

JULY 2018

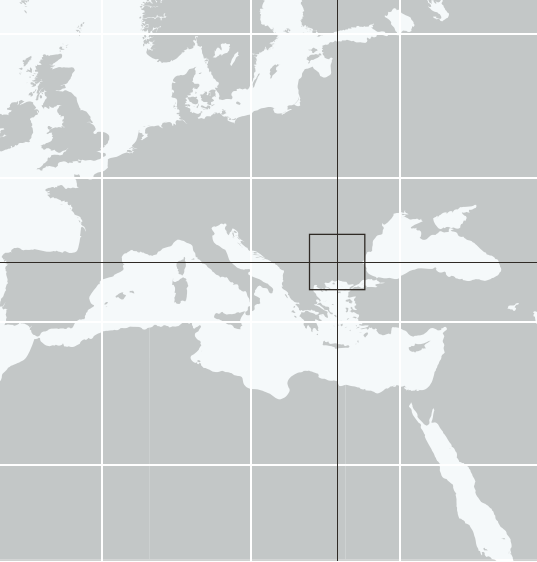
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
SEPTEMBER 3-30, 2018

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

BULGARIA

This reenactment shows the circumstances under which a Bible study is conducted in Bulgarian prisons with interested inmates

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New World Translation
of the Holy Scriptures.

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What should we remember about the recognition Jehovah grants?

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Whose Recognition Do You Seek?

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

HOW do you feel when someone you know and respect forgets your name or, worse still, does not even recognize you? Such an experience can be very discouraging. Why? It is because each one of us has a natural desire to

1. What natural desire do we all have, and what does it include?

be accepted. The type of recognition we desire goes beyond being identified by others; we also want some acknowledgment of who we are and what we have accomplished.—Num. 11:16; ftn.; Job 31:6.

² Like many other natural desires, though, our desire to be appreciated can become unbalanced, distorted by our imperfections. It can make us crave inappropriate expressions of recognition. Satan’s world fuels a desire for fame and acknowledgment that distracts attention from the one who truly deserves to be recognized and worshipped, our heavenly Father, Jehovah God.—Rev. 4:11.

³ In Jesus’ day, some religious leaders had the wrong view of recognition. Jesus warned his followers: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in robes and who love greetings in the marketplaces and front [“best,” ftn.] seats in the synagogues and the most prominent places at evening meals.” He went on to say: “These will receive a more severe judgment.” (Luke 20:46, 47) By contrast, Jesus commended a poor widow whose small contribution was likely not recognized by others.

2, 3. How can the desire to be appreciated become distorted? (See opening picture.)

(Luke 21:1-4) Jesus' view of recognition was obviously very different from that of others. This article will help us maintain the right view, the one that Jehovah God accepts.

THE GREATEST FORM OF RECOGNITION

⁴ What, then, is the greatest form of recognition that we can strive for? It is not the kind of attention that people seek in the academic, business, and entertainment fields of this world. Rather, it is the kind that Paul described for us in these words: “Now that you have come to know God or, rather, have *come to be known by God*, how is it that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly elementary things and want to slave for them over again?” (Gal. 4:9) What a wonderful privilege it is to “come to be known by God,” the Supreme Ruler of the universe! He is willing to have an intimate relationship with us. As one scholar stated, we “become objects of his favourable attention.” When Jehovah acknowledges us as his friends, we achieve the very reason for our existence.—Eccl. 12:13, 14.

⁵ Moses experienced such a blessing. When he pleaded with Jehovah to allow him to come to

4. What is the greatest form of recognition, and why?

5. How do we put ourselves in a position to be known by God?

know His ways more fully, Jehovah replied: “I will also do this thing that you request, because you have found favor in my eyes and I know you by name.” (Ex. 33:12-17) We likewise can receive wonderful blessings when Jehovah comes to know us personally. But how can we put ourselves in a position to be known by Jehovah? We do that when we come to love him and dedicate our life to him. —Read 1 Corinthians 8:3.

⁶ However, we need to maintain our treasured relationship with our heavenly Father. Like the Galatian Christians to whom Paul wrote, we too need to avoid slaving for “the weak and beggarly elementary things” of this world, including seeking its acclaim. (Gal. 4:9) Those first-century Christians had progressed to the point of being known by God. However, Paul said that the very same brothers were “turning back again” to empty things. Paul was, in effect, saying: “After you have come so far, why would you return to the foolish, valueless things you left behind?”

⁷ Could we find ourselves in a similar position today? Yes, we could. When we first came to know Jehovah, we, like Paul, may have given up

6, 7. What could cause us to lose our relationship with Jehovah?

prominence in Satan’s world. (Read **Philippians 3: 7, 8.**) Perhaps we gave up opportunities to receive higher education, or we may have turned down promotions or the possibility for making more money in the business world. Our musical talents or athletic abilities could have potentially led us to fame and wealth, but we turned our backs on all of that. (Heb. 11:24-27) How unwise it would be for us now to view such good decisions as ‘missed opportunities’! Such thinking might lead us to seek out what we already determined were among “the weak and beggarly” elements of this world.*

STRENGTHEN YOUR RESOLVE

⁸ How can we strengthen our resolve to seek Jehovah’s recognition and not that of the world? To do so, we need to remember two important facts. First, *Jehovah always gives recognition to those who serve him faithfully.* (Read **Hebrews 6:10; 11:6**) He deeply appreciates every one of his servants, and he views it as “unrighteous” to ignore those who are faithful to him. Jehovah always “knows those

* In other Bible translations, the word for “beggarly” is rendered “useless,” “bankrupt,” “destitute,” and “miserable.”

8. What will strengthen our resolve to seek Jehovah’s recognition?

who belong to him.” (2 Tim. 2:19) He is “aware of the way of the righteous” and knows how to rescue them out of trial.—Ps. 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:9.

⁹ At times, Jehovah has shown his approval of his people in outstanding ways. (2 Chron. 20:20, 29) Take, for example, the way Jehovah saved his people at the Red Sea when they were being pursued by Pharaoh’s mighty army. (Ex. 14:21-30; Ps. 106: 9-11) This event was so spectacular that people in that part of the world were still speaking about it 40 years later. (Josh. 2:9-11) How encouraging it is for us to remember such displays of Jehovah’s love and power as we face the long-foretold attack by Gog of Magog! (Ezek. 38:8-12) At that time, we will be especially grateful that we sought the recognition of our God and not that of the world.

¹⁰ We also need to keep in mind a second important fact: *Jehovah may give us recognition in ways we may never expect.* Those who do good deeds purely to be seen by men are told that they will have no reward at all from Jehovah. Why? Their reward has already been paid in full when they receive praise from others. **(Read Matthew 6:1-5.)**

9. Give examples of how Jehovah has shown his approval of his people.

10. What aspect of Jehovah’s recognition must we keep in mind?

However, Jesus said that his Father “looks on in secret” at those who do not receive due credit for the good they do to others. He notices those acts and repays each person accordingly. However, at times Jehovah rewards us in unexpected ways. Let us consider some examples.

A HUMBLE YOUNG WOMAN RECEIVES UNEXPECTED RECOGNITION

¹¹ When it came time for God’s Son to be born as a human, Jehovah selected a humble virgin girl, Mary, to be the mother of this special child. Mary lived in the insignificant city of Nazareth, far from Jerusalem and its magnificent temple. (Read Luke 1:26-33.) Why was Mary chosen for this privilege? She was told by the angel Gabriel that she had “found favor with God.” Mary revealed her deep spirituality when she later spoke to her relative Elizabeth. (Luke 1:46-55) Yes, Jehovah had been observing Mary, and he granted her this unexpected privilege because of her faithfulness.

¹² When Mary eventually gave birth to Jesus, Je-

11. How did Jehovah show recognition to the young woman Mary?

12, 13. In what way was due recognition given at the time of Jesus’ birth and when he was taken to the temple 40 days later?

hovah did not honor any of the prominent officials or rulers in Jerusalem and Bethlehem by letting them know what had happened. Angels appeared to lowly shepherds who were caring for sheep in the fields outside Bethlehem. (Luke 2:8-14) These shepherds then visited the newborn baby. (Luke 2:15-17) How pleasantly surprised Mary and Joseph must have been to see Jesus honored in such a manner! Consider the contrast between Jehovah's way of doing things and that of the Devil. When Satan sent astrologers to visit Jesus and his parents, all of Jerusalem became agitated at the news of Jesus' birth. (Matt. 2:3) This very public announcement of Jesus' birth ultimately resulted in the death of many innocent children.—Matt. 2:16.

¹³ Forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary was required to present an offering to Jehovah at the temple in Jerusalem, about six miles (9 km) from Bethlehem. (Luke 2:22-24) As Mary traveled with Joseph and Jesus, she may have wondered if the officiating priest would make some special acknowledgment of Jesus' future role. Recognition did come, but not in the way Mary may have expected. Instead, Jehovah used a "righteous and devout" man named Simeon, along with an 84-year-old widow, the prophetess Anna, to acknowledge

that this child would become the promised Messiah, or Christ.—Luke 2:25-38.

¹⁴ What about Mary? Did Jehovah continue to show her due recognition for faithfully caring for and raising his Son? Yes, he did. God had her actions and words recorded in the Bible. Apparently, Mary was not in a position to travel with Jesus during the three and a half years of his ministry. Perhaps as a widow, Mary had to stay in Nazareth. But even though she missed out on many privileges, she was able to be with Jesus at the time of his death. (John 19:26) Later, though, Mary was in Jerusalem along with the disciples during the days leading up to Pentecost when holy spirit was poured out. (Acts 1:13, 14) She was likely anointed along with the others present. If so, this would mean that she was given the opportunity to be in heaven with Jesus for all eternity. What a beautiful reward for her faithful service!

JEHOVAH'S RECOGNITION OF HIS SON

¹⁵ Jesus did not crave to be honored by the religious or political leaders of his day. But how en-

14. What blessings did Mary receive from Jehovah?

15. While Jesus was on earth, how did Jehovah show his approval of his Son?

couraged he must have been when Jehovah acknowledged him on three separate occasions by speaking directly from heaven. Just after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, Jehovah said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matt. 3:17) Evidently, John the Baptist was the only other person who heard those words. Then, about a year before Jesus' death, three of his apostles heard Jehovah say about Jesus: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved. Listen to him." (Matt. 17:5) Finally, just a few days before Jesus' death, Jehovah again spoke to his Son from heaven.—John 12:28.

¹⁶ Even though Jesus knew that he would experience a shameful death, falsely branded as a blasphemer, he prayed that Jehovah's will be done and not his. (Matt. 26:39, 42) "He endured a torture stake, despising shame," not seeking recognition from the world, but only from his Father. (Heb. 12:2) How did Jehovah show that recognition?

¹⁷ While on earth, Jesus expressed his desire to return to the glory he once had in heaven with his Father. (John 17:5) Nothing indicates that Jesus

16, 17. How did Jehovah honor Jesus in an unexpected manner?



What do you learn from the way Jehovah showed his Son due recognition?

(See paragraphs 15-17)



was hoping for more than that. He was not expecting some sort of heavenly “upgrade.” But what did Jehovah do? He honored Jesus in an unexpected way by resurrecting him to “a superior position” and giving him what no one else had received up until that time—immortal spirit life!* (Phil. 2:9; 1 Tim. 6:16) What an outstanding acknowledgment of Jesus’ faithful course!

¹⁸ What will help us to avoid seeking approval from this world? Keep close in mind that Jehovah *always* gives recognition to his faithful servants and that he often rewards them in *unexpected ways*. Who knows what unexpected blessings await us in the future? But for now, as we endure the hardships and trials of this wicked world, let us always remember that this world, along with any recognition it may offer, is passing away. (1 John 2:17) Our loving Father, Jehovah, ‘is not unrighteous so as to forget our work and the love we show for his name.’ (Heb. 6:10) Yes, he will show us favor—perhaps even in ways we cannot imagine now!

* This may have been an unexpected blessing, since immortality is not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures.

18. What will help us to avoid seeking approval from this world?



SONGS:
143, 124

**HOW WOULD YOU
ANSWER?**

In what sense
should our eyes
look to Jehovah?

Why did Moses
lose his privilege
of entering the
Promised Land?

What lessons do
we learn from what
happened to
Moses?

Where Are Your Eyes Looking?

*“To you I raise my eyes, you who are
enthroned in the heavens.”—PS. 123:1.*

WE ARE living in “critical times”
that are “hard to deal with,”
and life is going to become even
more difficult before a new day
dawns and true peace is restored
to this earth. (2 Tim. 3:1) So we
do well to ask ourselves, ‘Where
am I looking for help and di-

1, 2. What is involved in fixing our eyes on
Jehovah?

rection?’ Our immediate answer may be, “To Jehovah,” and that is the best response.

² What is involved in looking to Jehovah? And how can we make sure that our eyes remain fixed on him as we face life’s complex challenges? Centuries ago, a psalmist acknowledged the need for us to raise our eyes to Jehovah for help in times of need. (Read Psalm 123:1-4.) He compared our looking to Jehovah with the way a servant looks to his master. What did the psalmist mean by that? Well, not only does a servant look to his master for food and protection but the servant needs constantly to watch his master to discern his wishes and then to carry them out. In a similar way, we daily need to search God’s Word to ascertain what Jehovah’s will is for us personally and then to follow that direction. Only then can we be sure that Jehovah will show us favor in our time of need.—Eph. 5:17.

³ Although we know the importance of continually looking to Jehovah, we may at times become distracted. That is exactly what happened to Jesus’ close friend Martha. She became “distracted with attending to many duties.” (Luke 10:40-42)

3. What can distract us from keeping our eyes fixed on Jehovah?

If that could happen to such a faithful person when Jesus was physically with her, we should not be surprised if the same thing could happen to us. What, then, can distract us from keeping our eyes fixed on Jehovah? In this article, we will examine how the actions of others could distract us. We will also learn how to remain focused on Jehovah.

A FAITHFUL MAN LOSES A PRIVILEGE

⁴ Moses certainly looked to Jehovah for direction and guidance. Indeed, “he continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.” (Read Hebrews 11:24-27.) The Bible record tells us that “there has never again arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah knew face-to-face.” (Deut. 34:10) But even though Moses had such a close relationship with Jehovah, he still lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land. (Num. 20:12) What caused Moses to stumble?

⁵ Less than two months after the Israelites left Egypt, a serious problem arose—even before they arrived at Mount Sinai. The people started to

4. Why might we be surprised that Moses lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land?

5-7. What problem arose shortly after the Israelites left Egypt, and how did Moses handle the situation?

complain about a lack of water. They began to murmur against Moses, and the situation became so serious that Moses cried out to Jehovah: “What should I do with this people? A little longer and they will stone me!” (Ex. 17:4) Jehovah responded by giving Moses clear instructions. He was to take his rod and strike the rock in Horeb, and then water would come gushing out. We read: “Moses did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel.” The Israelites drank their fill, and the problem was solved.—Ex. 17:5, 6.

⁶ The inspired record goes on to tell us that Moses “named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarreling of the Israelites and because they put Jehovah to the test by saying: ‘Is Jehovah in our midst or not?’” (Ex. 17:7) Those names were appropriate because they mean “Testing” and “Quarreling.”

⁷ How did Jehovah feel about what happened there at Meribah? He viewed the actions of the Israelites as a challenge to his Godship, not just a rebellion against Moses. (Read Psalm 95:8, 9.) The Israelites were clearly in the wrong. On that occasion, Moses reacted correctly by looking to

Jehovah and then carefully following his direction.

⁸ What happened, though, when a similar event occurred some 40 years later, toward the end of the journey through the wilderness? The Israelites again found themselves in a location that came to be called Meribah. But this was a different site, one near Kadesh, close to the border of the Promised Land.* The Israelites once again complained about the lack of water. (Num. 20:1-5) But on this occasion, things turned out differently for Moses.

⁹ How did Moses react to this rebellion? Once again he turned his eyes to Jehovah for direction. But this time Jehovah did not tell him to *strike* the rock. Moses was told to take his rod, gather the people before the crag, and then *speak* to the crag. (Num. 20:6-8) Moses did not, however, speak to

* This was a different location from the Meribah that was near Rephidim. Unlike the first location, this second site was associated with Kadesh, not Massah. However, both locations were named Meribah because of the quarreling that occurred there.—See the map in Appendix B3 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

8. What problem arose toward the end of the 40-year journey through the wilderness?

9. What instructions did Moses receive, but what did he do? (See opening picture.)

that rock, or crag. Rather, he vented his frustration by shouting out to those gathered there: “Hear, now, you rebels! Must we bring out water for you from this crag?” He then struck the crag not just once but twice.—Num. 20:10, 11.

¹⁰ Jehovah became angry, even furious, with Moses. (Deut. 1:37; 3:26) Why did Jehovah react in that way? A number of factors may have been involved. As mentioned above, Jehovah may have been indignant because Moses failed to follow the new directions he had received.

¹¹ There is another possibility. Rock formations around the location of the first Meribah are solid granite. Regardless of how hard someone strikes granite, no one expects water to flow from it. However, cliff formations around the second Meribah are very different, usually consisting of softer limestone. Because of the porous nature of limestone, such areas often have underground reservoirs of water that can be tapped as a water supply. Could it be that when Moses struck such porous rock twice, he opened himself up to the

10. How did Jehovah react to Moses' actions?

11. How might Moses' action of striking the rock have detracted from the miracle Jehovah performed?

accusation that the resulting flow of water was due to natural causes rather than to Jehovah? By striking the rock instead of speaking to it, was Moses, as it were, taking some of the miracle out of the miracle?* We cannot be certain.

HOW MOSES REBELLED

¹² There is another plausible explanation for Jehovah's anger with Moses as well as Aaron. Notice what Moses said to the people: "Must we bring out water for you from this crag?" By using the word "we," Moses was likely referring to himself and Aaron. Those words indicated a gross lack of respect for Jehovah as the true Source of that miracle. This possibility seems to be confirmed by what we read at Psalm 106:32, 33: "They provoked Him at the waters of Meribah, and it went badly for Moses because of them. They embittered his

* Professor John A. Beck says of this account: "According to one Jewish tradition, the rebels criticize Moses with these words: 'Moses knows the properties of this particular rock! If he wishes to prove his miraculous powers, let him bring out water for us from this other one.'" This is, of course, only a tradition.

12. For what other reason might Jehovah have been angry with Moses and Aaron?

spirit, and he *spoke rashly with his lips.*”* (Num. 27:14) Whatever the case, Moses’ actions detracted from the honor due Jehovah. Speaking to Moses and Aaron, Jehovah said: “You both rebelled against my order.” (Num. 20:24) A serious sin indeed!

¹³ As leaders among Jehovah’s people, Moses and Aaron had a greater measure of accountability. (Luke 12:48) Previously, Jehovah had denied a whole generation of Israelites entrance into the land of Canaan because of their rebelliousness. (Num. 14:26-30, 34) So it was both appropriate and consistent for Jehovah to make the same judgment with regard to Moses because of his rebellious act. Just like the other rebels, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

¹⁴ What led Moses to adopt such a rebellious attitude? Notice Psalm 106:32, 33 once again: “They provoked Him at the waters of Meribah,

* See *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1987, “Questions From Readers.”

13. Why was the judgment Jehovah made concerning Moses both appropriate and consistent?

14, 15. What caused Moses to rebel?

and it went badly for Moses because of them. They *embittered his spirit*, and he spoke rashly with his lips.” Although the Israelites provoked Jehovah, it was Moses who became embittered. His lack of self-control led him to speak without considering the consequences.

¹⁵ Moses allowed the actions of others to distract him from keeping his eyes fixed on Jehovah. Moses handled the first incident correctly. (Ex. 7:6) Yet, it is possible that after dealing for decades with the rebellious Israelites, he had become tired and frustrated. Was Moses thinking mainly of his own feelings instead of how he could glorify Jehovah?

¹⁶ If such a faithful prophet as Moses could be distracted and stumbled, the same thing could easily happen to us. Like Moses, we are about to enter a symbolic land, the new world that Jehovah has promised us. (2 Pet. 3:13) None of us want to miss out on that special privilege. To fulfill our goal, though, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jehovah, always seeking to do his will. (1 John 2:17) What lessons should we learn from Moses’ mistake?

16. Why should we be concerned about Moses’ actions?

AVOID BEING DISTRACTED BY THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS

17 Do not give in to frustration. Even when we find ourselves dealing with the same problems over and over again, “let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due time we will reap if we do not tire out.” (Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13) When faced with frustrating situations or recurring personality conflicts, do we control our lips and our temper? (Prov. 10:19; 17:27; Matt. 5:22) When provoked by others, we need to learn to “yield place to the wrath.” Whose wrath? Jehovah’s wrath. (Read Romans 12:17-21.) If we keep looking to Jehovah, we will show him due respect by yielding to his wrath, patiently waiting for him to take action when he deems it necessary. To do otherwise and avenge ourselves in some way would be tantamount to disrespecting Jehovah.

18 Carefully follow the latest directions. Do we faithfully follow the latest directions that Jehovah has given us? If so, we will not rely on always doing things the way we have done them in

17. What will help us not to give in to frustration?

18. What do we need to remember when it comes to following directions?

the past. Rather, we will be quick to follow any new direction that Jehovah provides through his organization. (Heb. 13:17) At the same time, we will be careful that we “do not go beyond the things that are written.” (1 Cor. 4:6) In so doing, we keep our eyes fixed on Jehovah.

19 Do not allow the mistakes of others to damage your relationship with Jehovah. If we keep our figurative eyes focused on Jehovah, we will

19. How can we avoid damaging our relationship with Jehovah even though we may be dealing with the mistakes of others?

What lesson should we learn from Moses' reaction to the mistakes of others?

(See paragraph 19)



not allow the actions of others to embitter us or damage our relationship with him. This is especially important if, like Moses, we have a measure of responsibility in God’s organization. While it is true that each of us needs to ‘keep working out his own salvation with fear and trembling,’ we must remember that Jehovah does not have one rigid, inflexible standard by which he judges us. (Phil. 2: 12) Rather, the more responsibility we have, the greater our accountability. (Luke 12:48) But if we truly love Jehovah, nothing will stumble us or separate us from his love.—Ps. 119:165; Rom. 8:37-39.

²⁰ In these challenging times, may our eyes be raised continually to the One who is “enthroned in the heavens,” so that we can perceive his will. May we never allow our relationship with Jehovah to be negatively affected by the actions of others. The example of what happened to Moses reinforces the importance of this in our mind and heart. Rather than overreacting to the imperfections of those around us, let it be our determination that “our eyes look to Jehovah our God until he shows us favor.”—Ps. 123:1, 2.

20. What should be our determination?



SONGS:

28, 32

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

While professing to worship Jehovah, how did Cain and Solomon lose Jehovah's favor?

How did Moses and Aaron seize opportunities to show that they were on Jehovah's side?

How can we fully benefit from Jehovah's mercy and forgiveness?

“Who Is on Jehovah’s Side?”

“Jehovah your God you should fear, him you should serve, to him you should cling.”—DEUT. 10:20.

IT MAKES sense to cling to Jehovah. No one is more powerful, wise, or loving than our God! Who of us would not want to be on his side? (Ps. 96:4-6) Still, some of God's worshippers have

1, 2. (a) Why is it wise to be on Jehovah's side? (b) What will we consider in this article?

wavered when a situation called for them to take sides with Jehovah.

² In this article, we will consider examples of individuals who claimed to be on Jehovah's side while at the same time following a course that offended him. These accounts contain vital lessons that can help us remain fully loyal to Jehovah.

JEHOVAH SEARCHES THE HEART

³ Consider the case of Cain. He did not profess to worship any other god but Jehovah. Cain's worship, however, was not acceptable to God. There were seeds of wickedness growing deep within his heart. (1 John 3:12) Jehovah reached out to Cain and told him: "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?" (Gen. 4:6, 7) Jehovah was, in effect, telling Cain, "If you repent and take a firm stand on my side, I will, in turn, be on your side."

⁴ If only Cain would correct his thinking, Jehovah would restore him to favor. But Cain did not

3. Why did Jehovah reach out to Cain, and what did He tell him?

4. Given the opportunity to be on Jehovah's side, what did Cain do?

listen to the counsel. Wrong thinking and selfish desire led him to wrong actions. (Jas. 1:14, 15) In his youth, Cain may never have imagined that he would take a stand against Jehovah. In time, however, he did the unimaginable—he rebelled against God and killed his own brother!

⁵ Like Cain, a Christian today could be following the wrong path even while professing to worship Jehovah. (Jude 11) For instance, one could nurture immoral fantasies, greedy thoughts, or hateful feelings toward a fellow Christian. (1 John 2:15-17; 3:15) This thinking can lead to sinful actions. All the while, one could be active in the ministry and regular at congregation meetings. Other humans may not be aware of our thoughts and conduct, but Jehovah sees all things and knows if we are not wholeheartedly on his side.—Read Jeremiah 17:9, 10.

⁶ Even so, Jehovah is not quick to give up on us. When a person's steps lead him away from God, Jehovah urges him: "Return to me, and I will return to you." (Mal. 3:7) Especially when we struggle with weaknesses, Jehovah wants us to take a stand

5. What kind of thinking could cause us to lose Jehovah's favor?

6. How does Jehovah help us to "get the mastery over" sinful inclinations when we take a firm stand on his side?

against badness. (Isa. 55:7) If we do, he will in turn prove to be on our side by giving us the spiritual, emotional, and physical strength needed to “get the mastery over” our sinful inclinations.—Gen. 4:7.

“DO NOT BE MISLED”

⁷ We can learn much from the example of King Solomon. During his younger years, Solomon looked to Jehovah for guidance. God gave him great wisdom and entrusted him with the building of a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. But Solomon lost his friendship with Jehovah. (1 Ki. 3:12; 11:1, 2) God’s Law specifically prohibited a Hebrew king from taking “many wives for himself, so that his heart [might] not go astray.” (Deut. 17:17) Solomon disobeyed, eventually marrying 700 women. He brought into his household an additional 300 concubines. (1 Ki. 11:3) Many of his wives were non-Israelites, who worshipped false gods. Hence, Solomon also disobeyed God’s law against marrying foreign women.—Deut. 7:3, 4.

⁸ Solomon’s gradual departure from Jehovah’s requirements led him in time to extreme

7. How did Solomon lose his good standing with Jehovah?

8. To what extreme did Solomon offend Jehovah?

wrongdoing. Solomon built an altar to the idol goddess Ashtoreth and at least one other altar to the false god Chemosh. There he joined his wives in pagan worship. He built those altars on, of all places, a mountain located directly in front of Jerusalem, where he had built Jehovah's temple! (1 Ki. 11:5-8; 2 Ki. 23:13) Perhaps Solomon fooled himself into thinking that Jehovah would overlook his disobedience as long as he also continued to offer sacrifices at the temple.

⁹ But Jehovah never overlooks wrongdoing. The Bible reports: "Jehovah became furious at Solomon, because his heart had inclined away from Jehovah . . . , who had appeared to him twice and had warned him about this very thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not obey what Jehovah had commanded." As a result, God withdrew his approval and support. Solomon's heirs lost the unified kingdom of Israel and suffered many calamities for generations to come.—1 Ki. 11:9-13.

¹⁰ As in Solomon's case, one of the greatest threats to spirituality is friendship with those who

9. What resulted from Solomon's disregard for God's warnings?

10. What can threaten our good standing with Jehovah?



What effect are your associates having on your relationship with Jehovah?
(See paragraph 11)

do not understand or respect Jehovah's standards. Some may be associated with the congregation but may be spiritually weak. Others could be relatives, neighbors, coworkers, or schoolmates who are not worshippers of Jehovah. In any case, if our close associates do not show a high regard for Jehovah's standards, they can in time destroy our good standing with God.

¹¹ **Read 1 Corinthians 15:33.** Most people have some good qualities, and many outside the congregation do not engage in blatant misconduct. If

11. What can help us to determine whether an associate should be avoided?

that is true of your acquaintances, can you assume that they are good associations? Ask yourself what effect their companionship will have on your relationship with Jehovah. Will they improve it? What is in their heart? For example, are their conversations almost exclusively about fashion, money, gadgets, entertainment, or other material pursuits? Does their speech often include disparaging comments about others or obscene jesting? Jesus aptly warned: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matt. 12:34) If you realize that your associates pose a threat to your good standing with Jehovah, act decisively by limiting and if necessary ending such friendships.—Prov. 13:20.

JEHOVAH REQUIRES EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION

¹² Additional lessons can be learned from what took place shortly after the Israelites were freed from Egypt. The people gathered in front of Mount Sinai. There Jehovah made his presence strikingly real. A miraculous dark cloud formed. Jehovah produced thunder, lightning, smoke, and what seemed to be the loud and constant sound of

12. (a) What did Jehovah make clear to the Israelites shortly after they left Egypt? (b) How did the Israelites respond to God’s requirement for exclusive devotion?

a horn. (Ex. 19:16-19) In this setting, Jehovah revealed himself to the Israelites as “a God who requires exclusive devotion.” He assured them that he would be loyal to those who love him and keep his commandments. (Read Exodus 20:1-6.) In effect, Jehovah was telling his people, “If you prove to be on my side, I will prove to be on your side.” How would you respond to such a promise of loyalty from Jehovah God? You would surely do as the Israelites did. They “answered with one voice: ‘All the words that Jehovah has spoken, we are willing to do.’” (Ex. 24:3) Soon, however, something unexpected put the Israelites’ loyalty to the test.

¹³ The Israelites had been frightened by the dark cloud, the lightning, and the other awe-inspiring signs from God. At their request, Moses agreed to be their spokesperson for all communication with Jehovah on Mount Sinai. (Ex. 20:18-21) Moses was on the mountaintop for a long time. Were the Israelites now stranded in the wilderness without their trustworthy leader? Apparently, the people’s faith was too dependent on Moses’ visible presence. They became anxious and told Aaron: “Make for us a god who will go ahead of us, because we do not know what has happened to this Moses, the man

13. What circumstances put the loyalty of the Israelites to the test?

who led us up out of the land of Egypt.”—Ex. 32: 1, 2.

¹⁴ The people knew that idolatry was a serious offense against Jehovah. (Ex. 20:3-5) But soon they were worshipping a golden calf! Despite this obvious act of disobedience, the Israelites somehow fooled themselves into thinking that they were still on Jehovah’s side. Why, Aaron even called their calf worship “a festival to Jehovah”! How did Jehovah react? He felt betrayed. Jehovah told Moses that the people had “corrupted themselves” and had “deviated from the way [He] commanded them to go.” In his “burning anger,” Jehovah even considered wiping out the newly formed nation of Israel.—Ex. 32:5-10.

¹⁵ Jehovah decided not to eliminate the Israelites. His mercy gave loyal worshippers an opportunity to take a firm stand on his side. (Ex. 32:14) After witnessing the unrestrained behavior of the people—shouting, singing, and dancing before an idol—Moses crushed the golden calf into powder. He then proclaimed: “Who is on Jehovah’s side?”

14. What did the Israelites fool themselves into thinking, and what was Jehovah’s reaction?

15, 16. How did Moses and Aaron show that they were firmly on Jehovah’s side? (See opening picture.)

Come to me!” In response, “all the Levites gathered around” Moses.—Ex. 32:17-20, 26.

¹⁶ Although initially involved in setting up the idol, Aaron repented and joined the rest of the Levites on Jehovah’s side. These loyal ones were not just taking sides with Jehovah but were at the same time separating themselves from the wrongdoers. That was a wise move; that day thousands lost their lives because of their idolatry. However, those who were on Jehovah’s side were promised a blessing.—Ex. 32:27-29.

¹⁷ The apostle Paul drew attention to the golden calf episode and warned: “These things became examples for us, in order for us not to . . . become idolaters, as some of them did. [The examples] were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have come. So let the one who thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall.” (1 Cor. 10:6, 7, 11, 12) As Paul pointed out, even true worshippers could become involved in wrong practices. Those who give in to temptation may think that they still have a good standing with Jehovah. But merely wanting to be Jehovah’s friend or claiming to be loyal to him does

17. What do Paul’s words about the golden calf episode teach us?

not always mean that one is actually approved by Jehovah.—1 Cor. 10:1-5.

¹⁸ Just as the Israelites became anxious over Moses' delay in coming down from Sinai, Christians today may feel anxious over the seeming delay of Jehovah's day of judgment and the coming of the new world. The fulfillment of these promises may seem too far off in the future or too good to be true. Left unchecked, such thinking can lead us to put fleshly pursuits ahead of Jehovah's will. In time, we could drift away from Jehovah and eventually engage in practices that we would never have considered being involved in when we were in good spiritual health.

¹⁹ Never should we forget that Jehovah requires wholehearted obedience and exclusive devotion. (Ex. 20:5) Any wandering away from Jehovah's worship really means doing Satan's will, and that could lead only to disaster. Hence, Paul reminds us: "You cannot be drinking the cup of Jehovah and the cup of demons; you cannot be partaking of 'the table of Jehovah' and the table of demons." —1 Cor. 10:21.

18. What could cause us to drift away from Jehovah, and with what consequences?

19. What fundamental truth should we never forget, and why?

CLING TO JEHOVAH!

²⁰ The Bible accounts about Cain, Solomon, and the Israelites at Mount Sinai have a noteworthy element in common. These individuals had opportunity to “repent . . . and turn around.” (Acts 3:19) Clearly, Jehovah is not quick to give up on those who take a false step. In Aaron’s case, Jehovah extended forgiveness. Today, warnings from Jehovah may come in the form of a Bible account, Bible-based publications, or kind advice from a fellow Christian. When we heed the warnings, we are assured of Jehovah’s mercy.

²¹ Jehovah’s undeserved kindness has a purpose. (2 Cor. 6:1) It gives us an opportunity “to reject ungodliness and worldly desires.” (Read Titus 2: 11-14.) As long as we live “amid this present system of things,” we will face situations that will put our exclusive devotion to Jehovah to the test. May we always be ready to take a firm stand on his side, for it is ‘Jehovah our God we should fear, him we should serve, and to him we should cling’!—Deut. 10:20.

20. Even after we take a false step, how can Jehovah help us?

21. What should we be determined to do when our loyalty to Jehovah is put to the test?



SONGS:

40, 50

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What are some of the things we accomplish through dedication and baptism?

Why should it be obvious to others that we are exclusively devoted to Jehovah?

Why is it important to be hospitable, generous, forgiving, and kind to fellow worshippers?

We Belong to Jehovah

“Happy is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people he has chosen as his own possession.”—PS. 33:12.

EVERYTHING belongs to Jehovah! He owns “the heavens, even the heavens of the heavens, and the earth with all that is in it.” (Deut. 10:14; Rev. 4:11) Hence, by reason of their very existence, all humans belong to Je-

1. Why can Jehovah rightfully claim ownership of everything? (See opening picture.)

hovah. (Ps. 100:3) Yet, throughout human history, God has designated specific groups of people as belonging to him in a special way.

² For example, Psalm 135 refers to faithful worshippers of Jehovah in ancient Israel as “his special property.” (Ps. 135:4) Also, the book of Hosea foretold that some non-Israelites would become Jehovah’s people. (Hos. 2:23) Hosea’s prophecy was fulfilled when Jehovah included non-Jews in his selection of prospective rulers with Christ. (Acts 10:45; Rom. 9:23-26) This “holy nation” is Jehovah’s “special possession” in an outstanding way, its members having been anointed with holy spirit and chosen for life in heaven. (1 Pet. 2:9, 10) What about the majority of faithful Christians today who have an earthly hope? Jehovah also calls them his “people” and his “chosen ones.”—Isa. 65:22.

³ Today, the “little flock,” with a heavenly hope, and the “other sheep,” with an earthly hope, compose the “one flock” that Jehovah highly regards

2. Who have been identified in the Bible as belonging to Jehovah in a special way?

3. (a) Who enjoy a favored relationship with Jehovah today?
(b) What will be considered in this article?

as his people. (Luke 12:32; John 10:16) We surely want to show deep appreciation to Jehovah for granting us such a favored relationship with him. This article will consider various ways in which we can show our gratitude to Jehovah for giving us that special honor.

WE DEDICATE OUR LIVES TO JEHOVAH

⁴ We show appreciation to Jehovah by wholeheartedly dedicating ourselves to him. By water baptism, we formally and publicly acknowledge Jehovah's ownership of us and our willingness to subject ourselves to him. (Heb. 12:9) Jesus did something similar when at his baptism he, in effect, said to Jehovah: "To do your will, O my God, is my desire." (Ps. 40:7, 8, ftn.) Jesus presented himself to do Jehovah's will, even though since birth he had been part of a nation dedicated to God.

⁵ How did Jehovah respond to Jesus' baptism?

4. What is one way we can thank Jehovah for making it possible for us to have a relationship with him, and how did Jesus do something similar?

5, 6. (a) How did Jehovah respond when Jesus was baptized? (b) Illustrate why Jehovah appreciates our dedication, even though everything belongs to him.

The Bible account says: “After being baptized, Jesus immediately came up from the water; and look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw God’s spirit descending like a dove and coming upon him. Look! Also, a voice from the heavens said: ‘This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.’” (Matt. 3:16, 17) Although Jesus already belonged to his heavenly Father, Jehovah was delighted to see his Son’s willingness to do His will exclusively. Jehovah is likewise pleased to accept our dedication, and he will honor us with his blessing.—Ps. 149:4.

⁶ To illustrate, imagine that a man has planted many beautiful flowers in his garden. One day his little girl picks one of those flowers and offers it to him as a gift. Did not the flower already belong to the man? How could she give him something that he already owned? A loving father would not even think of such questions. Rather, he would be delighted to accept the gift as a token of his daughter’s love for him. He would surely treasure that single flower from his daughter above all the other flowers in his garden. Jehovah is no less delighted when we willingly devote ourselves to him exclusively.—Ex. 34:14.

⁷ Read Malachi 3:16. If you are not yet dedicated and baptized, consider the significance of taking such a step. Granted, from the moment you came into existence, you belonged to Jehovah, along with the rest of mankind. Yet, think how greatly it would please Jehovah if in recognition of his sovereignty, you were to dedicate yourself to him and do his will. (Prov. 23:15) Jehovah, in turn, recognizes those who willingly serve him, and he writes their names in his “book of remembrance.”

⁸ Having our name inscribed in Jehovah’s “book of remembrance” as his people comes with certain obligations. Malachi specifically stated that we must ‘fear Jehovah and meditate on his name.’ Giving our worshipful devotion to anyone or anything else would result in our name being removed from Jehovah’s figurative book of life. —Ex. 32:33; Ps. 69:28.

⁹ Hence, our dedication to Jehovah involves

7. How did Malachi highlight Jehovah’s feelings toward those who willingly serve him?

8, 9. What does Jehovah require from those whose names are inscribed in his “book of remembrance”?

much more than a solemn promise to do his will and to submit to water baptism. These actions are brief, and they quickly become part of the past. Our stand on Jehovah's side as his people requires an ongoing demonstration of our obedience to him both in the present and in the future—for as long as we live.—1 Pet. 4:1, 2.

WE REJECT WORLDLY DESIRES

¹⁰ The preceding article considered the Bible accounts of Cain, Solomon, and the Israelites. All of them professed to worship Jehovah, but their devotion to him was far from exclusive. These examples clearly establish that those who truly belong to Jehovah must firmly take their stand for righteousness and against wickedness. (Rom. 12:9) Appropriately, after Malachi mentioned the “book of remembrance,” Jehovah spoke of “the distinction between a righteous person and a wicked person, between one serving God and one not serving him.”—Mal. 3:18.

10. What clear distinction must exist between those who serve Jehovah and those who do not?

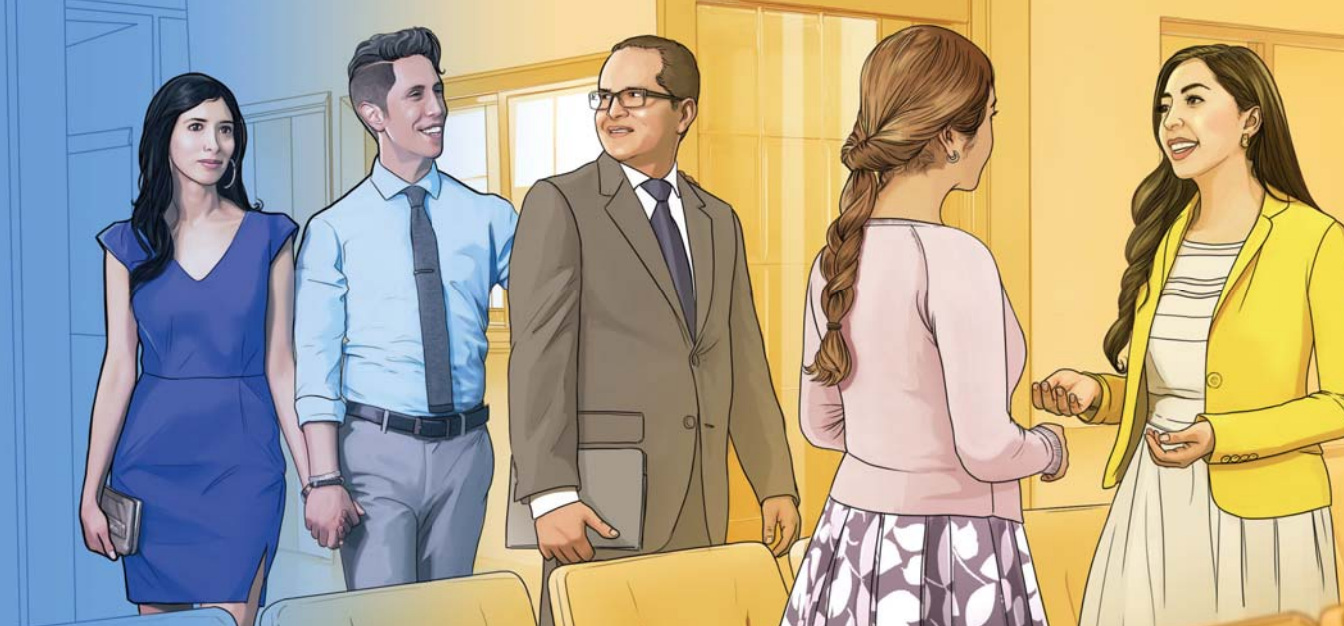


Does your lifestyle clearly identify you
as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

(See paragraphs 12, 13)

¹¹ Here, then, is another way we can show appreciation to Jehovah for choosing us as his people. Our spiritual progress must be “plainly seen by all.” (1 Tim. 4:15; Matt. 5:16) Ask yourself: ‘Is my complete allegiance to Jehovah evident to others? Do I look for opportunities to identify myself as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?’ Jehovah would be deeply saddened if after he has selected us as his people, we were to hesitate to

11. Why should it be obvious to others that we are devoted to Jehovah exclusively?



Do not let yourself be affected by those who are not taking a firm stand on Jehovah's side

let others know that we belong to him.—Ps. 119: 46; read Mark 8:38.

¹² Sad to say, some individuals have blurred ‘the distinction between their serving God and their not serving him’ by imitating “the spirit of the world.” (1 Cor. 2:12) That is a spirit that caters to ‘the desires of one’s flesh.’ (Eph. 2:3) For example, despite all the counsel that has been given on the subject, some still prefer styles of dress and

12, 13. How have some obscured their identity as Jehovah’s Witnesses?

grooming that are immodest. They wear tight-fitting and revealing clothing, even to Christian gatherings. Or they have adopted extreme haircuts and hairdos. (1 Tim. 2:9, 10) As a result, when they are in a crowd, it may be difficult to tell who belongs to Jehovah and who is “a friend of the world.”—Jas. 4:4.

¹³ In other ways, some Witnesses have not firmly rejected worldly conduct. Their dancing and actions at parties go beyond what is acceptable for Christians. They post on social media photos of themselves and comments that are unbecoming to spiritual people. They may not have been disciplined in the Christian congregation for a serious sin, but they can be a negative influence on their peers who are striving to maintain fine conduct among Jehovah’s people.—Read 1 Peter 2:11, 12.

¹⁴ The world aggressively promotes “the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one’s means of life.” (1 John 2:16) Yet, because we belong to Jehovah, we are admonished to “reject ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righ-

14. What course of action is vital if we are to protect our special friendship with Jehovah?

teousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things.” (Titus 2:12) Our speech, our eating and drinking habits, our dress and grooming, our work ethic—everything we do—should tell onlookers that we are exclusively devoted to Jehovah.—Read 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32.

WE “HAVE INTENSE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER”

¹⁵ Our appreciation for Jehovah’s special friendship is shown in how we treat fellow worshippers. They too belong to Jehovah. If we never lose sight of that fact, we will always treat our brothers and sisters with kindness and love. (1 Thess. 5:15) Jesus said to his followers: “By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:35.

¹⁶ To illustrate how we should treat one another in the congregation, consider the following. The utensils in Jehovah’s temple were dedicated, or set aside, exclusively for pure worship. The Mosaic Law outlined in detail how to care for these utensils, and violators were subject to

15. Why should we treat fellow worshippers with kindness and love?

16. What example from the Mosaic Law illustrates Jehovah’s feelings toward his people?

death. (Num. 1:50, 51) If Jehovah so jealously protected lifeless implements used in his worship, how much more would he protect his dedicated loyal worshippers whom he has chosen as his people! Speaking to his people, Jehovah once declared: “Whoever touches you touches the pupil of my eye.”—Zech. 2:8.

¹⁷ Interestingly, Malachi depicted Jehovah as “paying attention and listening” as His people interact with one another. (Mal. 3:16) Jehovah indeed “knows those who belong to him.” (2 Tim. 2:19) He is keenly aware of every single thing we do and say. (Heb. 4:13) When we are less than kind to our fellow worshippers, Jehovah is “paying attention and listening.” When we are hospitable, generous, forgiving, and kind to one another, we can be sure that Jehovah takes notice of that as well.—Heb. 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:8, 9.

“JEHOVAH WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS PEOPLE”

¹⁸ Surely we are eager to show our appreciation

17. Jehovah is “paying attention and listening” to what?

18. How can we show appreciation for the honor of being Jehovah’s people?

to Jehovah for the honor of being his people. We see the wisdom in acknowledging his ownership of us by voluntarily dedicating ourselves to him. Even while living “in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,” we want people to see that we are “blameless and innocent, . . . shining as illuminators in the world.” (Phil. 2:15) We take a firm stand against badness. (Jas. 4:7) And we love and respect our fellow worshippers, recognizing that they too belong to Jehovah.—Rom. 12:10.

¹⁹ The Bible promises: “Jehovah will not forsake his people.” (Ps. 94:14) This ironclad guarantee is binding despite any calamity that might befall us. Even death cannot stand in the way of Jehovah’s love for us. (Rom. 8:38, 39) “If we live, we live to Jehovah, and if we die, we die to Jehovah. So both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah.” (Rom. 14:8) We eagerly look forward to the day when Jehovah will bring to life all his loyal friends who have died. (Matt. 22:32) Even now we enjoy many blessings. As the Bible says, “happy is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people he has chosen as his own possession.”—Ps. 33:12.

19. How does Jehovah reward those who belong to him?

Cultivate Compassion for “All Sorts of People”

WHEN Jesus taught his disciples how to preach the good news, he acknowledged that the Kingdom message would not always be welcomed. (Luke 10:3, 5, 6) In our ministry, we may encounter some who respond harshly or even act abusively. Admittedly, such responses can make it difficult for us to maintain compassion for those to whom we preach.

A compassionate person sees the needs and problems of others, feels sympathy for them, and wants to help. However, if we begin to lose our compassion for those whom we meet in the ministry, we may also begin to lose our zeal and effectiveness. On the other hand, when we cultivate compassion, it is as if we were adding more oxygen to a fire—we keep our zeal for the ministry burning brightly!—1 Thess. 5:19.

How can we cultivate compassion even when it is challenging to do so? Let us consider three examples worthy of imitation—the examples of Jehovah, Jesus, and the apostle Paul.

IMITATE JEHOVAH'S COMPASSION

For thousands of years, Jehovah has endured the reproach that has been brought on his name. Yet, he remains “kind toward the unthankful and wicked.” (Luke 6: 35) His kindness is demonstrated by his patience. Jehovah desires that “all sorts of people” be saved. (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4) Although God hates wickedness, he views humans as precious and does not want any to lose their lives.—2 Pet. 3:9.

Jehovah understands how effectively Satan has blinded unbelieving humans. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4) Many have been taught wrong beliefs and attitudes since childhood, making it a challenge for them to accept the truth. Jehovah is eager to help such ones. How do we know?

Consider Jehovah's view of the ancient Ninevites. Despite their violent ways, Jehovah said to Jonah: “Should I not also feel sorry for Nineveh the great city, in which there are more than 120,000 men who do not even know right from wrong?” (Jonah 4:11) Jehovah viewed the Ninevites as spiritually disadvantaged, and he mercifully commissioned Jonah to warn them.

Like Jehovah, we view people as precious. We can imitate him by eagerly trying to help any who might listen, even if they seem unlikely to respond.



Do not be frustrated if a person does not initially show interest



Circumstances in life change, as may a person's attitude toward the truth

IMITATE JESUS' COMPASSION

Like his Father, Jesus was moved with pity for people who were in spiritual need. “On seeing the crowds, he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36) Jesus saw beneath the surface; he recognized that those who came to hear him speak had been taught falsehoods and had been mistreated by their religious leaders. Although he knew that many would allow various obstacles to hinder them from responding favorably, Jesus still proceeded “to teach them many things.”—Mark 4:1-9.

When people react unfavorably to our message, we need to see beneath the surface and ask ourselves why



We keep looking for those who are rightly disposed for everlasting life

Some respond to our patient efforts to help them spiritually

they respond as they do. Some may have a negative attitude about the Bible or about Christianity because of the bad examples of those who claim to be Christians. Perhaps others have been told lies about our beliefs. Still others may face the scorn of members of the community or of family members if they receive us favorably.

Some we meet in the ministry may react unfavorably because of traumatic experiences that have left them emotionally damaged. A missionary named Kim says: “In a certain part of our territory, many people are victims of a war in which they lost all their possessions. They have no real hope for the future. They are frustrated and very distrustful. In this area, we regularly encounter those

opposed to our message. On one occasion, I was assaulted while preaching.”

How does Kim maintain her compassion despite such treatment? She says: “When treated abusively, I try to keep in mind Proverbs 19:11, which says: ‘The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger.’ Remembering the background of those in our territory helps me to cultivate compassion for them. And not everyone we meet is hostile. In that same area, we have some nice return visits.”

We might ask ourselves, ‘How would I respond to the Kingdom message if I were in the position of those to whom we preach?’ For example, what if we had repeatedly been told lies about Jehovah’s Witnesses? In such circumstances, perhaps we too would respond negatively and be in need of compassion. When we recall Jesus’ command to treat others as we wish to be treated, we are motivated to respond empathetically even when it is difficult to do so.—Matt. 7:12.

IMITATE PAUL’S COMPASSION

The apostle Paul showed compassion even for violent opposers. Why? He did not forget his own past. He said: “Formerly I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man. Nevertheless, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and with a lack of faith.” (1 Tim. 1:13)

He recognized that Jehovah and Jesus had shown him great mercy. Likely, he could see his former self in some of those to whom he preached.

At times, Paul encountered strongly entrenched false beliefs. How did he react? Acts 17:16 reports that while Paul was in Athens, “his spirit within him became irritated on seeing that the city was full of idols.” Nevertheless, Paul used the very source of his irritation to give a fine witness. (Acts 17:22, 23) He adapted his preaching methods to the backgrounds of various types of people so that he “might by all possible means save some.”—1 Cor. 9: 20-23.

We can imitate Paul by acknowledging negative attitudes or wrong beliefs that we encounter and then by skillfully introducing “good news of something better.” (Isa. 52:7) A sister named Dorothy says: “In our territory, many have been taught that God is harsh and judgmental. I commend such people for their strong belief in God and then draw their attention to what the Bible says about Jehovah’s loving personality and his promises for the future.”

“KEEP CONQUERING THE EVIL WITH THE GOOD”

As we move deeper into “the last days,” we can expect that the attitudes of some to whom we preach “will

advance from bad to worse.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 13) But we must not let this downward trend erode our compassion or cause us to lose our joy. Jehovah can give us the strength to “keep conquering the evil with the good.” (Rom. 12:21) A pioneer named Jessica relates: “I often encounter people who lack humility and who belittle us and our message. This can be annoying. When I begin a conversation, I pray silently to Jehovah and ask for his help to see the person as he does. This takes my focus off of my feelings and instead makes me think about how to help the person.”

We should also consider how to encourage our fellow workers. Jessica says: “If one of us has a bad experience, I try not to dwell on it. Rather, I shift the conversation to positive topics, such as the good that our ministry accomplishes despite the negative responses of some.”

Jehovah is well-aware of the challenges we encounter in the ministry. How he must rejoice when we imitate his mercy! (Luke 6:36) Of course, Jehovah will not extend his compassion indefinitely. We can be confident that he knows exactly the right time to end this system of things. Until then, our preaching is urgent. (2 Tim. 4:2) Let us continue to carry out our assignment with zeal and tender compassion for “all sorts of people.”



How to Make Your Study of the Bible More Effective and Enjoyable

JOSHUA faces a daunting challenge. He has to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land in the face of formidable obstacles. Jehovah assures him of success, though, and encourages him: ‘Be courageous and strong. Observe my Law. Read it day and night, in order to observe carefully all that is written in it. Then you will be successful and you will act wisely.’ —Josh. 1:7, 8.

In these “critical times hard to deal with,” we too face formidable challenges. (2 Tim. 3:1) Like Joshua, we can succeed by following the advice Jehovah gave him. We can read the Bible regularly and carefully apply its principles to the tests we face.

However, many of us would admit that we are not the best students and that studying is not easy for us. Yet, since studying the Bible is so important, review the box “Try These Suggestions” for some good tips that can make your study more effective and enjoyable.

“Guide me in the pathway of your commandments,” sang the psalmist, “for in it *I take delight.*” (Ps. 119:35) You can derive great pleasure from considering God’s Word. Rewarding gems are awaiting discovery as you dig for spiritual treasures.

Although you do not have to lead a nation as Joshua did, you have your own challenges to face. So, like Joshua, study and observe what has been written for your benefit. When you do, you too will be successful and act wisely.

TRY THESE SUGGESTIONS



Pray before you study. The Bible contains the thoughts of the almighty God that he had recorded for your benefit. So when you read the Bible, seek his help to understand it, retain it, and apply it in your life.—Ezra 7:10.



Ask yourself questions as you read the Bible or Bible-based literature: ‘What does this passage tell me about Jehovah? How does it contribute to the overall message of his Word? How can I use these thoughts to help others?’



Meditate on what you study. Stop reading and think: ‘How does this material make me feel? Why does it make me feel that way? How does it relate to my past experiences, to my current situation, or to possible future events? How can I apply these Bible principles and this counsel in my life?’ (Job 23:5; Ps. 49:3) See if you can explain why Jehovah urges his people to avoid certain practices or what the consequences of a different course of action would likely be.—Deut. 32:28, 29.



Use your imagination when reading descriptive passages. Can you, for example, picture the scene as Joseph’s brothers sell him to the Ishmaelites? (Gen. 37:18-28) What do you see, hear, and smell? Put yourself in the place of the characters. What are they thinking and feeling? Such thoughts will make your study more vivid and meaningful.



Use the study tools that have been provided to enrich your research. Get familiar with the tools available in your language, both online and in print. Do not hesitate to ask others to help you learn how to use them effectively. The *Watch Tower Publications Index* or the *Research Guide for Jehovah's Witnesses*, for example, will help you to locate what has been written on many topics and to find explanations of many Bible verses. Use the appendixes of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* if available in a language you know. These provide useful information on geography, chronology, weights and measures, and so on.



Summarize key points in the material to help you remember what you have just studied. Better still, share it with others. Is there something you can use in your ministry? In these ways, you not only fix the main points in your mind but also use what you have studied to benefit others.

If an unmarried couple spend the night together under improper circumstances, would that constitute a sin meriting judicial action?

■ Yes, if there are no extenuating circumstances, a judicial committee would be formed on the basis of strong circumstantial evidence of sexual immorality. —1 Cor. 6:18.

The body of elders carefully evaluates each situation to determine whether a judicial committee is warranted. For example: Have the couple been pursuing a romantic relationship? Have they been previously counseled regarding their conduct with each other? What circumstances led to their spending the



night together? Did they plan ahead to do so? Did they have a choice in the matter, or were there extenuating circumstances, perhaps an unforeseen occurrence or genuine emergency that left them with no choice but to spend the night together? (Eccl. 9:11) What were the sleeping arrangements? Since each situation is different, there may be other relevant factors that the elders will consider.

After the facts are established, the body of elders will determine whether the couple's conduct warrants judicial action.



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