will bless your efforts. And if your relatives choose to listen to you, they will be saved!

17. For what should we not blame ourselves, but why must we never give up on our relatives?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 15 (box): A young brother is helping his unbelieving father work on his car. At an appropriate time, he shows him a video on jw.org®. **Page 16:** A sister listens attentively as her unbelieving husband talks about his busy day. Later, she enjoys recreation with her family. **Page 18:** The sister has invited members of her congregation to her home. They take a sincere interest in getting to know her husband. Later, the husband attends the Memorial with his wife.

HOW CAN YOU SHOW THE FOLLOWING QUALITIES WHEN DEALING WITH YOUR RELATIVES?

■ Empathy

■ Patience

■ Tact

SONG 38

He Will Make You Strong

PREVIEW

At times, brothers and sisters in full-time service may have to leave their assignment, or they may receive a new assignment. This article discusses the challenges they face and what can help them to make a successful transition. It also considers what others can do to encourage and support them, as well as principles that can help all of us to deal with changes.

Adjusting to a New Assignment

“God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name.”—HEB. 6:10.

“AFTER we had spent 21 wonderful years in our missionary assignment, all four of our parents had become infirm,” recall Robert and Mary Jo. “We were happy to take care of them. Still, it was painful to leave what had become the home of our hearts.”

² “When we learned that our health would not permit us to return to our assignment, we wept,” relate William and Terrie. “Our dream of serving Jehovah in a foreign land was over.”

³ “We knew that our persecutors wanted to close the branch office where I was serving,” says Aleksey. “But it was still a shock when it happened and we had to leave Bethel.”

⁴ Add to these the experiences of thousands of Bethel family members and others who have received new assignments.* These faithful brothers and sisters may find it challenging to leave a cherished assignment. What can help them to deal with the change? How can you assist them? The answers to those questions can help all of us to deal with changing circumstances in life.

* Similarly, upon reaching a certain age, many responsible brothers have turned over their responsibilities to younger brothers. See the articles “Older Christians—Jehovah Treasures Your Loyalty,” in *The Watchtower* of September 2018, and “Maintain Inner Peace Despite Changing Circumstances,” in *The Watchtower* of October 2018.

1-3. What are some reasons why full-time servants may have to change assignments?

4. What questions will we discuss in this article?

HOW TO DEAL WITH A CHANGE

⁵ Whether we serve in the field or at Bethel, we can develop deep affection for people and even for the place where we serve. If for any reason we have to leave, our heart feels torn. We miss those who stay behind, and we worry about them, especially if we had to leave because of persecution. (Matt. 10:23; 2 Cor. 11:28, 29) Further, taking up a new assignment—or even returning home—often means experiencing culture shock. “We had become unfamiliar with our own culture and even with preaching in our native language,” say Robert and Mary Jo. “We felt as if we didn’t fit in anymore.” Some who get a change of assignment may suddenly face unexpected financial challenges. They may feel uncertain, insecure, and discouraged. What can help?

⁶ *Stay close to Jehovah.* (Jas. 4:8) How

5. In what ways can a change of assignment affect us?
6. How can we stay close to Jehovah?

can we do that? By trusting in him as the “Hearer of prayer.” (Ps. 65:2) “Pour out your hearts before him,” says Psalm 62:8. Jehovah can do “more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive.” (Eph. 3:20) He does not limit himself to what we specifically ask for in our prayers. He may do the unexpected, beyond anything that we could ever think of, to solve our problems.

⁷ To remain close to Jehovah, read the Scriptures daily and ponder on them. One former missionary says: “Maintain a regular schedule of family worship and meeting preparation, just as you did in your former assignment.” Also, continue to be fully involved in preaching the good news in your new congregation. Jehovah remembers those who continue to serve him faithfully, even if they cannot do all they did before.—**Read Hebrews 6:10-12.**

7. (a) What will help us to remain close to Jehovah? (b) According to Hebrews 6:10-12, what will result from our continuing to serve Jehovah faithfully?



Why may leaving an assignment be challenging for full-time servants?
(See paragraph 5)



It is essential that we draw close to Jehovah and trust in him
(See paragraphs 6-7)

⁸ **Keep your life simple.** Do not let the anxieties of Satan’s world “choke” your spiritual activity. (Matt. 13:22) Reject pressure from the world or from well-meaning friends or relatives to seek financial security in Satan’s system. **(Read 1 John 2:15-17.)** Trust in Jehovah, who promises to provide for all our spiritual, emotional, and material needs “at the right time.”—Heb. 4:16; 13:5, 6.

⁹ **Avoid unnecessary debt. (Read Proverbs 22:3, 7.)** A move can be surprisingly costly, and it is easy to get into debt. To minimize the debt, beware of buying on credit things you do not really need.

8. How can the words found at 1 John 2:15-17 help you to keep your life simple?

9. According to Proverbs 22:3, 7, why is it important to avoid unnecessary debt, and what can help us to make wise decisions?

When we are under emotional pressure, as when caring for sick loved ones, we may find it difficult to decide how much debt to take on. In such situations, remember that “prayer and supplication” can help you to make wise decisions. In response to your prayers, Jehovah can grant you the peace that will “guard your hearts and your mental powers,” helping you to think things through calmly.—Phil. 4:6, 7; 1 Pet. 5:7.

¹⁰ **Maintain good relationships.** Share your feelings and experiences with good friends, especially those who may have experienced similar joys and challenges. Doing so can promote emotional healing. (Eccl. 4:9, 10) The friends you made in your former assignment will remain your friends. Now, in your new assignment, you need to make new friends. Remember that to have a friend, you need to be a friend. How can you cultivate new friendships? Share the rich experiences Jehovah has given you, and let others sense your joy in Jehovah’s service. Even if some in the congregation do not understand your enthusiasm for full-time service, others may be drawn to your example and become good friends. Be mindful, though, not to draw undue attention to your own accomplishments, and do not focus on negative feelings.

¹¹ If you had to leave your assignment because of your mate’s health, do not blame him or her. On the other hand, if you yourself had health problems, do not feel guilty, thinking that

10. How can we cultivate new friendships?

11. How can you keep your marriage happy?

WAYS THE CONGREGATION CAN HELP



Offer practical assistance
(See paragraph 13)



Involve reassigned ones in your ministry
(See paragraph 14)

you let your mate down. Remember, you are “one flesh,” and you promised before Jehovah to care for each other under all circumstances. (Matt. 19:5, 6) If you left an assignment because of an unplanned pregnancy, make sure your child knows that he is more important to you than your assignment was. Reassure your child that you view him as “a reward” from God. (Ps. 127:3-5) At the same time, tell him about the rewarding experiences you had in your assignment. Doing so can motivate your child to use his life in Jehovah’s joyful service just as you have done.

HOW OTHERS CAN HELP

¹² Commendably, many congregations and individuals do what they can to enable those in full-time service to remain in their assignments. They do so by encouraging them to continue their work, by giving them financial or other material support, or by helping them to care for their family members back home. (Gal. 6:2) If those in full-time service receive a new assignment to your congregation, do not view the change of assignment as an indication that they somehow failed or were disciplined.* Instead, help them to make the transition easier. Give them a warm welcome and commend them for the work they have done, even if poor health limits what they can do at present. Get to know

* The elders in the congregation where they have been serving should write a letter of introduction as soon as possible, so as not to delay their continuing to serve as a pioneer, as an elder, or as a ministerial servant.

12. (a) How can we help those in full-time service to continue in their assignments? (b) How can we make their transition to a new assignment easier?

them. Learn from their wealth of knowledge, training, and experience.

¹³ Initially, those receiving a new assignment may need your help to obtain housing, transportation, work, and other basic necessities. They may also need current information about everyday matters, such as paying taxes and obtaining insurance. Most important, they need, not pity, but understanding. They may be struggling to deal with their own health problems or those of their relative. They may be grieving over the death of a loved one.* And they also may grieve, even if in private, over the loss of association with their spiritual family in their former assignment. It takes time to process such deep and often very mixed emotions.

* See the series "Help for Those Who Grieve," in the 2018 *Awake!* No. 3.

13. What help can we provide for those receiving a new assignment?

¹⁴ In the meantime, your support and example can help them to adjust. "In my previous assignment, I conducted Bible studies every day," says a sister who served for many years in a foreign land. "In my new one, it was difficult even to get the opportunity to open the Bible or to show a video in the ministry. But local publishers invited me on their calls and studies. Seeing those zealous and courageous brothers and sisters conduct progressive Bible studies gave me a more positive outlook. I learned to start conversations in the new territory. All of this helped me to regain joy."

KEEP MOVING FORWARD!

¹⁵ You can make a success of your new assignment. Do not consider a change to be a failure or a step backward. Look

14. How did local publishers help one sister to adjust to her new assignment?

15. How can you make a success of your new assignment?

Look for ways to expand your ministry in your home territory

(See paragraphs 15-16)



for Jehovah's hand in your life and keep preaching. Imitate the faithful Christians of the first century. Wherever they were, they "went through the land declaring the good news of the word." (Acts 8:1, 4) Your efforts to keep on preaching may yield good results. For example, pioneers who were expelled from one country moved to a neighboring land where there also was a great need in their language. Within months, new rapidly growing groups were formed.

¹⁶ "The joy of Jehovah is your strength." (Neh. 8:10, fn.) We must find our joy primarily in Jehovah and not in our assignment, no matter how much we treasure it. Therefore, keep walking with Jehovah, looking to him for wisdom, guidance, and support. Remember that you came to love your former assignment because you put your heart into helping the people there. Put your heart into your present assignment and see how Jehovah helps you to love it too.—Eccl. 7:10.

¹⁷ We must remember that our ser-

16. How can you find joy in a new assignment?

17. What must we remember about our present assignment?

vice to Jehovah is eternal, but our present assignment is temporary. In the new world, all of us may have a change of assignment. Aleksey, mentioned at the outset, believes that his current experiences are preparing him for that. "I always knew that Jehovah and the new world are real, but somehow they seemed a little distant," Aleksey says. "Now I see Jehovah right in front of my eyes and the new world as the next stop on my journey." (Acts 2:25) No matter what our assignment is, let us keep walking with Jehovah. He will never leave us, but he will help us to find joy in doing whatever we can in his service—whatever that may be.—Isa. 41:13.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS **Page 21:** A couple obliged to leave the missionary work in a foreign land say a tearful goodbye to their congregation. **Page 22:** Back in their country of origin, the same couple persistently pray to Jehovah to help them cope with the challenges they face. **Page 24:** With Jehovah's help, the couple are back in full-time service. They use the language skills they learned as missionaries to share the good news with immigrants in their new congregation's territory.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What can help us to deal with a change of assignment?
- How can we help others who have received a new assignment?
- How can we keep moving forward in Jehovah's service?

FAITH

A Strengthening Quality

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS
GOODNESS
FAITH
MILDNESS
SELF-CONTROL

FAITH has tremendous power. For example, although Satan wants to kill us spiritually, faith enables us “to extinguish all the wicked one’s burning arrows.” (Eph. 6:16) With faith, we can face mountainlike problems. Jesus told his disciples: “If you have faith the size of a mustard grain, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move.” (Matt. 17:20) Since faith has the potential for strengthening us spiritually, we do well to consider these questions: What is faith? How does our heart condition affect our faith? How can we strengthen our faith? And in whom should we put faith?—Rom. 4:3.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith goes beyond simply believing or acknowledging the truth, for even “the demons believe [that God exists] and shudder.” (Jas. 2:19) What, then, is faith?

The Bible defines faith as having two aspects. **First**, “faith is the assured expectation of what is hoped for.” (Heb. 11:1a) If you have faith, you firmly believe that everything Jehovah says is true and will be fulfilled. For example, Jehovah told the Israelites: “If you could break my covenant regarding the day and my covenant regarding the night, to prevent day and night from coming at their proper time, only then could my covenant with my servant David be broken.” (Jer. 33:20, 21) Are you ever afraid that the sun

might stop rising and setting in the sky, thus causing day and night to cease? If you do not doubt the physical laws that keep the earth rotating on its axis and orbiting the sun, should you doubt that the Creator of these laws can fulfill his word? Of course not!—Isa. 55:10, 11; Matt. 5:18.

Second, faith is “the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.” Faith is said to be “the evident demonstration,” or “convincing evidence,” of things that are invisible to the eye and yet real. (Heb. 11:1b; ftn.) In what way? Suppose a child asks you, ‘How do you know that air exists?’ Although you have never seen air, you would likely help the child to reason on the evidence that exists—breathing, the effects of wind, and so on. Once the child is convinced of the evidence, he accepts the existence of what is invisible to him. Similarly, faith is based on solid evidence.—Rom. 1:20.

RIGHT HEART CONDITION NECESSARY

Since faith is based on evidence, to have faith a person must first acquire “an accurate knowledge of truth.” (1 Tim. 2:4) But that is not enough. The apostle Paul wrote: **“With the heart** one exercises faith.” (Rom. 10:10) A person must not only believe the truth but also value it. Only then will he be motivated to exercise faith, that is, to act in harmony with the truth. (Jas. 2:20) A

person who does not have heartfelt gratitude for the truth may reject even convincing evidence if he stubbornly holds to preconceived ideas or seeks to excuse his fleshly desires. (2 Pet. 3:3, 4; Jude 18) This is why in Bible times, not all who witnessed miracles developed faith. (Num. 14:11; John 12:37) God’s holy spirit produces faith only in people whose heart favors the truth over lies.—Gal. 5:22; 2 Thess. 2:10, 11.

HOW DAVID DEVELOPED STRONG FAITH

Among those who had outstanding faith was King David. (Heb. 11:32, 33) However, not everyone in David’s family had such faith. For example, on one occasion Eliab, David’s oldest brother, showed a lack of faith when he rebuked David for his concern about Goliath’s challenge. (1 Sam. 17:26-28) No one is born with faith; nor does anyone inherit faith from his parents, so David’s faith was a result of his own relationship with God.

In Psalm 27, David reveals how he came to have such strong faith. (Vs. 1) David **meditated** on his past experiences and on how Jehovah had dealt with his adversaries. (Vss. 2, 3) He deeply **appreciated** Jehovah’s arrangement for worship. (Vs. 4) David **worshipped** God along with fellow believers at the tabernacle. (Vs. 6) He earnestly sought out Jehovah in **prayer**. (Vss. 7, 8) David also wanted to be **instructed** in God’s way. (Vs. 11) So important was this quality to David that he rhetorically asked: “Where would I be if I did not have faith?”—Vs. 13.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

You can have faith like that of David if you imitate the mental attitude and habits reflected in Psalm 27. Since faith is based on accurate knowledge, the more you study God’s Word and Bible-based publications,



Just as we trust that there will always be day and night, we trust that God’s word will always come true

the easier it will be to produce this aspect of the fruitage of God’s spirit. (Ps. 1: 2, 3) Take time to meditate when you study. Meditation is the soil in which appreciation grows. As your appreciation for Jehovah deepens, so will your desire to exercise faith by worshipping him at congregation meetings and declaring your hope to others. (Heb. 10:23-25) Also, we demonstrate faith when we continue “to pray and not to give up.” (Luke 18:1-8) Therefore, “pray constantly” to Jehovah, trusting that “he cares for you.” (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:7) Faith moves us to action, and our actions, in turn, strengthen our faith.—Jas. 2:22.

EXERCISE FAITH IN JESUS

On the evening before his death, Jesus told his disciples: “Exercise faith in God;

exercise faith also in me.” (John 14:1) So we need to exercise faith not only in Jehovah but also in Jesus. How can you exercise faith in Jesus? Let us consider three ways.

First, view the ransom as God’s personal gift to you. The apostle Paul said: “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and handed himself over for me.” (Gal. 2:20) When you exercise faith in Jesus, you firmly believe that the ransom applies to you, is the basis for forgiving your sins, offers you the hope of everlasting life, and is the greatest confirmation of God’s love for you. (Rom. 8:32, 38, 39; Eph. 1:7) This will strengthen you to keep negative feelings about yourself at bay.—2 Thess. 2:16, 17.

Second, draw close to Jehovah in prayer on the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice. Because of the ransom, we can pray to Jehovah “with freeness of speech, so that we may receive mercy and find undeserved kindness to help us at the right time.” (Heb. 4:15, 16; 10:19-

22) Prayer strengthens our resolve to resist the temptation to sin.—Luke 22:40.

Third, obey Jesus. The apostle John wrote: “The one who exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; the one who disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.” (John 3:36) Note that John contrasted exercising faith with being disobedient. Therefore, you exercise faith in Jesus when you obey him. You obey Jesus by following “the law of the Christ,” that is, all that he taught and commanded. (Gal. 6:2) You also obey Jesus by heeding the guidance he provides through “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) By obeying Jesus, you will have the strength to endure stormlike adversities.—Luke 6:47, 48.

“BUILD YOURSELVES UP ON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH”

Once, a man cried out to Jesus: “I have faith! Help me out where I need faith!” (Mark 9:24) He had a measure of faith, but this man modestly recognized that he needed more faith. Like this man, all of us at some point will need more faith. And all of us can strengthen our faith now. As we have seen, we strengthen our faith when we study God’s Word and meditate on it, which will deepen our appreciation for Jehovah. Our faith will also grow stronger when we—along with fellow believers—worship Jehovah, publicly declare our hope, and persevere in prayer. Moreover, when we strengthen our faith, we receive the greatest reward of all. God’s Word urges us: “Beloved ones, build yourselves up on your most holy faith . . . in order to keep yourselves in God’s love.”—Jude 20, 21.



What does it mean to exercise faith in Jesus?



JOHN THE BAPTIST

A Lesson in Maintaining Joy

DO YOU long for a congregation assignment that is currently out of reach for you? Perhaps it is a responsibility that is enjoyed by someone else. Or maybe it is a service assignment, or privilege, that you once took care of. However, age, poor health, economic hardship, or family responsibilities now limit what you can do. Or it could be that you have had to give up a long-held responsibility because of organizational changes. Regardless of the reason, you may feel that you are not doing all that you would like to do in God's service. In such situations, it is understandable that you may at times feel disappointed. Even so, how can you keep negative emotions—such as discouragement, bitterness, or resentment—from taking root? How can you maintain your joy?

We can learn a lesson in maintaining joy by considering the example of John the Baptist. John enjoyed outstanding privileges, yet he likely expected his life in Jehovah's service to work out differently from what it

did. He may not have imagined that he would spend more time in jail than he did in his ministry. Still, John continued to be joyful, and he maintained that attitude for the rest of his life. What helped him? And how can we retain our joy even when we face disappointments?

A JOYFUL ASSIGNMENT

In the spring of 29 C.E., John began his assignment as forerunner of the Messiah, saying: "Repent, for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 3:2; Luke 1:12-17) Many responded. In fact, crowds came from far and wide to hear his message, and many were moved to repent and get baptized. John also boldly warned the self-righteous religious leaders of the judgment that awaited them unless they changed. (Matt. 3:5-12) He saw his ministry reach its climax in the fall of 29 C.E. when he baptized Jesus. From then on, John directed others to follow Jesus, the promised Messiah.—John 1:32-37.

In view of John's unique role, Jesus could say: "Among those born of women, there has not been raised up anyone greater than John the Baptist." (Matt. 11:11) John no doubt rejoiced over the blessings he received. Like John, many today have experienced rich blessings. Take a brother named Terry as an example. He and his wife, Sandra, have spent over 50 years in full-time service. Terry states: "I have had many wonderful privileges. I have served as a pioneer, a Bethelite, a special pioneer, a circuit overseer, a district overseer, and now again as a special pioneer." It is a joy to receive theocratic privileges, but as we will learn from John's example, remaining joyful requires effort when our circumstances change.

REMAIN APPRECIATIVE

A key to John the Baptist's enduring joy was that he never lost his appreciation for the privileges he had. Consider an example. After Jesus' baptism, John's ministry began to decrease while Jesus' ministry began to increase. Concerned, John's disciples approached him and said: "See, this one is baptizing, and all are going to him." (John 3:26) John replied: "Whoever has the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, when he stands and hears him, has a **great deal of joy** on account of the voice of the bridegroom. So **my joy has been made complete.**" (John 3:29) John did not compete with Jesus; nor did John think that the privilege he had received had been diminished by Jesus' greater role. Instead, John remained joyful because he cherished his role as "friend of the bridegroom."

John's disposition helped him to remain content despite all that his assignment required of him. For instance, John was a Nazirite from birth, and therefore he was forbidden to drink wine. (Luke 1:15) "John came neither eating nor drinking," said Jesus, re-

ferring to John's austere lifestyle. On the other hand, Jesus and his disciples were under no such restrictions and lived a more normal life. (Matt. 11:18, 19) Also, while John did not perform any miracles, he knew that Jesus' disciples, including some who initially followed John, were granted that power. (Matt. 10:1; John 10:41) Rather than let such differences distract him, John zealously stuck to his own assignment from Jehovah.

If we too treasure our current assignment in Jehovah's service, we can safeguard our joy. Terry, mentioned earlier, says, "I concentrated on each of the assignments I was given." As he looks back on his life of full-time service, he says, "I have no regrets but only wonderful memories."

We can deepen our joy in God's service by meditating on what gives real value to any theocratic assignment, or responsibility. It is the privilege of being "God's fellow workers." (1 Cor. 3:9) Just as polishing a treasured heirloom can preserve its luster, meditating on the profound honor of serving God can prevent wrong views from tarnishing our joy. We will resist comparing our sacrifices with the sacrifices of other people. We will not esteem our privileges less because of the privileges granted to others.—Gal. 6:4.

FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL MATTERS

John may have known that his ministry would be limited, but he may not have realized how abruptly it would end. (John 3:30) In 30 C.E., some six months after baptizing Jesus, John was imprisoned by King Herod. Still, John did what he could to continue giving a witness. (Mark 6:17-20) What would help him remain joyful through these changes? He kept focused on spiritual matters.

While John was in prison, he received reports about Jesus' expanding ministry. (Matt. 11:2; Luke 7:18) John was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah but may have wondered how Jesus would fulfill **all** that the



Focusing on good reports of our worldwide preaching work can help us maintain our joy

Scriptures said the Messiah would accomplish. Since the Messiah was to receive kingship, might Jesus' rulership start soon? Would it lead to John's being freed from prison? Eager for a clearer understanding of Jesus' role, John dispatched two of his disciples to ask Jesus a question: "Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?" (Luke 7:19) When they returned, John must have listened intently as they described that Jesus had performed miraculous cures and then sent them back to tell John: "The blind are now seeing, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed, the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up, and the poor are being told the good news."—Luke 7:20-22.

John was no doubt strengthened by their report. It verified that Jesus was fulfilling the Messianic prophecies. Although Jesus' appearance would not lead to John's release from prison, John knew that his service had not been in vain. Despite his circumstances, he had reason to be happy.

Like John, if we focus on spiritual matters, we will be able to endure with joy and patience. (Col. 1:9-11) We can do this by reading the Bible and meditating on it, reminding us that our work in God's service is never in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58) Sandra says: "Reading a chapter of the Bible each day has helped me draw closer to Jehovah. It helps me focus on him and not on me." We can also focus on reports of Kingdom activity, which can help us to look beyond our own circumstances and concentrate on what Jehovah is accomplishing. "The monthly programs on JW Broadcasting® help us feel closer to the organization," says Sandra, "and they help us to maintain joy in our assignment."

John the Baptist carried out his brief career with "Elijah's spirit and power," and like Elijah, he "was a man with feelings like ours." (Luke 1:17; Jas. 5:17) If we imitate his example of appreciation and spiritual focus, we too can remain joyful in our Kingdom service, come what may.

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COVER PICTURE:

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul writes his letter to the congregation in Philippi. During that time, Paul also makes good use of opportunities to preach to his guards and to visitors (See study article 32, paragraph 16)

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