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COVER IMAGE:

CROATIA

Two brothers offer a tract to a painter on the bridge in front of Kaštilac, a fortress built in the 16th century, near the city of Split

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 WEEK OF APRIL 30–MAY 6

Baptism—A Requirement for Christians

16 WEEK OF MAY 7-13

Parents, Are You Helping Your Child Progress to Baptism?

What should be our goal when we teach a Bible student? Why would it be a mistake to put off getting baptized? What has prevented some Christian parents from encouraging their children to get baptized? These two articles will answer those questions and others.

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28 WEEK OF MAY 14-20

The Delightful Course of Hospitality —So Needed!

The apostle Peter urged Christians in the first century: “Be hospitable to one another.” (1 Peter 4:9) Why is this counsel so important in our day? What are some ways that we can be hospitable? And how can we be good guests? This article will answer those questions.

40 WEEK OF MAY 21-27

Discipline—Evidence of God’s Love

53 WEEK OF MAY 28–JUNE 3

“Listen to Discipline and Become Wise”

These two articles will help us to understand how God’s discipline proves how much he loves us. How does God discipline us? How should we respond to his discipline? And how can we develop self-discipline? Find the answers in these articles.



SONGS:
52, 41

**WHAT DO WE
LEARN ABOUT
BAPTISM FROM
THE FOLLOWING
SCRIPTURES?**

1 Peter 3:20, 21

Matthew 28:19, 20

Acts 22:16

Baptism—A Requirement for Christians

“Baptism . . . is also now saving you.”

—1 PETER 3:21.

MARIA’S parents watched as their young daughter stood up with the others who wanted to get baptized. The speaker asked

1, 2. (a) How do some parents feel when their child wants to get baptized? (b) Why are those who want to get baptized asked if they have dedicated themselves to Jehovah? (See opening picture.)

two questions. Maria answered in a loud and clear voice. Soon after that, she got baptized.

² Maria's parents were very proud that their daughter had dedicated her life to Jehovah and got baptized. But before that, Maria's mother had been a little concerned. She wondered: 'Is Maria too young to get baptized? Does she really understand how serious it is to dedicate herself to Jehovah? Should she wait longer to get baptized?' Many loving parents ask themselves similar questions when their child says that he or she wants to get baptized. (Ecclesiastes 5:5) After all, the most important decision anyone can make is to dedicate his life to Jehovah and get baptized.—See the box "Have You Dedicated Yourself to Jehovah?"

³ The apostle Peter compared baptism to Noah's building the ark. He said: "Baptism, which corresponds to this, is also now saving you." (Read 1 Peter 3:20, 21.) The ark gave obvious proof to others that Noah wholeheartedly wanted to do God's will. Noah faithfully did the work Jehovah gave him to

3, 4. (a) How did the apostle Peter teach us that baptism is very important? (b) Why did Peter compare baptism to Noah's building the ark?



Have You Dedicated Yourself to Jehovah?

Before Bible students can be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses, the brother who gives the baptism talk asks them to answer two questions in front of the audience. The first question is, **"On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?"**

How do we know that those who present themselves for baptism have already dedicated themselves to Jehovah? Jesus told his followers to make disciples and baptize them. (Matthew 28:19, 20) About a year before that, Jesus had said to his apostles and other disciples: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and keep following me."—Matthew 16:24.

While Jesus was on earth, his whole life was focused on doing Jehovah's will. So Bible students who want to do **all** the things that Jesus commanded his followers must disown themselves as he did. They must dedicate themselves completely to Jehovah. Like Jesus, they make God's will the most important thing in their life. (Matthew 26:39) When a person gets baptized, he makes it clear to others that he has disowned himself and is determined to serve God with all his strength, possessions, and abilities. (Romans 12:1) That is why the speaker asks those who want to get baptized to confirm that they have already dedicated themselves to Jehovah to do his will.

do. Because of Noah's faith, Jehovah saved him and his family during the Flood. What was Peter trying to teach us?

⁴ When people saw the ark, they knew that Noah had faith in God. When people see someone getting baptized, they know that he has dedicated his life to God because of his faith in the resurrected Christ. Like Noah, those who get baptized obey God and do the work he has given them to do. And just as Jehovah saved Noah during the Flood, he will save his loyal baptized servants when he destroys this wicked world. (Mark 13:10; Revelation 7: 9, 10) Clearly, it is very important to dedicate our life to Jehovah and get baptized. In fact, if someone delays getting baptized, he could lose the opportunity to live forever.

⁵ Now that we know how serious baptism is, we need to know the answer to these three questions: What does the Bible say about baptism? What must a person do before he can get baptized? Why should we always remember how important baptism is when we teach our children or a Bible student?

5. What will we learn in this article?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT BAPTISM

⁶ In the Bible, the first person we read about who baptized others was John the Baptist. (Matthew 3: 1-6) Why did people come to him to get baptized? They did so to show that they had repented of their sins, that is, they admitted that they had disobeyed the Law of Moses and were deeply sorry. But the most important baptism that John performed had a completely different meaning. John had the great honor of baptizing Jesus, God's perfect Son. (Matthew 3:13-17) Jesus had never sinned. He did not need to repent. (1 Peter 2:22) So why did Jesus get baptized? To show that he was ready to use his life to do God's will.—Hebrews 10:7.

⁷ After Jesus began preaching, his disciples started to baptize others. (John 3:22; 4:1, 2) Those people also got baptized because they had repented of their sins against the Law of Moses. But after Jesus died and was resurrected, those who wanted to be his disciples would have to get baptized for a different reason.

6, 7. (a) What did John's baptism mean? (b) Whose baptism was different from all others, and why?

⁸ In the year 33, soon after his resurrection, Jesus spoke to more than 500 men, women, and possibly even children. This may have been the time when he said: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 15:6) Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples. Anyone who wants to be his disciple, or take his “yoke,” has to get baptized. (Matthew 11:29, 30) To serve God in the way that pleases Him, a person has to accept that God uses Jesus to accomplish His will. Then, that person can get baptized with God’s approval. The Bible gives much evidence that Jesus’ early disciples knew how important it was to get baptized. They did not think that they should wait and get baptized later.—Acts 2:41; 9:18; 16:14, 15, 32, 33.

DO NOT DELAY GETTING BAPTIZED

⁹ Read Acts 8:35, 36. An Ethiopian man who

8. (a) What command did Jesus give after his resurrection?
(b) Why do Christians need to get baptized?

9, 10. What can we learn about baptism from the Ethiopian man and from Saul?

had accepted the Jewish faith was on his way home after worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem. Jehovah's angel sent Philip to preach to him, and Philip taught him "the good news about Jesus." How did the Ethiopian man react? He understood how important it was to accept Jesus as Lord, and he wanted to do what Jehovah requires of Christians. So he got baptized without delay.

¹⁰ Another example is a Jewish man named Saul. The entire Jewish nation had been dedicated to God, but Jehovah had rejected the Jews because they did not obey him. Saul believed that the Jews were still serving God in the right way, so he persecuted the Christians. But one day, the resurrected Jesus, who Saul thought was dead, personally spoke to Saul from heaven. How did Saul react? He gladly accepted help from the Christian disciple Ananias. The Bible says: "He then got up and was baptized." (Acts 9:17, 18; Galatians 1:14) He later became known as the apostle Paul. Notice that as soon as he understood that God was using Jesus to accomplish His will, Saul got baptized without delay.—Read Acts 22:12-16.

¹¹ Today, too, it is similar with many Bible stu-

-
11. (a) What makes Bible students today decide to get baptized?
(b) How do we feel when someone gets baptized?

dents, young and old. Because they love and trust what the Bible says, they are eager to dedicate their life to Jehovah and get baptized. In fact, the baptism talk is always a special moment at assemblies and conventions. Jehovah's Witnesses are happy when Bible students accept the truth and decide to get baptized. Parents are very happy when their children do the same. During the 2017 service year, more than 284,000 new ones got baptized to show that they had dedicated their life to Jehovah. (Acts 13:48) Clearly, they understood that it is necessary for Christians to get baptized. But what did they have to do before they could get baptized?

¹² Before Bible students can get baptized, they must learn the truth about God, his purpose for humans and the earth, and what he did to save mankind. (1 Timothy 2:3-6) Then they need to develop faith, which will help them to obey God's laws and to stop doing what he hates. (Acts 3:19) This is important, because Jehovah will not accept the dedication of a person who keeps doing things that He hates. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) But there is more. Those who want to dedicate their life to Jehovah need to attend congregation meetings and regularly preach the good news and teach others. This is

12. What must Bible students do before they can get baptized?

required of anyone who wants to follow Christ. (Acts 1:8) A student must first do all these things. Then he can dedicate his life to Jehovah in a private prayer and get baptized.

MAKE BAPTISM A GOAL FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

¹³ When we help our children and other Bible students to do these necessary things, we must remember that those who want to be true followers of Jesus have to get baptized. Then we will not be afraid to tell them at appropriate times how important dedication and baptism are. We want our children and other Bible students to keep making progress and get baptized!

¹⁴ Of course, no one should pressure or force a child or a Bible student to get baptized. Jehovah does not force any of us to serve him. (1 John 4:8) When we teach others, we must help them understand how important it is for them to develop a personal relationship with Jehovah. Then, if a Bible student is truly grateful to know the truth about God and really wants to do everything that true

13. When we teach others, why must we remember that they have to get baptized to be true Christians?

14. Why do we not pressure anyone to get baptized?

**Christians should do, he will want to get baptized.
—2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.**

¹⁵ A person does not have to get baptized at a certain age. Everyone is different, and some students progress faster than others. Many get baptized

15, 16. (a) Does a person have to be a certain age to get baptized? Explain. (b) Why must a Bible student get baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses even if he was already baptized in another religion?

When you teach others, do you look for opportunities to help them understand that baptism is very important?

(See paragraph 13)



when they are young, and they remain faithful to Jehovah as they grow older. Others are already much older when they learn Bible truth and get baptized. Some are even more than 100 years old!

¹⁶ One lady who studied the Bible had already been baptized in a few different religions. That is why she asked her Bible teacher if it was really necessary to get baptized again. Her teacher showed her some Bible verses that answered her question. Once the lady understood what the Bible requires, she got baptized, even though she was almost 80 years old. What do we learn from this example? Jehovah will accept our baptism only if we know the truth about his will. So even if we were baptized in another religion, we still have to get baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.—Read Acts 19:3-5.

¹⁷ The day a person gets baptized is a very happy day. It is also a time to think carefully about what dedication and baptism involve. To do everything that is required of a true Christian is hard work. Jesus' disciples must "live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up."—2 Corinthians 5:15; Matthew 16:24.

17. What should a person think about on the day he gets baptized?

¹⁸ As we have learned in this article, the decision to become a true Christian is very serious. That is why Maria's mother asked herself the questions mentioned at the beginning of the article. If you are a parent, you may have asked yourself: 'Is my child really ready to get baptized? Does my child know enough about Jehovah to dedicate himself to God? Should my child get a good education and a job before getting baptized? What if my child commits a serious sin after getting baptized?' We will discuss these questions in the next article, and we will learn how Christian parents can have the right view of baptism.

18. What questions will we discuss in the next article?

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

To dedicate yourself to Jehovah means to promise that you will use your whole life to serve Jehovah and do his will. You make this promise in a private prayer to Jehovah. Every Christian needs to dedicate himself to Jehovah and then get baptized



SONGS:
51, 135

**HOW CAN PARENTS
USE THESE VERSES
TO HELP THEIR
CHILDREN
PROGRESS TO
BAPTISM?**

Colossians 1:9, 10

Ecclesiastes 12:1

James 4:17

Parents, Are You Helping Your Child Progress to Baptism?

“Why are you delaying? Rise, get baptized.”—ACTS 22:16.

“FOR months I kept telling Dad and Mom that I wanted to be baptized, and they often talked to me about it. They wanted to make sure I knew how serious my decision was. On December 31, 1934, the day came for this momentous

1. What do Christian parents want to be sure of before their children get baptized?

event in my life.” That is how Blossom Brandt described what happened when she decided to get baptized. Today, too, parents want to help their children make wise decisions. If a child waits to get baptized without having a good reason for waiting, this could harm the child’s relationship with Jehovah. (James 4:17) Before their child gets baptized, wise parents want to be sure that he or she is ready to become a disciple of Christ.

² Some circuit overseers have noticed that many young ones in their late teens and early 20’s are not yet baptized, even though they have grown up in the truth. Most of the time, these young ones go to the meetings, go in field service, and view themselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Still, for some reason they have not dedicated themselves to Jehovah and been baptized. In some cases, this is because the parents think that their children are not ready to get baptized. In this article, we will discuss four concerns that have prevented some parents from encouraging their children to get baptized.

-
2. (a) What problem have some circuit overseers noticed?
(b) What will we discuss in this article?

IS MY CHILD OLD ENOUGH?

³ Blossom's parents, mentioned in the first paragraph, were concerned about whether she was old enough to understand what it means to get baptized and how serious it is. How can parents know if their child is ready to dedicate himself to Jehovah?

⁴ **Read Matthew 28:19, 20.** The Bible does not say that a person should get baptized at a specific age. But it is good for parents to think carefully about what it means to make disciples. In the Greek language, the word for “make disciples” used at Matthew 28:19 means to teach someone with the goal of helping him become a student, or a disciple. A disciple is someone who learns and understands what Jesus taught and who wants to obey him. So from the time their children are born, parents should teach them with the goal of helping them to dedicate themselves to Jehovah and become disciples of Christ. Of course, babies do not qualify to get baptized. Still, the Bible shows that even young children can understand and love Bible truth.

3. What were Blossom's parents concerned about?

4. How can Jesus' command found at Matthew 28:19, 20 help parents today?

⁵ Timothy was a disciple who decided to serve Jehovah while he was still young. The apostle Paul said that Timothy began to learn the truth from God's Word "from infancy." Timothy's father did not serve Jehovah, but his mother and grandmother helped Timothy to love God's Word. As a result, he had very strong faith. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15) He may have been in his late teens or early 20's when he qualified to receive special assignments in the congregation.—Acts 16:1-3.

⁶ Every child is different. Not all become mature at the same age. Some children understand the truth, make wise decisions, and want to get baptized when they are young. Others may not be ready to get baptized until they are a little older. Wise parents do not pressure their children to get baptized. Instead, they help each child to make progress at his or her own pace. Parents are happy when their child applies Proverbs 27:11. (Read.) But they must remember that their goal is to help their children to become disciples. With that in mind, they should ask themselves, 'Does my child

5, 6. (a) The Bible's description of Timothy leads us to what conclusion about his baptism? (b) What is the best way for wise parents to help their children?

know enough to dedicate himself to God and get baptized?’

DOES MY CHILD KNOW ENOUGH?

⁷ As parents teach their children, they help them to know the truth well. This knowledge will move children to dedicate themselves to God. But that does not mean that a child has to know every detail of every Bible teaching before he can make a dedication and get baptized. Every disciple of Christ must keep learning even after getting baptized. (Read Colossians 1:9, 10.) So how much does someone need to know before he can get baptized?

⁸ The experience of a family from the past can help parents today. (Acts 16:25-33) In the year 50, Paul went to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey. While he was there, he and Silas were falsely accused, arrested, and thrown in jail. During the night, there was a powerful earthquake that opened all the doors of the jail. The jailer thought that all the prisoners had escaped, and he

7. Does someone need to know every detail of every Bible teaching before he can get baptized? Explain.

8, 9. What happened to a jailer in Philippi, and what can we learn from his experience?

wanted to kill himself. But Paul stopped him. Then Paul and Silas taught the jailer and his family the truth about Jesus. They believed the things they learned about Jesus and realized how important it was to obey him. So they got baptized right away. What can we learn from their experience?

⁹ The jailer may have been a retired Roman soldier. He did not know God's Word. So to become a Christian, he had to learn basic truths from the Bible, understand what Jehovah requires of his servants, and want to obey Jesus' teachings. What he learned in that short time helped him want to get baptized. Of course, he would have continued to learn more after he was baptized. So when your child tells you that he wants to get baptized because he loves Jehovah and wants to obey him, what can you do? You may let him talk to the elders so that they can decide if he qualifies to get baptized.* (See footnote.) Like all baptized Christians, he will continue to learn more about Jehovah for as long as he lives, even forever.—Romans 11:33, 34.

* Parents can discuss with their child the helpful information in *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, pages 304-310. See also the "Question Box" in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, April 2011, page 2.

WHAT IS THE BEST EDUCATION FOR MY CHILD?

¹⁰ Some parents think that it would be best for their child to get baptized only after he gets some advanced education and has a good career. These parents may have good intentions, but they should ask themselves: ‘Will that help my child to be truly successful? Does it agree with what we learn from the Bible? How does Jehovah want us to use our life?’—Read Ecclesiastes 12:1.

¹¹ It is important to remember that this world and the things in it are against what Jehovah wants and thinks. (James 4:7, 8; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19) A close relationship with Jehovah is the best protection a child can have against Satan, this world, and the world’s bad thinking. If parents put education and a good job first in life, their child will probably believe that the things in the world are more important than a close relationship with Jehovah. This is dangerous. As loving parents, do you really want this world to teach your child what it thinks will make him happy? The only way to be successful and have true joy is to put Jehovah first in our life.—Read Psalm 1:2, 3.

10, 11. (a) What do some parents think? (b) What will really protect a child?

WHAT IF MY CHILD WERE TO SIN?

¹² One mother explained why she had not wanted her daughter to get baptized. She said, “I am ashamed to say that the major reason was the disfellowshipping arrangement.” Like that sister, some parents feel that it is better for their child to wait to get baptized until he is old enough to avoid making foolish mistakes. (Genesis 8:21; Proverbs 22:15) Those parents may feel that if their child is not baptized, he cannot get disfellowshipped. But what is wrong with this reasoning?—James 1:22.

¹³ Of course, parents do not want their child to get baptized before he is ready to dedicate his life to Jehovah. But it would be a mistake to think that a child is not accountable to Jehovah until he is baptized. A child becomes accountable to God when he knows what Jehovah says is right and wrong. (Read James 4:17.) Wise parents do not discourage their child from getting baptized. Even when the child is young, they teach him to love what Jehovah says is right and hate what He says is wrong, just as they do. (Luke 6:40) Your

12. Why do some parents feel it is better for their child to wait to get baptized?

13. If someone is not baptized, does this mean that he is not accountable to Jehovah? Explain.



child's love for Jehovah will protect him against committing a serious sin, because he will want to do what Jehovah says is right.—Isaiah 35:8.

OTHERS CAN HELP

¹⁴ The elders can support what parents are doing by being positive when they talk about goals in Jehovah's service. One sister remembered that Brother Russell spoke to her when she was six years old. She said, "He took 15 minutes with me to discuss my spiritual goals." What was the result? Later, that sister became a pioneer, and she pioneered for

14. How can the elders support what parents are doing?



Parents must have the goal of helping their child to become a disciple
(See paragraphs 16, 17)

more than 70 years! Clearly, positive words and encouragement can affect a person's whole life. (Proverbs 25:11) Elders can also invite parents and children to help with projects at the Kingdom Hall. They can ask the children to do things that fit their age and abilities.

¹⁵ How can others in the congregation help? By showing appropriate personal interest in young ones. For example, you can look for signs that young ones are drawing closer to Jehovah. Did a child give a good comment at the meeting, or did he have a part on the midweek meeting program?

15. How can others in the congregation help young ones?

Did he witness to someone at school, or did he do the right thing when he was tempted to do something wrong? If so, be quick to tell him he did well! We can make it a goal to talk to young ones before and after the meetings. When we do, children will feel that they are part of “the great congregation.”
—Psalm 35:18.

HELP YOUR CHILD PROGRESS TO BAPTISM

¹⁶ One of the greatest privileges for parents is teaching their children to love Jehovah. (Psalm 127:3; Ephesians 6:4) In the nation of Israel, children were dedicated to Jehovah when they were born. But our children are not. Just because parents love Jehovah and the truth, it does not mean that their children will. From the day their child is born, parents must have the goal of helping him to become a disciple, to dedicate himself to God and get baptized. What could be more important? A person’s dedication, baptism, and faithful service to Jehovah will make it possible for him to be saved during the great tribulation.—Matthew 24:13.

¹⁷ When Blossom Brandt wanted to get baptized, her parents wanted to be sure that she was ready.

16, 17. (a) Why is it important for children to get baptized?
(b) What joy can Christian parents have? (See opening picture.)

When they were sure that she was, they supported her decision. Blossom explained what her father did the night before she got baptized: “He had all of us get on our knees, and he offered a prayer. He told Jehovah that he was so happy about his little girl’s decision to dedicate her life to Him.” More than 60 years later, Blossom said: “You can be sure, in all the ages to come, I’ll never forget that night!” Parents, may you too have joy and satisfaction when you see your children become dedicated and baptized servants of Jehovah.

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

A **disciple** is one who has been taught about Jehovah and Jesus. He tries to be like Jesus and puts Jehovah’s work first in his life. He also obeys Jesus and gets baptized. The goal of parents is to help their children to become disciples and dedicate themselves to Jehovah without delay

We are **accountable to Jehovah** when we know what Jehovah wants us to do, whether we are baptized or not. Being accountable to him means that we are responsible for our actions and decisions



SONGS:
100, 87

**HOW WOULD YOU
ANSWER?**

Why is it important to be hospitable to our brothers and sisters?

What opportunities do we have to be hospitable?

What can prevent us from being hospitable, and how can we improve?

The Delightful Course of Hospitality —So Needed!

“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”—1 PETER 4:9.

SOMETIME between the years 62 and 64, the apostle Peter wrote to “the temporary residents scattered about in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” (1 Peter 1:1) These brothers and sisters had come from many dif-

1. What difficulties did Christians have in the first century?

ferent places. They were facing “fiery trials,” or persecution, and needed encouragement and guidance. They also lived during a very dangerous time. Peter wrote: “The end of all things has drawn close.” In less than ten years, Jerusalem would be destroyed. What would help Christians everywhere to get through those stressful times?—1 Peter 4:4, 7, 12.

² One thing Peter urged his brothers to do was to “be hospitable to one another.” (1 Peter 4:9) The Greek word for “hospitality” literally means “fondness for, or kindness to, strangers.” But Peter was urging his brothers and sisters to be hospitable “to one another,” even though they already knew one another and were doing things together. How would being hospitable help them?

³ It would draw them closer together. What about you? Do you remember the pleasant time you had when someone invited you to his home? And when you invited someone to your home, this brought you closer together. A good way to get to know our brothers and sisters is by being hospitable to them. Christians who lived in Peter’s time needed to draw closer to one another as problems became worse. In

2, 3. Why did Peter urge his brothers to be hospitable? (See opening picture.)

these “last days,” we need to do the same.—2 Timothy 3:1.

⁴ In what ways can we be hospitable “to one another”? What can prevent us from being hospitable, and how can we improve? What can help us to be good guests?

OPPORTUNITIES TO BE HOSPITABLE

⁵ **At meetings:** Jehovah and his organization invite us to the meetings. We want everyone who attends our meetings to feel welcome, especially new ones. (Romans 15:7) They are also Jehovah’s guests, so we need to make them feel comfortable, no matter what they look like or how they are dressed. (James 2:1-4) If you notice that a visitor is alone, could you invite him to sit with you? He may be grateful if you help him to understand what will be happening during the program or to find the scriptures that are being read. This would be an excellent way to “follow the course of hospitality.”—Romans 12:13.

⁶ **For snacks or a meal:** People in Bible times often showed hospitality by inviting others to their

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4. What questions will we discuss in this article?
 5. How can we be hospitable at our Christian meetings?
 6. To whom should we be the most hospitable?

home for a meal, showing that they wanted to be friends and have peace. (Genesis 18:1-8; Judges 13:15; Luke 24:28-30) To whom should we be the most hospitable? It should be to the brothers and sisters in our congregation. As this system gets worse, we will need to depend on our brothers and sisters and be their loyal friends. In 2011, the Governing Body changed the time of the *Watchtower* Study for the United States Bethel family from 6:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. Why? The announcement said that it would probably be easier for Bethelites to accept and show hospitality to one another if the meeting ended earlier. Other branches have done the same. This has been a great opportunity for those in the Bethel family to get to know one another.

⁷ Sometimes brothers from other congregations, circuit overseers, or representatives from Bethel give a talk to our congregation. Can we use these occasions to be hospitable to these brothers? (Read **3 John 5-8**.) One way we can do this is to invite them to our home for a snack or a meal.

⁸ A sister in the United States remembers: “Over the years, my husband and I have had the opportunity to provide hospitality in our home for many speakers and their wives.” She feels that every

7, 8. How can we be hospitable to visiting speakers?

experience strengthened their faith and at the same time was fun. She says: “We have never regretted it.”

⁹ Guests who stay longer: In Bible times, it was common to give some visitors a place to stay. (Job 31:32; Philemon 22) Today, we may need to do the same. Circuit overseers often need a place to stay when they visit congregations. This may also be the case with students of theocratic schools and with construction volunteers. And what about those who have become homeless after a natural disaster? They may need somewhere to live until their home is rebuilt. We should not assume that only those who have big homes can help. They may have already done so many times before. Can you offer someone a place to stay, even if your home is small?

¹⁰ A brother in South Korea remembers when students attending theocratic schools stayed with him. He writes: “I hesitated initially because we were newly married and living in a small house. But having students stay with us was truly a joyous experience. As newlyweds, we were able to see how happy a couple can be when they serve Jehovah and pursue spiritual goals together.”

9, 10. (a) Who may need to stay with us for a longer period of time? (b) Can those who have smaller homes help? Give an example.

11 New brothers and sisters in the congregation: Some brothers and sisters or families may move to your area from other congregations. They may have come because your congregation needed help. Or they may be pioneers who were assigned to your congregation. This is a big change for them. They will have to adjust to a new area, a new congregation, and maybe even a new language or culture. Could you invite them to have a snack or a meal or to go somewhere together? This will help them to make new friends and adjust to their changed circumstances.

12 You do not need to prepare many things to be hospitable. (Read Luke 10:41, 42.) One brother remembers something that happened when he and his wife first became missionaries. He says: “We were young, inexperienced, and homesick. One evening my wife was particularly homesick, and my efforts to help were not working. Then, about 7:30 p.m., we heard a knock on the door. There stood a Bible student who brought us three oranges. She had come to welcome the new missionaries. We invited her in

11. Why may those who are new to your congregation need hospitality?

12. What experience shows that you do not need to prepare many things to be hospitable?

and gave her a glass of water. Then we made tea and hot chocolate. We didn't know Swahili yet, and she didn't know English." The brother said that this experience helped them to start making friends with the local brothers and to be happier.

LET NOTHING STOP YOU FROM BEING HOSPITABLE

¹³ Have you ever hesitated to be hospitable? If so, you may have missed an opportunity to have an enjoyable time and to make friends that you will have forever. Being hospitable is one of the best ways to stop feeling lonely. So why would anyone hesitate to be hospitable? There are a few reasons.

¹⁴ **Time and energy:** Jehovah's people are very busy and have many responsibilities. Some may feel that they do not have enough time or energy to be hospitable. If you feel that way, you may need to change your schedule to be able to show and accept hospitality. This is important because the Bible urges us to be hospitable. (Hebrews 13:2) So being hospitable is the right thing to do. But to show hos-

13. How does being hospitable help you?

14. What can we do if we do not have enough time and energy to show or accept hospitality?

pitality, you may need to spend less time doing things that are less important.

15 How you feel about yourself: Have you ever wanted to be hospitable but felt that you could not do it? Perhaps you are shy and worry that your guests will get bored. Or perhaps you do not have much money and you worry that you cannot offer your guests what other brothers and sisters can. But remember that a home does not need to be fancy. Your guests will be happy if your home is clean and tidy and if you are friendly.

16 If you feel anxious about having guests, you are not alone. An elder in Britain admits: “There can be a measure of nervousness in preparing for guests. But as with anything in relation to serving Jehovah, the benefits and satisfaction that result far outweigh any anxiety. I have enjoyed simply sitting down with guests over coffee and talking.” It is always good to show personal interest in your guests. (Philippians 2:4) Most people enjoy talking about their experiences in life. We may hear their experiences only when we get together with them. Another elder writes: “Having friends from the congregation to my home helps me to understand them better and

15. Why may some feel that they cannot be hospitable?

16, 17. What can you do if you feel anxious about having guests?

gives me time to get to know them, especially how they came into the truth.” If you show personal interest in your guests, you can be sure that all will enjoy themselves.

¹⁷ A pioneer sister who often had students from different theocratic schools stay with her admitted: “Initially I was concerned because my accommodations are very modest, and I have secondhand furniture. The wife of one of the instructors really put me at ease. She said that when she and her husband are serving in the traveling work, their best weeks are those spent staying with a spiritual person who may not have much materially but who has the same focus as they have—serving Jehovah and keeping life simple. This reminded me of what my mum used to say to us as children: ‘Better a dish of vegetables where there’s love.’” (Proverbs 15:17) There is no need to worry, because what really matters is that we show love to our guests.

¹⁸ **How you feel about others:** Is there someone in your congregation who irritates you? If you do not try to overcome these negative feelings, your feelings will not change. You may not want to invite someone to your home if you do not like his person-

18, 19. How can being hospitable help us to overcome our negative feelings about others?

ality. Or perhaps there is someone who hurt you in the past, and it is hard for you to forget.

¹⁹ The Bible says that you can improve your relationship with others, even with your enemies, if you are hospitable. (Read Proverbs 25:21, 22.) If you invite someone to your home, you may be able to overcome negative feelings and to develop a more peaceful relationship with him. You may begin to see the same good qualities in him that Jehovah saw when He drew him to the truth. (John 6:44) When love motivates you to invite someone who does not expect it, this could be the start of a good friendship. How can you make sure that love is really your motive? One way is to apply the counsel at Philippians 2:3: “With humility consider others superior to you.” We should think of ways that our brothers and sisters are superior to us. Maybe we can learn from their faith, endurance, or some other Christian quality. Thinking about their good qualities will deepen our love for them and make it easier to be hospitable.

BE A GOOD GUEST

²⁰ The psalmist David asked: “O Jehovah, who

20. Why and how should we be reliable when we have accepted an invitation?



Hosts usually
prepare well for
their guests
(See paragraph 20)

may be a guest in your tent?” (Psalm 15:1) After that, David discussed qualities that Jehovah wants his guests to have. One of these is being reliable: “He does not go back on his promise, even when it is bad for him.” (Psalm 15:4) If we accept an invitation, we should not cancel unless it is absolutely necessary. The host may have already prepared for our visit, and if we cancel, all his effort will have been wasted. (Matthew 5:37) Some people cancel one invitation so that they can accept one they feel is better. Is that loving and respectful? We should be grateful for whatever our host offers us. (Luke 10:7) If we must cancel, then it would be lov-

ing and thoughtful to let our host know as soon as possible.

²¹ It is also important to respect local customs. In some cultures, unexpected guests are welcome. In others, it is better to make arrangements before we visit. In some places, the host offers his guests the best food he has, and his family comes second. In others, everyone is treated the same. In some areas, guests normally bring something to contribute to the meal. In others, hosts prefer that their guests not bring anything. In some cultures, guests politely refuse the first or second invitation. But in others, it is rude not to accept the first invitation. We should always do our best to make sure that our host will be happy that he invited us.

²² Peter said: “The end of all things has drawn close.” (1 Peter 4:7) Today, we face the greatest tribulation the world will ever experience. As this system gets worse, we will need to have deep love for our brothers and sisters. Peter’s counsel applies now more than ever: “Be hospitable to one another.” (1 Peter 4:9) Yes, hospitality is enjoyable and necessary now and forever.

21. How can respecting local customs help us to be good guests?

22. Why is it so important to “be hospitable to one another”?



SONGS:

123, 86

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What do we learn about God's discipline from what happened to Shebna?

When we give discipline, how can we imitate Jehovah and his Son?

For what does discipline prepare us?

Discipline Evidence of God's Love

"Those whom Jehovah loves he disciplines."—HEBREWS 12:6.

WHAT do you think of when you hear the word "discipline"? Many people think of punishment, but discipline is much more than that. The Bible says that discipline is good for us and sometimes mentions it along

1. How does the Bible often describe discipline?

with knowledge, wisdom, love, and life. (Proverbs 1:2-7; 4:11-13) That is because God's discipline proves that he loves us and wants us to live forever. (Hebrews 12:6) Although God's discipline sometimes includes punishment, it is never cruel or harmful. In fact, the most important meaning of the word "discipline" involves education, such as the education a parent gives a beloved child.

² Think about this example. A little boy named Johnny was throwing a ball in the house. His mother said: "Johnny, you know you should not play with your ball in the house! You might break something." But he ignored his mother and continued to play with the ball. The ball hit a vase, and the vase broke! What did Johnny's mother do to discipline him? She taught him by explaining why what he did was wrong. She wanted him to realize that it is good for him to obey his parents and that their rules are necessary and reasonable. To help Johnny learn this lesson, she decided that it would also be appropriate to punish him by taking his ball away from him for a while. That was not pleasant for Johnny, but it helped him to remember

2, 3. How might discipline include teaching and punishment? (See opening picture.)

that there would be consequences if he disobeyed his parents.

³ As Christians, we are part of God's household. (1 Timothy 3:15) Our Father, Jehovah, has the right to decide what is right and what is wrong and to discipline us when we disobey him. Also, if our actions have unpleasant consequences, Jehovah's loving discipline can help us to remember how important it is that we obey him. (Galatians 6:7) God loves us very much and does not want us to suffer. —1 Peter 5:6, 7.

⁴ When we give discipline based on the Bible, we can help a child or a Bible student to become a follower of Christ. We use the Bible to teach our students what is right and to help them understand and 'observe all the things Jesus commanded us.' (Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Timothy 3:16) This is the way Jehovah wants them to be trained so that they too can help others follow Christ. (Read Titus 2:11-14.) Now let us discuss three important questions: (1) How does God's discipline prove that he loves us? (2) What can we learn from the example of people who were disciplined by God? (3) How

4. (a) How does Jehovah want us to train others? (b) What will we discuss in this article?

can we imitate the way Jehovah and his Son give discipline?

GOD DISCIPLINES WITH LOVE

⁵ Jehovah corrects, educates, and trains us because he loves us. He wants us to stay close to him and to live forever. (1 John 4:16) He never insults us or makes us feel worthless. (Proverbs 12:18) Instead, Jehovah focuses on our good qualities and allows us to have free will. Can you see how the discipline we receive through the Bible, our publications, our parents, or the elders proves Jehovah loves us? In fact, when elders try to correct us in a mild and loving way even before we realize that we have done something wrong, they are actually imitating Jehovah's love for us.—Galatians 6:1.

⁶ Sometimes discipline involves more than counsel. If someone has sinned seriously, he will no longer qualify for certain assignments in the congregation. Even when this happens, the discipline shows God's love for him. For example, it may help him to see how important it is to spend more time studying the Bible,

5. How does discipline from Jehovah prove that he loves us?

6. How does discipline show God's love even if it means that someone no longer qualifies for an assignment?

meditating, and praying. Doing these things can help his relationship with Jehovah become stronger. (Psalm 19:7) As time goes by, he may regain the responsibilities or assignments that he lost. Even when someone is disfellowshipped, that proves Jehovah's love because it protects the congregation from bad influences. (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7, 11) And because God's discipline is always fair, it helps the disfellowshipped person to understand how serious his sin is. This can cause him to repent.—Acts 3:19.

JEHOVAH'S DISCIPLINE BENEFITS US

⁷ To understand how important discipline is, we will now discuss two people whom Jehovah disciplined. One is Shebna, an Israelite who lived during the time of King Hezekiah, and the other is Graham, a brother in our time. Shebna was “in charge of the house,” apparently that of King Hezekiah, and had much authority. (Isaiah 22:15) But Shebna became proud and wanted to make others think that he was important. He even made an expensive tomb for himself and rode in “glorious chariots.”—Isaiah 22:16-18.

7. Who was Shebna, and what bad quality did he develop?

⁸ Because Shebna tried to get glory for himself, God gave his assignment to a man named Eliakim. (Isaiah 22:19-21) This happened when King Sennacherib of Assyria planned to attack Jerusalem. Later, Sennacherib sent a group of officials and a large army to frighten the Jews and make King Hezekiah surrender. (2 Kings 18:17-25) Hezekiah sent Eliakim and two other men to meet the officials. One of these men was Shebna, who was now a secretary. From this we can see that Shebna probably had learned to be humble and did not feel offended or sorry for himself. He was willing to accept a less important position. Here are three lessons we can learn from what happened to Shebna.

⁹ First, the fact that Shebna lost his position reminds us that “pride is before a crash.” (Proverbs 16:18) We may have special assignments in the congregation, and others may think that we are important. If so, will we remain humble? Will we remember that any abilities we have and any good things we accomplish are only because of

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8. How did Jehovah discipline Shebna, and what was the result?
9-11. (a) What important lessons can we learn from Shebna?
(b) How do you feel about how Jehovah treated Shebna?



If we are humble and willing to adjust
our attitude, God will bless us
(See paragraphs 8-10)

Jehovah? (1 Corinthians 4:7) The apostle Paul warned: “I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think, but to think so as to have a sound mind.”
—Romans 12:3.

¹⁰ Second, the strong counsel that Jehovah gave Shebna may indicate that he believed that Shebna could change. (Proverbs 3:11, 12) This is a lesson for those who have lost a special assignment. Instead of becoming angry and offended, they can continue to give Jehovah their best. They can choose to view the discipline as evidence of Jeho-



vah’s love. Remember that our Father will eventually reward those who remain humble. (Read 1 Peter 5:6, 7.) Jehovah’s loving discipline can mold us if we are humble and are like soft clay.

¹¹ Third, we learn a valuable lesson from the way Jehovah treated Shebna. Although the way that Jehovah disciplines shows that he hates sin, it also shows that he loves the person who sinned. Jehovah looks for the good in people. If you are a parent or an elder, will you imitate the way Jehovah gives discipline?—Jude 22, 23.

¹² Sadly, some people feel so hurt when they are disciplined that they draw away from God and the congregation. (Hebrews 3:12, 13) Does that mean that no one can help them? No! Take the example of Graham, who was disfellowshipped and was later reinstated. After that, however, he stopped preaching and going to meetings. An elder made the effort to become Graham's friend, and eventually Graham asked the elder to study the Bible with him.

¹³ The elder recalled: "Graham had a problem with pride. He was critical of the elders who had been involved in his disfellowshipping. So for the next few studies, we discussed scriptures on pride and its effects. Graham began to see himself clearly in the mirror of God's Word, and he did not like what he saw! The effect was amazing! After acknowledging that he had been blinded by a 'rafter' of pride and that his critical attitude was his problem, he began to change quickly for the better. He started to attend Christian meetings regularly, to study God's Word earnestly, and to make daily prayer a habit. He also accepted his spiritual re-

12-14. (a) How do some react to discipline from Jehovah? (b) How did God's Word help one brother to change his attitude, and what was the result?

sponsibilities as family head, much to the delight of his wife and children.”—Luke 6:41, 42; James 1:23-25.

¹⁴ The elder added: “One day, Graham told me something that touched my heart. ‘I’ve known the truth for years,’ he said, ‘and I’ve even served as a pioneer. But only now can I honestly say that I love Jehovah.’” Soon, Graham was assigned to help with the microphones at the meetings, and he was happy to have that assignment. The elder said: “His example taught me that when a person humbles himself before God by accepting discipline, blessings just pour out!”

IMITATE GOD AND CHRIST WHEN YOU GIVE DISCIPLINE

¹⁵ If we want to become good teachers, we must first be good students. (1 Timothy 4:15, 16) Likewise, if you are someone Jehovah uses to discipline others, you must remain humble and let Jehovah guide you in life. When others see that you are humble, they will respect you and it will be easier for them to accept advice or counsel from you. We can learn from Jesus’ example.

15. What must we do so that our discipline will be effective?

¹⁶ Jesus always obeyed his Father, even when doing so was very difficult. (Matthew 26:39) He reminded his listeners that his teachings and wisdom came from his Father. (John 5:19, 30) Jesus was humble and obedient, and this helped him to be a compassionate teacher. Sincere people enjoyed being around him. (Read Matthew 11:29.) Jesus' kind words encouraged those who were discouraged and who felt weak. (Matthew 12:20) He corrected his apostles in a kind and loving way even when he could have become irritated with them for arguing about which one of them was the greatest.—Mark 9:33-37; Luke 22:24-27.

¹⁷ Any time elders give discipline based on Bible principles, they need to imitate Christ. In this way they will prove that they want to be guided by God and his Son. The apostle Peter wrote: “Shepherd the flock of God under your care, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly before God; not for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; not lording it over those who are God’s inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock.” (1 Pe-

16. What can we learn from Jesus about effective discipline and teaching?

17. What qualities will help elders take good care of the congregation?

ter 5:2-4) Elders who joyfully submit to God and to Christ will benefit, and so will those they care for.—Isaiah 32:1, 2, 17, 18.

¹⁸ What about discipline and training in the family? Jehovah tells family heads: “Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah.” (Ephesians 6:4) Are training and discipline really necessary? We read at Proverbs 19:18: “Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not become responsible for his death.” Jehovah gives parents the responsibility to discipline their children. If they do not, they must answer to him! (1 Samuel 3:12-14) But Jehovah gives parents the wisdom and strength they need when they ask for his help in prayer and rely on his Word and holy spirit to guide them.—Read James 1:5.

LEARNING HOW TO LIVE FOREVER IN PEACE

¹⁹ If we accept discipline from God and imitate the way Jehovah and Jesus give discipline, we will have many, many blessings! Our families and

18. (a) What does Jehovah expect parents to do? (b) How does God help parents?

19, 20. (a) What blessings come when we accept God’s discipline? (b) What will we discuss in the next article?

congregations will be peaceful, and everyone will feel loved, valued, and safe. This is just a small sample of the peace and happiness we will have in the future. (Psalm 72:7) Jehovah's discipline is preparing us to live together forever as a peaceful and united family, with Jehovah as our Father. (Read Isaiah 11:9.) If we remember this, we will see what discipline really is: a beautiful way that God shows us his love.

²⁰ In the next article, we will learn more about discipline in the family and the congregation. We will discuss how we can discipline ourselves. And we will learn how to avoid something more painful than any discipline we could ever receive.

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

When **Jehovah disciplines us**, he trains and teaches us. His discipline is never cruel or harsh but is always kind and wise. As a loving Father, Jehovah helps us to see where we need to improve and how we can do so



“Listen to Discipline and Become Wise”

“My sons . . . listen to discipline and become wise.”—PROVERBS 8:32, 33.

WISDOM comes from Jehovah, and he generously shares it with others. We read at James 1:5: “If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching.” One way we find wisdom is by accepting God’s discipline. Doing so

1. How can we find wisdom, and how will it help us?

SONGS:
56, 89

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How does Jehovah patiently teach us self-discipline?

How can parents raise their children in the discipline of Jehovah?

How can we benefit from any discipline we may receive in the congregation?

protects us from doing things that are wrong and helps us remain close to Jehovah. (Proverbs 2:10-12) And we will have the wonderful hope of everlasting life.—Jude 21.

² Because we are imperfect or because of how we were raised, it is sometimes difficult to accept discipline or see it as something good. But when we experience the benefits of God’s discipline in our life, we understand just how much he loves us. Proverbs 3:11, 12 tells us: “My son, do not reject the discipline of Jehovah.” Then it says: “For those whom Jehovah loves he reproveth.” We can be sure that Jehovah wants what is best for us. (Read Hebrews 12:5-11.) Because God knows us so well, his discipline is always appropriate and exactly what we need. In this article, we will discuss four aspects of discipline: (1) self-discipline, (2) the discipline parents should give their children, (3) the discipline we receive in the congregation, and (4) something that is worse than any pain from discipline.

WHY ARE WE WISE IF WE DISCIPLINE OURSELVES?

³ If we have self-discipline, we control the way

2. How can we learn to love God’s discipline?

3. How does a child develop self-discipline? Give an example.

we behave and think. We are not born with self-discipline, but we have to learn it. For example, when a child learns to ride a bicycle, one of his parents usually holds the bicycle to keep it steady. But, in time, the child learns how to stay on the bicycle, and the parent can let go of it for a few seconds at a time. When the parent is sure that the child will stay on the bicycle, he can let go of it completely. In a similar way, when parents patiently train their children “in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah,” they are helping their children to develop self-discipline and wisdom.—Ephesians 6:4.

⁴ The same is true of people who come to know Jehovah when they are adults. Although they may have some self-discipline, they are not mature Christians yet. But when they start putting on “the new personality” and trying to be like Christ, they become more mature. (Ephesians 4:23, 24) Self-discipline helps us learn “to reject ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things.”—Titus 2:12.

4, 5. (a) Why is self-discipline an important part of “the new personality”? (b) Why should we not become discouraged even if we make mistakes?

⁵ However, we are all sinful. (Ecclesiastes 7:20) So if we make a mistake, does it mean that we do not have enough self-discipline or maybe none at all? Not necessarily. We learn at Proverbs 24:16: “The righteous one may fall seven times, and he will get up again.” What will help us to “get up again”? Not our own strength, but God’s spirit. (Read Philippians 4:13.) The fruitage of that spirit includes self-control, which is very similar to self-discipline.

⁶ Prayer, Bible study, and meditation will also help us to develop self-discipline. But what if studying the Bible is difficult for you or you do not like studying? Do not be discouraged. If you let him, Jehovah will help you to “form a longing” for his Word. (1 Peter 2:2) Ask Jehovah to help you discipline yourself so that you can find the time to study the Bible. Perhaps you can begin by studying for just a few minutes at a time. Gradually, it will become easier and more enjoyable to study. You will love the quiet times you spend meditating on Jehovah’s precious thoughts.—1 Timothy 4:15.

⁷ Self-discipline helps us to reach our goals in Je-

6. How can we become better students of God’s Word? (See opening picture.)

7. How can self-discipline help us to reach our goals in Jehovah’s service?

hovah's service. For example, one father felt that he was losing his zeal, so he set the goal of becoming a regular pioneer. How did self-discipline help him? He read articles in our magazines about pioneering and prayed about it. Doing this made his relationship with Jehovah stronger. He also auxiliary pioneered when he could. He did not allow anything to stop him; instead, he stayed focused on his goal. After some time, he became a regular pioneer.

RAISE YOUR CHILDREN IN THE DISCIPLINE OF JEHOVAH

⁸ Jehovah has given parents the responsibility to raise their children “in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah.” (Ephesians 6:4) This is very difficult to do in today's world. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) When children are born, they do not know right from wrong, and their conscience is untrained. So they need discipline to train it. (Romans 2:14, 15) One Bible scholar explained that the Greek word translated as “discipline” could also mean “child development,” or raising a child to be a responsible adult.

⁹ When parents discipline their children with love, the children feel safe. They learn that freedom has

8-10. What can help parents raise their children to serve Jehovah? Give an example.



Children are not born knowing right from wrong, so they need to be trained

(See paragraph 8)

limits and that everything they do in life has consequences. So it is very important for Christian parents to rely on Jehovah's wisdom to help them raise their children. Ideas about raising children are different depending on where a person lives, and these ideas keep changing. However, parents who listen to God do not have to guess about what they should do or rely on the experience or ideas of humans.

¹⁰ We can learn from the example of Noah. When Jehovah told him to build the ark, Noah did not know how to do it. He had to rely on Jehovah, and we read that he did "just so," or just as Jehovah told him. (Genesis 6:22) What was the result? The ark

saved the lives of Noah and his family! Noah was also a successful parent. Why? Because he trusted in God's wisdom. Noah taught his children well and was a good example for them, which was not easy in that wicked time before the Flood.—Genesis 6:5.

¹¹ If you are a parent, how can you do “just so”? Listen to Jehovah. Let him help you raise your children. Use the advice from his Word and his organization. Later on, your children will probably thank you for doing so! One brother wrote: “I am filled with gratitude for the way my parents raised me. They did their best to reach my heart.” He says that it was his parents who helped him to draw close to Jehovah. Of course, even when parents do all they can to teach their child, the child may still leave Jehovah. But a parent who has tried his best can have a good conscience and can hope that one day his child will return to Jehovah.

¹² For some parents, one of the most difficult tests of obedience comes when a child is disfellowshipped. A sister whose disfellowshipped daughter left home admits: “I looked for loopholes in our publications

11. Why should parents work hard to train their children?

12, 13. (a) If a child is disfellowshipped, how do parents show that they obey God? (b) How did one family benefit from the parents' obedience to Jehovah?

so that I could spend time with my daughter and my granddaughter.” But her husband kindly helped her to see that they were no longer responsible for their daughter and that they needed to be loyal to Jehovah.

¹³ Some years later, the daughter was reinstated. The mother says: “Now she calls or texts me nearly every day! And she deeply respects my husband and me because she knows that we obeyed God. We have a wonderful relationship.” If your son or daughter has been disfellowshipped, will you “trust in Jehovah with all your heart”? Will you show Him that you “do not rely on your own understanding”? (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Remember, Jehovah’s discipline shows us how wise he is and how much he loves us. Never forget that he gave his Son for all humans, and that includes your son or daughter. God wants everyone to get eternal life. (Read 2 Peter 3:9.) So parents, continue to trust that Jehovah’s discipline and guidance are right, even when being obedient is painful. Listen to God’s discipline, and do not fight against it.

IN THE CONGREGATION

¹⁴ Jehovah promised to care for, protect, and

14. How do we benefit from Jehovah’s instruction that “the faithful steward” gives us?

teach the Christian congregation. He does so in several ways. For example, he appointed his Son to care for the congregation, and Jesus assigned a “faithful steward” to provide spiritual food to help us stay faithful. (Luke 12:42) That “steward” gives us valuable instruction, or discipline. You can probably think of times that a talk you heard or an article you read in one of our magazines helped you to change how you think or act. You can be happy that you have made those changes, because it means that you are allowing Jehovah to discipline you.—Proverbs 2:1-5.

¹⁵ Christ also provided elders to take loving care of the congregation. The Bible calls these brothers “gifts in men.” (Ephesians 4:8, 11-13) How can we benefit from the work of the elders? We can imitate their faith and good example, and we can follow the counsel they give from the Bible. (Read Hebrews 13: 7, 17.) The elders love us and want us to draw closer to God. If they notice that we are missing meetings or losing our zeal, they will quickly try to help us. They will listen to us and then give loving encouragement and wise counsel from the Bible. Do you view their help as evidence that Jehovah loves you?

15, 16. (a) How can we benefit from the work of the elders?
(b) How can we make the elders’ work more pleasant for them?

¹⁶ Remember that it may not be easy for the elders to give us counsel. How do you think the prophet Nathan felt when he had to speak to King David after the king tried to hide his serious sin? (2 Samuel 12: 1-14) How did the apostle Paul feel when he had to counsel Peter, one of the 12 apostles, for treating Jewish Christians better than non-Jewish ones? It took courage for Paul to do that. (Galatians 2:11-14) So how can you make it easier for the elders to give you counsel? Be humble, thankful, and easy to talk to. See their help as evidence of God's love. You will benefit, and the elders will enjoy doing their work.

¹⁷ One sister says that things that happened to her in the past made it hard for her to love Jehovah, and she became very depressed. She says: "I knew that I had to talk with the elders. They did not berate me or criticize me, but they encouraged me and strengthened me. After every congregation meeting, no matter how busy they were, at least one of them would ask how I was. Because of my past, I found it difficult to feel worthy of God's love. Time and time again, however, Jehovah has used the congregation and the elders to confirm his love for me. I pray that I will never let him go."

17. How did the elders help one sister?

WHAT IS WORSE THAN ANY PAIN FROM DISCIPLINE?

¹⁸ Discipline may be painful, but the results of rejecting God's discipline are even more painful. (Hebrews 12:11) We can learn from the bad examples of Cain and King Zedekiah. When God saw that Cain hated his brother and wanted to kill him, he warned Cain: "Why are you so angry and dejected? If you turn to doing good, will you not be restored to favor? But if you do not turn to doing good, sin is crouching at the door, and its craving is to dominate you; but will you get the mastery over it?" (Genesis 4:6, 7) Cain rejected Jehovah's discipline, murdered his brother, and suffered terrible consequences for the rest of his life. (Genesis 4:11, 12) If Cain had listened to God, he would not have experienced so much pain.

¹⁹ Zedekiah was a weak and wicked king. When he ruled, the people of Jerusalem were in a bad situation. The prophet Jeremiah warned Zedekiah over and over again that he needed to change. But the king rejected Jehovah's discipline, and the results were tragic. (Jeremiah 52:8-11) Jehovah does not

18, 19. What is worse than any pain from discipline? Give an example.

SOME EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED

To have **self-discipline** means to control ourselves and correct ourselves. This helps us improve and become mature Christians. We need to pray to Jehovah, asking him to help us discipline ourselves so that we can improve our study habits and reach our goals in his service

want us to suffer such unnecessary pain!—Read Isaiah 48:17, 18.

²⁰ Today, many in the world make fun of God’s discipline and ignore it. But soon, anyone who rejects God’s discipline will suffer painful consequences. (Proverbs 1:24-31) So let us “listen to discipline and become wise.” As Proverbs 4:13 says, “hold on to discipline; do not let it go. Safeguard it, for it means your life.”

20. What will happen to those who accept God’s discipline and to those who reject it?



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