

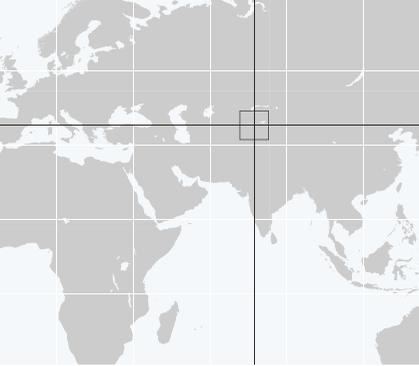
APRIL 2018

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JUNE 4–JULY 8, 2018



COVER IMAGE:
KYRGYZSTAN

A special pioneer couple preach in a remote area near the city of Balykchy

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5,235

BIBLE STUDIES
4,653

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE (2017)
10,067

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THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
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The Way to True Freedom

“If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.”

—JOHN 8:36.

TODAY, there is much talk about equality, liberty, and freedom. People in many parts of the world want to be free from oppression, discrimination, and poverty. Others demand to have freedom of speech, of choice, and of self-determination. To be able to do what one wants to do or to live the way one wants to live seems to be much desired by people everywhere.

² How to satisfy those desires, however, is quite another matter. On the social or political level, many resort to protests, demonstrations, revolts, even revolutions. But do such confrontations achieve the desired results? On the contrary, they often lead to tragedies and loss of life. All of this once again testifies to the truthfulness of King Solomon’s inspired observation: “Man has dominated man to his harm.”—Eccl. 8:9.

³ The Christian disciple James pointed out the key to

1, 2. (a) What evidence is there that people are struggling to gain freedom? (b) What have been the results of such struggles?

3. What can we do to find true happiness and satisfaction?

SONGS: 54, 36

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

What is relative freedom?

How was true freedom lost?

What freedom did Jesus promise, and how can we gain it?

finding true happiness and satisfaction. He wrote: “The one who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and continues in it . . . will be happy in what he does.” (Jas. 1:25) Jehovah, who gave that perfect law, knows best the things humans need in order to be completely happy and satisfied. He gave the first human couple everything that they needed to be happy—including true freedom.

WHEN HUMANS WERE TRULY FREE

⁴ When reading the first two chapters of Genesis, we can easily see that Adam and Eve enjoyed the kind of freedom that people today can only hope for—freedom from want, from fear, and from oppression. The first couple’s life was completely free from worries about food, work, sickness, and death. (Gen. 1:27-29; 2:8, 9, 15) Does this mean that the freedom that Adam and Eve enjoyed was absolute? Let us see.

⁵ Many today think that to be truly free, they must be able to do anything and everything they want to do, regardless of the consequences. *The World Book Encyclopedia* defines freedom as “the ability to make choices and to carry them out.” However, it adds: “From a legal point of view, people are free if society imposes no unjust, unnecessary, or unreasonable limits on them.” This implies that, in practice, certain limits are necessary so that everyone in that society can benefit from the freedom granted. The question, then, is: Who has the right to determine what

limits are just, necessary, and reasonable?

⁶ When it comes to freedom, a key point for us to bear in mind is that Jehovah God alone has what can be called absolute and unlimited freedom. Why? Because he is the Creator of all things and the almighty Sovereign of the universe. (1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 4:11) Recall the beautiful words of King David in describing the unique and lofty position that Jehovah alone occupies. (**Read 1 Chronicles 29: 11, 12.**) Accordingly, all creatures in heaven and on earth have freedom in only a relative sense. They must recognize that Jehovah God has the ultimate authority to impose what he determines to be just, necessary, and reasonable limits. That, in fact, was what Jehovah God did with his human creation right from the beginning.

⁷ Even though Adam and Eve initially enjoyed freedom in many ways, there were limits imposed on them. Some of them were instinctive, but they were limits nonetheless. For example, our first parents knew that to keep on living, they had to breathe, eat, sleep, and so on. Would they feel a loss of freedom for having to do these things? No, for Jehovah saw to it that even in doing such routine things, they could find enjoyment and contentment. (Ps. 104:14, 15; Eccl. 3:12, 13) Who would not delight in taking an invigorating breath of fresh air, eating his favorite food, or awakening from a restful night of sleep? We happily do these necessary things with

4. What freedom did Adam and Eve enjoy? (See opening picture.)

5. Contrary to what many think, what is needed for people to enjoy freedom?

6. (a) Why does Jehovah alone possess absolute freedom? (b) What sort of freedom can humans enjoy, and why?

7. What are some instinctive actions that contribute to one’s happiness?

out any feeling of constraint or burden. Adam and Eve no doubt felt the same.

⁸ Jehovah specifically commanded Adam and Eve to populate the earth and to take care of it. (Gen. 1:28) Did this command in some way deprive them of their freedom? Of course not! It was given to enable humans to participate in their Creator's purpose—to make the earth into a global paradise home for a race of perfect humans forever. (Isa. 45:18) Today, it is not against Jehovah's will for people to choose to be single or to be married but remain childless. Still, by and large, people marry and raise children in spite of the challenges such choices bring. (1 Cor. 7:36-38) Why? Because under normal circumstances, people find happiness and satisfaction in doing so. (Ps. 127:3) Enjoying their marriage and family for all eternity could have been Adam and Eve's happy lot in life.

HOW TRUE FREEDOM WAS LOST

⁹ Jehovah gave Adam and Eve another command, which included a clear statement of the penalty if violated: "As for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die." (Gen. 2:17) Was this command in any way unjust, unnecessary, or unreasonable? Did it rob Adam and Eve of their freedom? Certainly not. In fact, a number of Bible scholars comment on the logic and good sense of the command. For example, one scholar ob-

serves: "The inference of God's commands in [Genesis 2:16, 17] is that only God knows what is good . . . for humanity and only God knows what is not good . . . for them. To enjoy the 'good,' humankind must trust God and obey him. If they disobey, they will be left to decide for themselves what is good . . . and what is not good." That is a burden that humans could not carry successfully on their own.

¹⁰ Upon reading Jehovah's command to Adam, many today would say that Adam was denied the freedom to do what he wanted. In saying so, they are confusing the exercise of one's free will with the right to *decide* what is good and what is bad. Adam and Eve did have the freedom to choose whether they would obey God or not. However, only Jehovah has the right to decide in the absolute sense what is good and what is bad, as symbolized by "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad" in the garden of Eden. (Gen. 2:9) We have to admit that we do not always know what the outcome of our choices will be; nor do we know whether they will turn out for our good every time. That is why we so often see people make choices or decisions with all good intentions—only to have them result in suffering, disaster, or tragedy. (Prov. 14:12) Human limitations play a large role. By means of his command, Jehovah lovingly taught Adam and Eve the way to exercise true freedom. How is that so, and did that first couple respond?

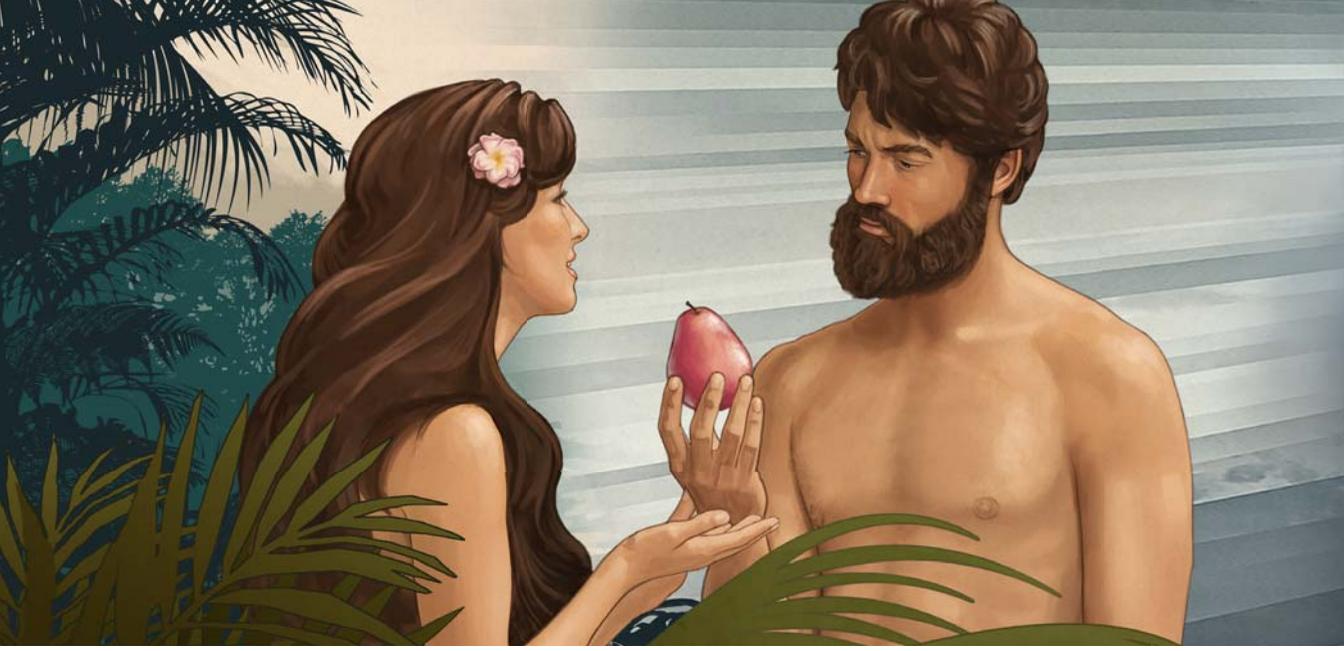
¹¹ As it turned out, our first parents

8. What specific command did God give our first human parents, and for what purpose?

9. Why was God's command found at Genesis 2:17 not unjust, unnecessary, or unreasonable?

10. Why should we not equate free will with the right to decide what is good and what is bad?

11, 12. Why did Adam and Eve's choice prove to be disastrous? Illustrate.



chose to disobey. Satan's tempting promise—"your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and bad"—proved to be irresistible for Eve. (Gen. 3:5) Did Adam and Eve's choice eventually enhance their freedom in any way? Sadly, it did not. Their choice did not bring them what Satan said it would. In fact, they soon learned that rejecting Jehovah's direction and going their own way resulted in disaster. (Gen. 3:16-19) Why? Simply because Jehovah did not give humans the freedom to determine for themselves what is good and what is bad.—**Read Proverbs 20:24 and footnote; Jeremiah 10:23.**

¹² This can be illustrated with a pilot flying an airplane. To reach a certain destination safely, he usually must follow a preapproved flight path. Modern aviation equipment allows a pilot to use onboard navigation instruments and to keep in touch with air traffic controllers along the way so as to reach his planned destination. However, if the pilot chose to disregard that guidance and fly any

route he desired, the result could be disastrous. Like that pilot, Adam and Eve wanted to do things their own way. They rejected the guidance God had provided. The result? They ended, as it were, in a tragic crash, resulting in sin and death for themselves and for their future offspring. (Rom. 5:12) In striving for self-determination, they lost the true freedom they had been given.

HOW TO GAIN TRUE FREEDOM

¹³ People may think that the more freedom they have, the better off they will be, but the reality is that having unbounded freedom is a two-edged sword. True, freedom does bring many benefits; yet, we shudder to imagine what the world would be like if there were no restraints at all. For this reason, *The World Book Encyclopedia* states: "The laws of every organized society form a complicated pattern of balanced freedoms and restrictions." "Complicated" is surely the right word. Just think of the vol-

13, 14. How can we gain true freedom?



Adam and Eve's choice proved disastrous!
(See paragraphs 9-12)

umes and volumes of laws written by man, let alone the armies of lawyers and judges needed to interpret and administer them.

¹⁴ In contrast, Jesus Christ pointed out a simple way to enjoy true freedom. He said: “If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31, 32) Jesus’ direction for gaining true freedom involves two requirements: First, accept the truth that he taught, and second, become his disciple. Doing so will lead to true freedom. But freedom from what? Jesus went on to explain: “Every doer of sin is a slave of sin. . . . If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.” —John 8:34, 36.

¹⁵ Clearly, the freedom that Jesus promised his disciples is far superior to the social or political freedom that most people yearn for today. When Jesus

15. Why can the freedom that Jesus promised make us “truly free”?

said: “If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free,” he was talking about liberation from the greatest bondage and oppression that humankind has ever experienced—being “a slave of sin.” Not only can sin lead us to doing what is bad but it can also prevent us from doing what we know is right or from living up to what we know we are capable of. In that sense we are slaves of sin, and the outcome is frustration, pain, suffering, and finally death. (Rom. 6:23) The apostle Paul felt this pain and agony deeply. **(Read Romans 7:21-25.)** It is only when the shackles of sin are thrown off that we can hope to have the true freedom that our first human parents once enjoyed.

¹⁶ Jesus’ statement “if you remain in my word” implies that there are certain requirements or boundaries for being set free by him. As dedicated Christians, we have disowned ourselves and have chosen to live within the bounds of Christ’s teachings as his disciples. (Matt. 16:24) Just as Jesus promised, we will be truly free when the benefits of his ransom sacrifice are fully applied to us.

¹⁷ Submitting to Jesus’ teachings as his disciples will give our life real meaning and satisfaction. This, in turn, opens up the prospect of being completely liberated from enslavement to sin and death. **(Read Romans 8:1, 2, 20, 21.)** The following article will consider how we can wisely use the freedom we now have, so that we can honor Jehovah, the God of true freedom, forever.

16. How can we become truly free?

17. (a) What will give our life real meaning and satisfaction? (b) What will we consider in the next article?



Serve Jehovah, the God of Freedom

“Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.”

—2 COR. 3:17.

SONGS: 49, 73

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

In what ways has Jehovah’s spirit liberated us?

How can we avoid misusing our God-given freedom?

What can we do to make wise use of our freedom?

PEOPLE of the Roman world, among whom the early Christians lived, prided themselves on being champions of law, justice, and freedom. Yet, much of the power and glory of the Roman Empire was built on the backs of slaves. At one point, some 30 percent of the population were slaves. Undoubtedly, slavery and freedom were topics on the minds of the common people, including Christians.

² The letters of the apostle Paul have much to say about freedom. However, the objective of his ministry was not social or political reform, the very thing people of that day were seeking. Rather than looking to any human ruler or agency for freedom, Paul and his fellow Christians worked hard to help others learn the good news of God’s Kingdom and the incomparable value of the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Paul directed his fellow believers to the Source of true freedom. In his second letter to the Corinthian Christians,

1, 2. (a) Why were people in the apostle Paul’s day concerned with slavery and freedom? (b) To whom did Paul direct people so that they could gain true freedom?

for example, he clearly stated: “Jehovah is the Spirit, and where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.”—2 Cor. 3:17.

³ Earlier in this letter to the Corinthians, Paul spoke of the glory of Moses when he descended from Mount Sinai after being in the presence of an angel of Jehovah. Upon seeing Moses, the people became fearful, and Moses put a veil over his face. (Ex. 34:29, 30, 33; 2 Cor. 3:7, 13) “But,” Paul explained, “when one turns to Jehovah, the veil is taken away.” (2 Cor. 3:16) What do Paul’s words mean?

⁴ As we learned in the preceding article, Jehovah, the Creator of all things, is the only Person who enjoys absolute and unlimited freedom. It stands to reason that in the presence of Jehovah and “where the spirit of Jehovah is,” there is freedom. To enjoy and benefit from that freedom, however, we must ‘turn to Jehovah,’ that is, come into a personal relationship with him. The Israelites in the wilderness did not view Jehovah’s dealings with them in a spiritual way. It was as if their hearts and minds were veiled and hardened, focused only on using their newfound freedom from Egypt in a physical, or fleshly, way.—Heb. 3:8-10.

⁵ The freedom that is associated with the spirit of Jehovah, however, is more than liberation from physical slavery.

3, 4. (a) What led up to Paul’s statement found at 2 Corinthians 3:17? (b) What must we do to enjoy the freedom that comes from Jehovah?

5. (a) What sort of freedom does Jehovah’s spirit bring? (b) How do we know that physical bondage need not diminish the freedom Jehovah provides? (c) What questions do we need to answer?

Far beyond what human efforts can hope to achieve, the spirit of Jehovah brings liberation from enslavement to sin and death, as well as from slavery to false worship and its practices. (Rom. 6:23; 8:2) What a glorious freedom that is! A person can enjoy the benefits of such freedom even when imprisoned or enslaved. (Gen. 39:20-23) This was certainly true of Sister Nancy Yuen and Brother Harold King, both of whom endured years of imprisonment for their faith. You can see and hear them relate their experiences on JW Broadcasting. (Look under INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES > ENDURING TRIALS.) We need to consider, though, how can we show that we treasure our freedom? And what can we do to make wise use of this freedom?

VALUING OUR GOD-GIVEN FREEDOM

⁶ When we realize the true value of a costly gift, we are moved to show our gratitude to the giver. The Israelites did not appreciate the freedom that Jehovah bestowed upon them when he delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Within a few months of their deliverance, they began to long for the food and drink they once had in Egypt and complained about Jehovah’s provisions, even wanting to return to Egypt. Just imagine, they put ‘fish, cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions, and garlic’ above their God-given freedom to worship the true God, Jehovah. Is it any wonder that Jehovah became very angry with his people? (Num. 11:5, 6, 10; 14:3, 4) What a lesson for us!

6. How did the Israelites show a lack of appreciation for the freedom that Jehovah gave them?

⁷ The apostle Paul urged all Christians not to take for granted the freedom that Jehovah has kindly given us through his Son, Jesus Christ. **(Read 2 Corinthians 6:1.)** Recall the misery and pain of conscience that Paul suffered because of feeling captive to sin and death. Yet, he gratefully declared: “Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Why? He explained to his fellow Christians: “For the law of the spirit that gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” (Rom. 7:24, 25; 8:2) Following Paul’s example, we too should never take for granted that Jehovah liberated us from the bondage of sin and of death. By means of the ransom, we can serve our God with a clean conscience and find real delight in doing so.—Ps. 40:8.

⁸ In addition to expressing gratitude, however, we should be mindful of never misusing our precious freedom. The apostle Peter warned against using our freedom as an excuse for catering to our fleshly desires. **(Read 1 Peter 2:16.)** Does that warning not remind you of what befell the Israelites in the wilderness? And the danger is still with us, perhaps even more so. Satan and his world offer ever more alluring choices in dress and grooming, food and drink, recreation and entertainment, and a host of other things. Clever advertisers often feature attractive people deceptively promoting as must-haves many things we really do not need. How easy it is to

7. How did Paul act in harmony with his counsel found at 2 Corinthians 6:1, and how can we do likewise?

8, 9. (a) What warning did the apostle Peter give about using our freedom? (b) What dangers confront us today?

fall prey to these ploys and to misuse our freedom!

⁹ The counsel by Peter also applies to more serious aspects of life, such as a person’s choice of education, employment, or career. For example, young people in school today are under much pressure to qualify for enrollment in elite institutions of higher education. They are led to believe that advanced education opens the door to high-paying and prestigious jobs, and statistics are often presented to show the gap in earnings between graduates from such institutions and those who completed only basic schooling. Faced with choices that can deeply affect their entire life course, young people may find all of this very enticing. What should they and their parents bear in mind?

¹⁰ Some individuals may feel that since choices in these matters are personal, they should have the freedom to choose what they please as long as their conscience permits it. Perhaps they have in mind Paul’s words to the Corinthian Christians about food: “Why should my freedom be judged by another person’s conscience?” (1 Cor. 10:29) While it is true that we have the freedom to make personal choices regarding our education and career, we need to remember that our freedom is relative and that all decisions we make have consequences. For that reason, Paul prefaced his statement with these words: “All things are lawful [or, “permissible,” ftn.], but not all things are advantageous. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.” (1 Cor. 10:23) That certainly helps us to

10. What do we need to bear in mind when exercising our freedom to make personal choices?



Are you using your freedom of choice
to advance the Kingdom work or your own interests?
(See paragraphs 8-10)

see that there are far more important factors to consider than our own preferences when it comes to exercising personal freedom in all aspects of our life.

WISELY USING OUR FREEDOM TO SERVE GOD

¹¹ In his warning against the misuse of freedom, Peter also pointed out the objective. He urged us to use our freedom “as slaves of God.” Thus, the real purpose for which Jehovah, through Jesus, has freed us from the law of sin and of death is for us to live a life of dedication “as slaves of God.”

¹² The best way to protect ourselves from misusing our freedom and thus becoming enslaved again by worldly ambitions and desires is to be fully absorbed in spiritual pursuits. (Gal. 5:16) Consider, for example, the patriarch Noah and his family. They lived in a violent and im-

moral world. Yet, they kept free from being entangled in the desires and pursuits of the people around them. How did they manage to do that? They chose to keep busy in all that Jehovah had assigned them to do—build the ark, store up food for themselves and the animals, and sound the warning to others. “Noah did according to all that God had commanded him. He did just so.” (Gen. 6: 22) The result? Noah and his family survived the end of that world.—Heb. 11:7.

¹³ What has Jehovah commanded us to do today? As disciples of Jesus, we are well-acquainted with our God-given commission. **(Read Luke 4:18, 19.)** Today, the vast majority of people are still blinded by the god of this system of things and are in bondage—religious, economic, and social. (2 Cor. 4:4) It is our privilege to follow Jesus’ example of helping people to come to know and worship Jehovah, the God of freedom.

11. For what purpose have we been set free?

12. What example did Noah and his family set for us?

13. What commission did Jesus receive and in turn pass on to his followers?

(Matt. 28:19, 20) That is not an easy work, and there are many challenges. In some lands, people are becoming more indifferent, some even hostile. The question that each of us should consider is, ‘Can I use my freedom to give greater support to the Kingdom work?’

¹⁴ It is most encouraging to see that many have sensed the urgency of our times and have simplified their lives so as to share in the full-time ministry. (1 Cor. 9:19, 23) Some of them serve within their local territories; others move to where the need is greater. Records show that in the last five years, the average number of regular pioneers has grown to over 1,100,000 and more than a quarter of a million worldwide have been added to the ranks of full-time preachers. What a splendid result of making wise use of the freedom to serve Jehovah!—Ps. 110:3.

¹⁵ What helped these brothers and sisters to make wise use of their freedom? Consider John and Judith, who for the past 30 years have served in a number of countries. They recall that when the Pioneer Service School began in 1977, the emphasis was placed on being willing to move and serve where the need was greater. To keep their focus on this goal, John says that he changed jobs many times in order to maintain a simple lifestyle. Eventually, when they arrived in a foreign country, they found that praying to Jehovah and relying on him helped them to overcome such obstacles as learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture, and enduring difficult climates. How did those years of service

14, 15. What kind of response to the preaching work is seen among Jehovah’s people? (See opening picture.)

affect them? “I felt that I was immersed in the best activity I’ve ever known or experienced,” John says. “Jehovah became more real to me, as a loving father would be. Now I understood better what James 4:8 means: ‘Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.’ I knew I had found what I was looking for, a satisfying purpose in life.”

¹⁶ Unlike John and Judith, others have circumstances that allow them to serve full-time for only a short period. Nonetheless, many seize the opportunity to volunteer in theocratic construction projects around the world. For example, when world headquarters was being built at Warwick, New York, some 27,000 brothers and sisters offered their services—anywhere from two weeks to a year or longer. Many of them put their life on hold to serve there. What a wonderful example of using their God-given freedom to praise and honor Jehovah, the God of freedom!

¹⁷ We are grateful that we have come to know Jehovah and can enjoy the freedom that true worship brings. May we show by the choices we make that we treasure that freedom. Instead of squandering or misusing it, let us use our freedom and the opportunities it brings to serve Jehovah to the fullest extent possible. If we do so, we can look forward to enjoying the blessings Jehovah has promised when the words of this prophecy are fulfilled: “The creation itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.”—Rom. 8:21.

16. How have thousands with limited circumstances used their freedom wisely?

17. What glorious future awaits those who now use their God-given freedom wisely?

APPOINTED MEN LEARN FROM TIMOTHY



WORLDWIDE last year, thousands of men were appointed as elders and ministerial servants among Jehovah’s Witnesses. If you are one of those dear brothers, then surely you rejoice in your new privilege of service.

Understandably, though, you may also feel a little anxious. Jason, a young elder, relates, “When I was first appointed, I felt quite overwhelmed by my new responsibilities.” Moses and Jeremiah felt inadequate when they received new assignments from Jehovah. (Ex. 4:10; Jer. 1:6) If you have similar feelings, how can you overcome them and keep making progress? Consider the example of the Christian disciple Timothy.—Acts 16:1-3.

IMITATE TIMOTHY’S EXAMPLE

Timothy was probably in his late teens or early 20’s when the apostle Paul invited him to become his traveling companion. At first, being young, Timothy may have lacked self-confidence and may have hesitated to act in his newly assigned role. (1 Tim. 4:11, 12; 2 Tim. 1:1, 2, 7) Yet, a decade later, Paul could tell the congregation in Philippi: “I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly . . . For I have no one else of a disposition like his.”—Phil. 2:19, 20.

What made Timothy such an outstanding elder? Consider six lessons you can draw from his example.

1. He truly cared for people. Paul told the brothers in Philippi: “[Timothy] will genuinely care for your concerns.” (Phil. 2:20) Yes, Timothy cared about people. He was genuinely interested in their spiritual welfare, and he willingly expended himself in their behalf.

Avoid being like the proverbial bus driver who is more concerned with arriving on time at every bus stop than with picking up passengers. William, a respected elder for over 20 years, advises newly appointed men: “Love the brothers. Focus on their needs rather than on the administrative side of things.”

2. He put spiritual interests first. Contrasting Timothy’s example with that of others, Paul said: “All the others are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 2:21) Paul was writing from Rome. He observed that the brothers there were overly occupied with personal affairs. To some degree, they were spiritually self-sparing. But not Timothy! When opportunities arose to advance the good news, his attitude was like that of Isaiah, who said: “Here I am! Send me!” —Isa. 6:8.

How can you balance your personal and spiritual obligations? First, prioritize. “Make sure of the more important things,” urged Paul. (Phil. 1:10) Make God’s priorities your priorities. Second, simplify. Eliminate time and energy

1



2



3



stealers. Paul exhorted Timothy: “Flee from youthful desires, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace.”—2 Tim. 2:22.

3. He worked hard in sacred service. Paul reminded the Philippians: “You know the proof [Timothy] gave of himself, that like a child with a father he slaved with me to advance the good news.” (Phil. 2:22) Timothy was not lazy. He worked hard alongside Paul, and this strengthened the bonds of affection between them.

There is no shortage of work in God’s organization today. That work is truly satisfying and can draw you closer to your brothers and sisters. So make it your aim always to have “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.”—1 Cor. 15:58.

4. He applied the lessons he learned. Paul wrote to Timothy: “You have closely followed my teaching, my course of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance.” (2 Tim. 3:10) Because Timothy applied what he learned, he qualified for greater responsibility.—1 Cor. 4:17.

Do you have a spiritual mentor? If not, why not seek one out? Tom, an elder for many years, recalls: “An experienced elder took me under his wing and gave me excellent training. I regularly asked for and applied his advice. This rapidly built up my confidence.”

5. He kept training himself. Paul exhorted Timothy: “Train yourself with godly devotion as your aim.” (1 Tim. 4:7) An athlete may have a coach, but he also needs to train himself. Paul urged Timothy: “Continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching. . . . Ponder over these

things; be absorbed in them, so that your advancement may be plainly seen by all people.”—1 Tim. 4:13-15.

You too need to keep honing your skills. Do not let your spirituality stagnate or your understanding of congregation procedures go out-of-date. Also, avoid becoming overconfident—perhaps thinking that you have so much experience that you can handle any situation without doing careful research. In imitation of Timothy, “pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching.”—1 Tim. 4:16.

6. He relied on Jehovah’s spirit. Reflecting on Timothy’s ministry, Paul reminded him: “Guard this fine trust by means of the holy spirit, which is dwelling in us.” (2 Tim. 1:14) To safeguard his ministry, Timothy needed to rely on God’s spirit.

Donald, an elder for many decades, observes: “Appointed men must cherish their relationship with God. Those who do will go ‘from strength to strength.’ If they pray for God’s spirit and cultivate its fruitage, they will be a real blessing to their brothers.”—Ps. 84:7; 1 Pet. 4:11.

CHERISH YOUR PRIVILEGE

It is very encouraging to see so many newly appointed brothers, like you, making spiritual progress. Jason, mentioned at the outset, says: “During the time that I’ve been an elder, I’ve learned a lot and my confidence has grown. Now I really enjoy my assignment and view it as a wonderful privilege!”

Will you keep making spiritual progress? Make it your aim to learn from Timothy. Then you too will be a blessing to God’s people.

4



5



6





Imitating Jehovah A God Who Gives Encouragement

“Praised be the God . . . who encourages us in all our trials.”—2 COR. 1:3, 4, fn.

EVER since humankind fell into sin and imperfection, Jehovah has proved that he is a God who gives encouragement. Immediately after the rebellion in Eden, he gave Adam’s future descendants reason to take courage. All was not lost for the human family. Once understood, the prophetic promise written at Genesis 3:15 would give humankind hope that eventually “the original serpent,” Satan the Devil, and all his evil works would be destroyed.—Rev. 12:9; 1 John 3:8.

JEHOVAH ENCOURAGED HIS SERVANTS OF OLD

² Jehovah’s servant Noah lived in an ungodly world where the only people who worshipped Jehovah were members of his family. With violence and sexual perversion rampant all around him, Noah could have become discouraged. (Gen. 6:

1. What encouragement did Jehovah give at the time of the rebellion in Eden?
2. How did Jehovah encourage Noah?

SONGS: 7, 3

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How has Jehovah proved to be a God who gives encouragement?

How did Jesus show himself to be encouraging?

How did the apostles encourage their brothers?

4, 5, 11; Jude 6) But Jehovah gave him information that infused him with the courage he needed to persevere in his efforts to ‘walk with God.’ (Gen. 6:9) Jehovah told Noah that He was going to put an end to that wicked world and instructed him about what he must do to ensure his family’s safety. (Gen. 6:13-18) Jehovah proved to be for Noah a God of encouragement.

³ Later, Joshua had the daunting task of settling God’s people in the Promised Land. This involved conquering powerful armies of the nations that occupied the territory. Joshua had every reason to be apprehensive. Knowing this, Jehovah instructed Moses to reassure Joshua. God said: “Commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, because he is the one who will cross over before this people and he is the one who will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.” (Deut. 3:28) Before Joshua went into action, Jehovah encouraged him, saying: “Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and strong. Do not be struck with terror or fear, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:1, 9) What reassuring encouragement!

⁴ Not only did Jehovah encourage individuals but he also gave words of encouragement to his people as a group. In prophetic terms that would prove to be of comfort to the Jews held captive in Babylon, Jehovah stated: “Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify

3. What encouragement did Joshua receive? (See opening picture.)

4, 5. (a) What encouragement did Jehovah give to his ancient people? (b) How did Jehovah encourage his Son?

you, yes, I will help you, I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness.” (Isa. 41:10) The early Christians had the same assurance, and so do God’s people today.—**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.**

⁵ Jesus himself received encouragement from his Father. At his baptism, Jesus heard a voice from heaven say: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matt. 3:17) How those words must have strengthened Jesus throughout his earthly ministry!

JESUS GAVE ENCOURAGEMENT

⁶ Jesus imitated his Father’s example. The parable of the talents, given in Jesus’ prophecy about the conclusion of the system of things, encourages faithfulness. The master honored each of the faithful slaves with the words: “Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matt. 25:21, 23) What strong encouragement to continue serving Jehovah faithfully!

⁷ Jesus’ apostles often quarreled over who was the greatest among them, but Jesus patiently encouraged them to humble themselves and to become servants, not bosses. (Luke 22:24-26) Peter in particular disappointed Jesus several times. (Matt. 16:21-23; 26:31-35, 75) Rather than reject Peter, Jesus encouraged him and even commissioned him to strengthen his brothers.—John 21:16.

6. How does the parable of the talents provide encouragement?

7. What encouragement did Jesus give to his apostles and to Peter in particular?

ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN IN ANCIENT TIMES

⁸ Even before Jehovah's Son came to earth and set a perfect example of how to impart encouragement, faithful servants of Jehovah were conscious of the need to be encouraging. When threatened by the Assyrians, Hezekiah assembled the military chiefs and the people of Judah to encourage them. "And the people were strengthened by [his] words."—**Read 2 Chronicles 32:6-8.**

⁹ Although in need of consolation himself, Job gave his three "troublesome comforters" a lesson in giving encouragement. He told them that if he had been in their place, he 'would have strengthened them with the words of his mouth, and the consolation of his lips would have brought them relief.' (Job 16:1-5) Finally, Job received encouragement from Elihu and from Jehovah himself.—Job 33:24, 25; 36:1, 11; 42:7, 10.

¹⁰ Another example in ancient times of someone in need of encouragement is Jephthah's daughter. Before going out to combat the Ammonites, Judge Jephthah vowed that if Jehovah gave him the victory, the first person who would come out to meet him after the battle would be devoted to Jehovah's service at the sanctuary. It so happened that it was his daughter, his only child, who came out to celebrate his victory with him. Jephthah's heart was broken. But he kept his vow and sent his virgin

8. How did Hezekiah encourage the military chiefs and the people of Judah?

9. What does the book of Job teach us about giving encouragement?

10, 11. (a) Why did Jephthah's daughter need to be encouraged? (b) Who today deserve similar encouragement?

daughter to Shiloh to serve at the tabernacle for the rest of her life.—Judg. 11:30-35.

¹¹ However hard this was on Jephthah, it may have been harder still on his daughter, who willingly complied with her father's decision. (Judg. 11:36, 37) She thus relinquished the right to marry, to have children, and to preserve the family name and inheritance. If anyone, then, needed comfort and encouragement, she did. The Bible account states: "It became a custom in Israel: From year to year, the young women of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year." (Judg. 11:39, 40) Do not unmarried Christians who use their singleness to give greater attention to "the things of the Lord" also deserve commendation and encouragement?—1 Cor. 7:32-35.

THE APOSTLES ENCOURAGED THEIR BROTHERS

¹² On the night before his death, Jesus told the apostle Peter: "Simon, Simon, look! Satan has demanded to have all of you to sift you as wheat. But I have made supplication for you that your faith may not give out; and you, once you have returned, strengthen your brothers."—Luke 22:31, 32.

¹³ Peter proved to be a pillar in the early Christian congregation. (Gal. 2:9) He encouraged his brothers by his courageous example at Pentecost and thereafter. Toward the end of his long ministry, he wrote to fellow Christians. Explaining why, he stated: "I have written you in few words in order

12, 13. How did Peter 'strengthen his brothers'?



The apostles' letters did much to encourage the congregations in the first century, and they build us up to this day
(See paragraphs 12-17)

to encourage you and to give an earnest witness that this is the true undeserved kindness of God. Stand firm in it." (1 Pet. 5:12) Peter's inspired letters have continued to be a source of encouragement to Christians throughout the ages and up to this day. How we need this encouragement as we await the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises!—2 Pet. 3:13.

¹⁴ The apostle John was also a pillar in the early Christian congregation. His riveting Gospel account of Jesus' ministry has been a source of encouragement to Christians throughout the centuries—and still is. His Gospel alone preserves Jesus' statement that love is the identifying mark of his true disciples.—**Read John 13:34, 35.**

14, 15. How have the inspired writings of the apostle John been a source of encouragement for Christians throughout the centuries?

¹⁵ John's three letters contain further gems of truth. When we are weighed down with the burden of sin, are we not relieved to read that "the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin"? (1 John 1:7) And if our heart continues to condemn us, do we not get a lump in our throat and tears of gratitude in our eyes when we read that "God is greater than our hearts"? (1 John 3:20) John alone wrote that "God is love." (1 John 4:8, 16) His second and third letters commend Christians who continue "walking in the truth."—2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4.

¹⁶ In the first century, perhaps the apostle who did the most to encourage his brothers was the apostle Paul. It appears that in the early days of Christianity, most of the apostles remained in

16, 17. What encouragement did the apostle Paul give the early Christians?

Jerusalem, which continued to be the location of the governing body. (Acts 8:14; 15:2) Christians in Judea preached Christ to people who because of the influence of Judaism believed in one God. On the other hand, the apostle Paul was sent by the holy spirit to preach to the people of the nations of the Greco-Roman world, who worshipped many gods.—Gal. 2:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:7.

¹⁷ Paul traveled far and wide in what is now Turkey, as well as in Greece and Italy, establishing Christian congregations among non-Jews. These newly converted Christians “suffered at the hands of [their] own countrymen” and needed encouragement. (1 Thess. 2:14) About the year 50 C.E., Paul wrote to the young congregation in Thessalonica: “We always thank God when we mention all of you in our prayers, for we continually remember your faithful work, your loving labor, and your endurance.” (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) He also exhorted them to strengthen one another, saying: “Keep encouraging one another and building one another up.”—1 Thess. 5:11.

AN ENCOURAGING GOVERNING BODY

¹⁸ The first-century governing body proved to be a source of encouragement both to those taking the lead and to Christians in general. When Philip the evangelizer preached about Christ to the Samaritans, he received the full backing of those on the governing body. They sent two of their number, Peter and John, to pray for the new believers to receive holy spirit. (Acts 8:5, 14-17) How Philip himself as well as those he

18. How did the first-century governing body encourage Philip?

had converted must have been encouraged by this support from the governing body!

¹⁹ Later, the governing body was called upon to decide whether non-Jewish Christians should be required to submit to circumcision, as had been required of Jews by the Law of Moses. (Acts 15:1, 2) Under the guidance of the holy spirit and after reasoning on the Scriptures, the responsible brothers decided that this was no longer necessary, and they wrote a letter to the congregations to that effect. Representatives of the governing body were sent out to the congregations to deliver the letter. The result? “After reading it, they rejoiced over the encouragement.”—Acts 15:27-32.

²⁰ Today, the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses gives encouragement to Bethel family members, to special full-time field workers, and indeed, to the entire international brotherhood of true Christians. And the result is the same as in the first century—rejoicing over the encouragement! In addition, in 2015 the Governing Body published the brochure *Return to Jehovah*, which has proved to be a rich source of encouragement to many throughout the world. But is it only those in authority who should imitate Jehovah in giving encouragement? The answer to that question will be found in the following article.

19. What effect did the letter sent by the governing body have on the early Christian congregation?

20. (a) What encouragement does the Governing Body today give to the international brotherhood? (b) What question will be answered in the following article?



Encourage One Another “All the More So”

“Let us consider one another . . . , encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.”

—HEB. 10:24, 25.

SONGS: 90, 87

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why did the apostle Paul use the expression “all the more so” when he instructed Christians to encourage one another?

Who are in need of encouragement today?

Who can encourage fellow Christians?

WHY should we intensify our efforts to be encouraging? The apostle Paul gives us the reason in his letter to Hebrew Christians. He told them: “Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and *all the more so as you see the day drawing near.*” (Heb. 10:24, 25) Within just five years, Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem would see a “day of Jehovah” approaching and recognize the sign Jesus had given them to flee for their lives from that city. (Acts 2:19, 20; Luke 21:20-22) That day of Jehovah arrived in 70 C.E. when the Romans executed Jehovah’s judgment on Jerusalem.

² Today, we have every reason to believe that the “great and very awe-inspiring” day of Jehovah is near. (Joel 2:11) The prophet Zephaniah said: “The great day of Jehovah is near!”

1. Why did the apostle Paul exhort the early Hebrew Christians to encourage one another “all the more so”?
2. Why should we today be increasingly concerned about encouraging one another?

It is near and it is approaching very quickly!” (Zeph. 1:14) That prophetic warning also applies to our time. In view of the proximity of Jehovah’s day, Paul tells us to “be concerned about one another so as to incite to love and fine works.” (Heb. 10:24, ftn.) We should, therefore, be increasingly interested in our brothers, so that we can encourage them whenever needed.

WHO NEED ENCOURAGEMENT?

³ “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down, but a good word cheers it up.” (Prov. 12:25) This is true of all of us. We all need a word of encouragement from time to time. Paul showed that even one who has the responsibility of encouraging others needs to be built up himself. To Christians living in Rome, he wrote: “I am longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you for you to be made firm; or, rather, that we may have an interchange of encouragement by one another’s faith, both yours and mine.” (Rom. 1:11, 12) Yes, Paul, who gave outstanding encouragement to others, at times needed to be built up himself.—**Read Romans 15:30-32.**

⁴ Those who live a life of self-sacrifice should be commended. Among these are the faithful pioneers. Many have made great sacrifices in order to make room in their lives for the pioneer service. The same is true of missionaries, Bethelites, circuit overseers and their wives, and those who work in remote translation offices. All of these make sacrifices in their lives in order to devote more time to

sacred service. They, therefore, ought to receive encouragement. And those whose heart is still in the full-time service but who for various reasons have had to limit their activity also appreciate receiving encouragement.

⁵ Brothers and sisters who remain single because they want to obey the admonition to marry “only in the Lord” make up another group that merits encouragement. (1 Cor. 7:39) Likewise, hardworking wives appreciate hearing upbuilding words from their husbands. (Prov. 31:28, 31) Also, Christians who remain faithful through persecution or illness need to hear encouragement. (2 Thess. 1:3-5) Jehovah and Christ comfort all these faithful servants.—**Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.**

ELDERS STRIVE TO BE ENCOURAGING

⁶ **Read Isaiah 32:1, 2.** Jesus Christ, through his anointed brothers and supportive “princes” of the other sheep, provides encouragement and guidance to despondent and discouraged ones in this time of need. That is as it should be, for these elders are not “masters” over the faith of others but “are fellow workers” for the joy of their brothers.—2 Cor. 1:24.

⁷ The apostle Paul set an example to be imitated. He wrote to the persecuted Christians in Thessalonica: “Having tender affection for you, we were determined to impart to you, not only the good news of God but also our very selves, because you became so beloved to us.”—1 Thess. 2:8.

3. What did the apostle Paul state about encouragement? (See opening picture.)

4, 5. Whom can we encourage today, and why?

6. What is the role of the elders as described at Isaiah 32:1, 2?

7, 8. In addition to sharing words of encouragement, how can the elders build others up?

⁸ Showing that just a word of encouragement does not always suffice, Paul told the elders from Ephesus: “You must assist those who are weak and must keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, when he himself said: ‘There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.’” (Acts 20:35) Paul was willing not only to encourage his brothers but also to “spend and be completely spent for” them. (2 Cor. 12:15) Similarly, elders should not only encourage and console their brothers with words but also build them up by showing sincere personal interest.—1 Cor. 14:3.

⁹ Building one another up may involve giving counsel, but here again, elders should follow the example given in the Bible about how to give counsel in an encouraging way. An outstanding example in this respect was given by Jesus himself after his death and resurrection. He

9. How can the elders give counsel in an encouraging way?

had some firm counsel to give to certain congregations in Asia Minor, but notice how he went about it. Before giving them counsel, he gave warm commendation to the congregations in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. (Rev. 2:1-5, 12, 13, 18, 19) He told the congregation in Laodicea: “All those for whom I have affection, I reprove and discipline. So be zealous and repent.” (Rev. 3:19) Elders would do well to imitate Christ’s example when they need to give counsel.

NOT THE EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ELDERS

¹⁰ Being encouraging is not the exclusive responsibility of the elders. Paul exhorted all Christians to speak “what is good for building up as the need may be, to impart what is beneficial” to others. (Eph. 4:29) Each of us should be alert to observe “the need” that others

10. How can all of us share in building one another up?

Parents, are you training your children to encourage others?

(See paragraph 10)



have. Paul counseled Hebrew Christians: “Strengthen the hands that hang down and the feeble knees, and keep making straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but, rather, may be healed.” (Heb. 12:12, 13) All of us, including young ones, can build one another up by words of encouragement.

¹¹ Marthe,* a sister who went through a period of depression, writes: “One day when I was praying for encouragement, I met an older sister who showed me affection and compassion, which I was in particular need of at the time. She also shared with me her own experience with the kind of test I was going through, and I felt less alone.” Possibly, the older sister did not realize the good effect that her words would have on Marthe.

¹² Paul gave this advice to all the members of the congregation in Philippi: “If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any spiritual fellowship, if any tender affection and compassion, make my joy full by being of the same mind and having the same love, being completely united, having the one thought in mind. Do nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with humility consider others superior to you, as you look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.”—Phil. 2:1-4.

¹³ Yes, all of us should endeavor to look out for the interests of others, offering a “consolation of love,” “spiritual

* Names have been changed.

11. How was Marthe helped during a period of depression?

12, 13. In what positive ways can we apply the advice given at Philippians 2:1-4?

fellowship,” and “tender affection and compassion” to encourage our brothers and sisters.

SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

¹⁴ News of faithfulness on the part of those we have helped in the past can be a real source of encouragement, as it was for the apostle John, who wrote: “No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth.” (3 John 4) Many pioneers can attest to how encouraging it is for them to learn that some of those they helped into the truth years ago are staying faithful and perhaps are even serving as pioneers. Simply reminding a discouraged pioneer of past joys can be a real source of comfort.

¹⁵ Many circuit overseers have stated how encouraged they and their wives felt after receiving even a short note of gratitude for their visit to a congregation. The same can be true of elders, missionaries, pioneers, and Bethel family members who receive a word of appreciation for their faithful service.

HOW ALL OF US CAN BE ENCOURAGING

¹⁶ It would be an error on our part if we believed that we cannot be encouraging because we are not particularly communicative. It does not take much to be a source of encouragement—perhaps no more than a warm smile when greeting someone. If there is no smile in return, it could mean that there is a problem, and just listening to the other person may bring comfort.—Jas. 1:19.

14. What can be a source of encouragement?

15. What is one way that we can encourage those who are serving faithfully?

16. What does it take to encourage someone?

¹⁷ Henri, a young brother, was greatly distressed when his close relatives, including his father, who had been a respected elder, left the truth. Henri was encouraged by a circuit overseer who took him to a café for a cup of coffee and allowed him to open his heart. Henri realized that the only way to help his family come back to the truth was for him to persevere faithfully. He found great comfort in reading Psalm 46; Zephaniah 3:17; and Mark 10:29, 30.

¹⁸ The examples of Marthe and Henri show that we can be encouraging to a brother or a sister who is in need of comfort. King Solomon wrote: “A word spoken at the right time—how good it is! A cheerful glance makes the heart

17. How was one young brother helped during a time of distress?

18. (a) What observation did King Solomon make? (b) What suggestion did the apostle Paul make?

rejoice; a good report invigorates the bones.” (Prov. 15:23, 30, ftn.) Additionally, reading from *The Watchtower* or our website can invigorate someone who is downcast. Paul shows that singing a Kingdom song together can be a source of encouragement. He wrote: “Keep on teaching and encouraging one another with psalms, praises to God, spiritual songs sung with gratitude, singing in your hearts to Jehovah.”—Col. 3:16; Acts 16:25.

¹⁹ Mutual encouragement will become more and more important as we see Jehovah’s day “drawing near.” (Heb. 10:25) As Paul said to fellow Christians of his day, “keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.”—1 Thess. 5:11.

19. Why will mutual encouragement become more and more important in the days ahead, and what should we do?



All of us can build up
and encourage one another
(See paragraph 18)





Young People, Are You Focused on Spiritual Goals?

“Commit to Jehovah whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”—PROV. 16:3.

SUPPOSE you plan to travel to a distant town for an important event. Getting there requires a long journey by bus. At the bus station, you are overwhelmed by crowds of passengers and many buses. How good it is that you have your goal clearly in mind—finding the bus that is going to your chosen destination! Boarding a bus going anywhere else would mean that you would head in the wrong direction.

² Young people today might be likened to those passengers. Adolescents face a long journey, not by bus, but in life. At times they may feel overwhelmed by the opportunities and decisions that confront them. Youths, you can make it easier for yourselves if you have a good idea where you want to go in life. Where should you be headed?

³ This article answers that question by encouraging youths to focus their life on their desire to please Jehovah. That

1-3. (a) What challenge confronts all young people, and how might this be illustrated? (See opening picture.) (b) How can Christian youths best meet this challenge?

SONGS: 135, 144

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can young ones benefit from applying Proverbs 16:3?

What goals can young people work toward?

What will help youths not to be distracted?

means including Jehovah in all aspects of life—education, employment, family responsibilities, and so on. And it means reaching out for spiritual goals. Young people who keep focused on serving Jehovah can be sure of his blessing in making a success of life.—**Read Proverbs 16:3.**

WHY SET SPIRITUAL GOALS?

⁴ Setting theocratic goals early in life makes good sense. Why? We will examine three reasons. The first two show that working on spiritual goals strengthens a person's relationship with Jehovah; the third highlights the benefit of aiming for theocratic targets early in life.

⁵ The primary reason for setting spiritual goals is to show Jehovah how grateful we are for his love and for what he has done for us. The psalmist observed: "It is good to give thanks to Jehovah . . . For you have made me rejoice, O Jehovah, because of your deeds; because of the works of your hands I shout joyfully." (Ps. 92:1, 4) As a young person, think of all you owe to Jehovah. Your life, your faith, the Bible, the congregation, and your wonderful hope for the future. Giving priority to spiritual matters is a way of showing gratitude to God for these blessings, and that brings you closer to him.

⁶ The second reason is that once you start working toward spiritual goals, you begin building a record of good works in Jehovah's eyes. This brings you even closer to him. The apostle Paul promised:

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4. What will we examine in this article?
 5. What is the primary reason for setting spiritual goals?
 6. (a) What effect do spiritual goals have on our relationship with Jehovah? (b) What goals can be set at an early age?

"God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name." (Heb. 6:10) You are never too young to set goals. Christine was ten years old when she made up her mind to read regularly the life stories of faithful Witnesses. At 12 years of age, Toby set the goal of reading the entire Bible before his baptism. Maxim was 11 years old and his sister Noemi was one year younger when they got baptized. Both then began working toward the goal of Bethel service. To help themselves keep focused, they put a Bethel application up on a wall in their home. Why not consider which goals are important to you and then start working toward them?—**Read Philippians 1:10, 11.**

⁷ The third reason for setting goals early in life has to do with decision-making. Adolescents have to make decisions about education, employment, and other matters. Making decisions is like choosing the right road when you come to an intersection. As long as you know the way to your destination, choosing the right road presents no problem. In the same way, if you know what your goals are, making good decisions becomes easier. Proverbs 21:5 says: "The plans of the diligent surely lead to success." The earlier you make plans by setting good goals, the sooner you will have success. That is what Damaris experienced when she faced an important decision as a teenager.

⁸ Damaris finished her basic schooling with top grades. She could have accepted a scholarship to study law at a university, but she chose instead to work in a

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- 7, 8. (a) How can setting goals make decision-making easier? (b) Why did one teenager choose not to go to a university?

bank. Why? “I made up my mind very early on to pioneer. That meant working part-time. With a university degree in law, I could have earned a lot of money, but I would have had little chance of finding part-time work.” Damaris has now been a pioneer for 20 years. Does she feel that she set the right goal and made the correct decision as a teenager? “At my workplace in the bank, I now have much contact with lawyers. They do the sort of work I would be doing had I studied law. Many, though, are very unhappy with their jobs. My decision to pioneer helped me sidestep frustration in a secular career and opened the way for years of joy in Jehovah’s service.”

⁹ Thousands of young ones in congregations all over the world deserve warm praise. They commit themselves to Jehovah and focus their lives on theocratic goals. Such young people enjoy life to the full while at the same time learning to follow Jehovah’s guidance in all endeavors. These include education, employment, and family life. “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart,” wrote Solomon. “In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Prov. 3:5, 6) Youths in the Christian congregation are precious in the eyes of Jehovah, who loves them dearly and gives them his protection, guidance, and blessing.

BECOME WELL-PREPARED TO GIVE A WITNESS

¹⁰ A young person who focuses his life on the desire to please Jehovah gives

9. Why do our young people deserve warm praise?

10. (a) Why must the ministry be high on our list of priorities? (b) How can we become effective in the ministry?

special attention to the ministry. Jesus Christ stressed that “the good news has to be preached first.” (Mark 13:10) Because the preaching work is so urgent, it should be high on our list of priorities. Could you set the goal of sharing in the ministry more often? Could you pioneer? But what if you find little joy in preaching? And how can you be more effective at giving a witness? Two basic steps will help: Prepare well, and do not give up sharing what you know with others. It might surprise you how much joy you will then find when preaching.

¹¹ You could start by working out an answer to a question commonly raised by schoolmates, such as “Why do you believe in God?” Our jw.org website contains articles designed to help young people work out for themselves how to answer that question. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > TEENAGERS. There you will find a worksheet entitled “Why Do I Believe in God?” The worksheet will guide you in preparing your own answer. It provides three scriptures you can use when explaining your conviction—Hebrews 3:4, Romans 1:20, and Psalm 139:14. Using these worksheets, you can prepare an answer to one question after another.—**Read 1 Peter 3:15.**

¹² As you have opportunity, encourage your schoolmates to look up jw.org for themselves. That is what Luca did. His class was discussing different religions, and Luca noticed that the textbook contained some wrong ideas about Jehovah’s Witnesses. Although he felt hesitant, he asked permission to correct these false claims, and the teacher

11, 12. (a) What can young ones do to prepare to give a witness? (b) How did one youth use an opportunity to give a witness at school?



How do you prepare to give a witness?
(See paragraphs 11, 12)

agreed. Not only did Luca explain his beliefs but he also showed our website to the whole class. For homework the teacher asked each pupil to view the whiteboard animation *Beat a Bully Without Using Your Fists*. Luca was thrilled to be able to give a good witness.

¹³ Do not lose heart, even if the road you travel gets bumpy at times. (2 Tim. 4:2) When difficulties arise, stick to your goals. Katharina was 17 years old when she made it her goal to witness to each colleague at work. One person insulted her several times, but she refused to be intimidated. Her fine conduct in the face of difficulties impressed another colleague named Hans. As a result, he read our publications, studied the Bible, and got baptized. Katharina had moved away and did not know all of this. Imagine her joy when 13 years later she was sitting in the Kingdom Hall with her family and Hans was introduced as the visit-

13. Why should we not give up when difficulties arise?

ing speaker! How good that Katharina did not give up on her goal to witness to her workmates!

DO NOT BE DISTRACTED

¹⁴ So far this article has encouraged you to make up your mind to focus your life on your desire to serve Jehovah. This means centering your life on spiritual goals. Other youths of your age probably center their lives on having a good time, and they will likely invite you to join them. Sooner or later you will need to show how determined you are to stick to the choices you have made. Do not be distracted by peer pressure. After all, thinking again of the bus illustration, you surely would not board a bus going just anywhere simply because the passengers on that bus appear to be having a good time.

¹⁵ There are a number of ways to combat peer pressure. For instance, avoid

14, 15. (a) When under pressure, what should youths keep in mind? (b) How can youths combat peer pressure?

situations that are known to be tempting. (Prov. 22:3) And remind yourself of the painful consequences of joining others in bad behavior. (Gal. 6:7) A further help is to admit your own need for advice. Humility will allow you to be open to suggestions from your parents and spiritually mature ones in the congregation.—**Read 1 Peter 5:5, 6.**

¹⁶ Humility moved Christoph to accept good advice. Shortly after he got baptized, he began training regularly at a fitness center. Other young people at the center urged him to join their sports club. He spoke about the matter to an elder, who asked Christoph to think about certain dangers before making a decision, such as the risk of getting infected by the spirit of competition. Christoph joined the club anyway. In time, however, he discovered that the sport was violent, even dangerous. Again he spoke to several elders, all of whom gave him Scriptural advice. “Jehovah sent me good advisers, and I listened to Him, even if it took some time.” Are you humble enough to accept sound advice?

¹⁷ “Rejoice, young man [or woman], while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.” (Eccl. 11:9) Yes, Jehovah wants you as a young person to have a joyful heart. This article has highlighted one way to make that possible. Keep yourself focused on theocratic goals, including Jehovah in all your plans. The earlier you start to do this, the sooner you will sense Jehovah’s guidance, protection, and blessing.

16. Relate an experience showing the benefits of humility.

17, 18. (a) What does Jehovah want for young people today? (b) What sad situation may arise in adulthood, and how can this be avoided? Illustrate.

Think of all the sound counsel you find in God’s Word, and take to heart the advice: “Remember, then, your Grand Creator in the days of your youth.”—Eccl. 12:1.

¹⁸ No one remains young for long. Young people quickly progress to adulthood. Sad to say, as adults, many then regret having followed the wrong goals when they were young or, just as frustrating, having had no goals at all. But youths who today keep focused on theocratic goals will well into adulthood be deeply satisfied with the choices they made. This is the case with Mirjana, who as a teenager was very talented at sports. She was asked to take part in the Winter Olympic Games but chose instead to take up the full-time ministry. Over 30 years later, Mirjana is still in full-time service, together with her husband. She explains: “Fame, honor, power, and riches are transitory and lowly goals in life. Serving God and trying to contribute in some small way to helping people spiritually are truly noble and lasting goals.”

¹⁹ Young people in the congregation deserve warm commendation for the way they meet these challenges and for being determined to focus their lives on serving Jehovah. Youths do this by reaching out for spiritual goals and by giving the preaching work high priority. Moreover, they make up their mind not to be distracted by this world. Adolescents can be sure that their hard work is not in vain. They have the loving support of their brothers and sisters, and when they commit themselves to Jehovah, their plans in life will succeed.

19. Summarize the benefits of being focused on spiritual goals early in life.

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In the 2013 revision of the “New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures,” Psalm 144:12-15 applies to God’s people. The previous rendering applied this to the wicked foreigners, who are mentioned in verse 11. Why was the wording adjusted?

■ The Hebrew wording allows for both renderings. That said, the revised wording is based on the following factors:

1. The revised wording has lexical and grammatical support. The connection between Psalm 144:12-15 and the preceding verses hangs on the meaning given to the first word in verse 12, which is the Hebrew term *asher*. *Asher* can be rendered in a number of ways. For example, it can be understood as a relative pronoun, such as “who” or “whom.” “Who” was the meaning given in the earlier rendering. As a result, the good things mentioned in verses 12 to 14 were applied to the wicked, who were mentioned in the preceding verses. However, *asher* can also indicate result or consequence and can be translated “that,” “so that,” or “then.” “Then” is the rendering used in the 2013 revision and in other Bible translations.

2. The revised wording fits in well with the rest of the psalm. The use of “then” in verse 12 means that the blessings that follow in verses 12 to 14 are understood as applying to the *righteous*—those who ask to be ‘rescued and saved’ from the wicked (verse 11). This adjustment is also reflected in verse 15, where the two occurrences of the word “happy” are now in parallel in a positive or complementary way. As a result, in both instances such happiness applies to the *same* people—those “whose God is Jehovah!” Keep in mind, too, that

the original Hebrew text had no punctuation, such as quotation marks. Hence, translators must determine the correct sense, taking into account the Hebrew poetic style, the context, and the related Bible passages.

3. The revised wording harmonizes with other Bible passages that promise divine blessings for God’s faithful people. As a result of the adjusted rendering of the term *asher*, the psalm now reflects David’s well-founded hope that after God delivered the nation of Israel from its enemies, He would bless the people with happiness and prosperity. (Lev. 26:9, 10; Deut. 7:13; Ps. 128:1-6) For example, Deuteronomy 28:4 states: “Blessed will be your children and the fruit of your ground and the offspring of your livestock, your young cattle and sheep.” Indeed, during the reign of David’s son Solomon, the nation enjoyed unprecedented peace and prosperity. What is more, aspects of Solomon’s reign point forward to the rule of the Messiah.—1 Ki. 4:20, 21; Ps. 72:1-20.

In conclusion, the adjusted wording in Psalm 144 does not change our understanding of Bible teachings. It does, however, make the whole psalm reflect more clearly the long-cherished hope of Jehovah’s servants—the divine execution of the wicked followed by the establishment of lasting peace and prosperity for the righteous.—Ps. 37:10, 11.



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