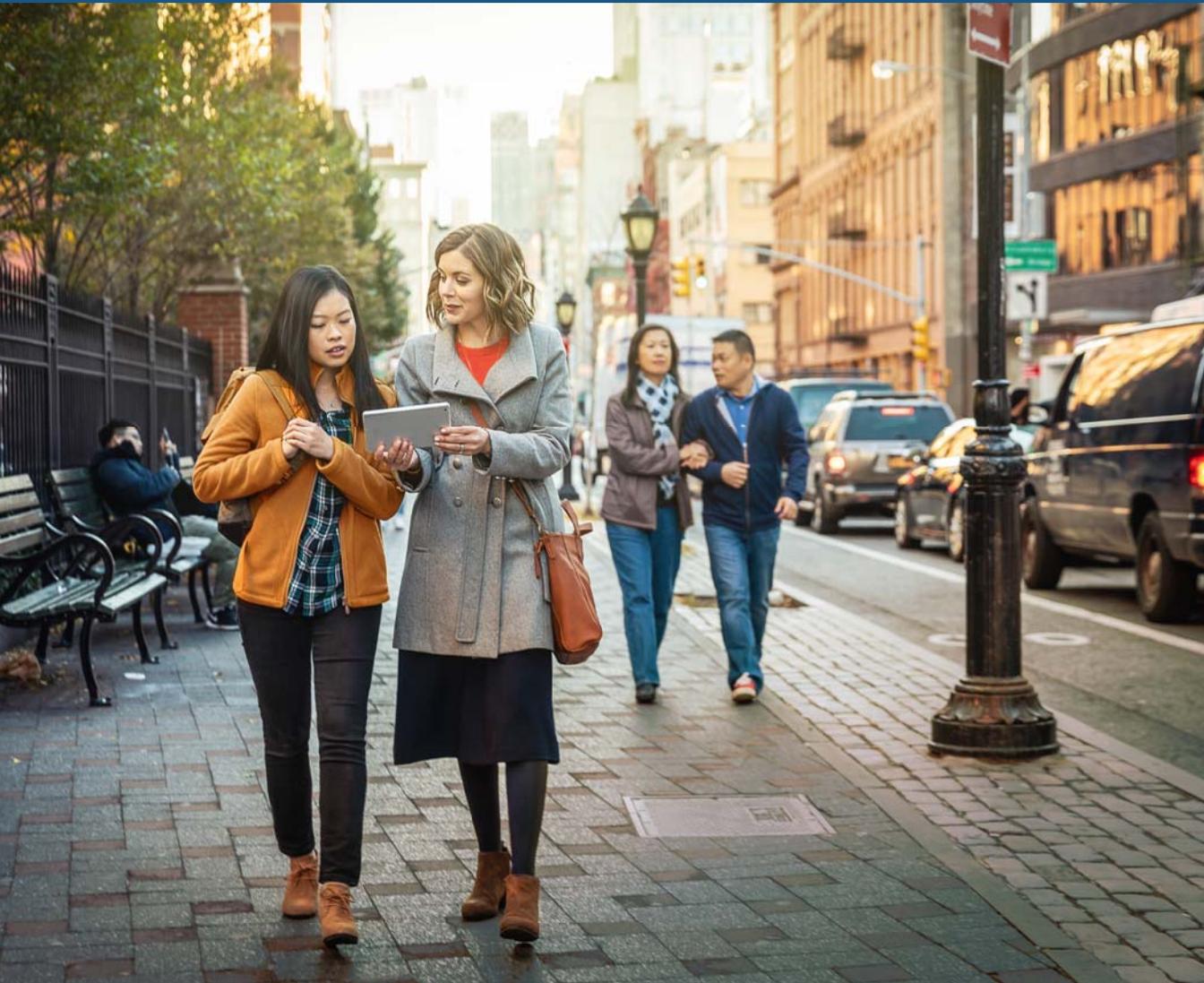


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# THE WATCHTOWER

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STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
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# Prepare Now for Persecution

*“All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted.”—2 TIM. 3:12.*

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## SONG 129

We Will Keep Enduring

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## PREVIEW

We do not want to be hated. But sooner or later, all of us will have to deal with persecution. This article will help us to face persecution with courage.

**ON THE** night before our Lord Jesus was put to death, he said that all who choose to be his disciples will be hated. (John 17:14) Up until now, faithful Christian Witnesses of Jehovah have been persecuted by those who oppose true worship. (2 Tim. 3:12) As the end of this system of things draws closer, we expect our enemies to oppose us even more.—Matt. 24:9.

<sup>2</sup> How can we prepare ourselves now to face persecution? We do not need to imagine all the things that could happen to us. If we did, we could be overwhelmed with fear and anxiety. We could allow imagined threats to defeat us even before any real test comes. (Prov. 12:25; 17:22) Fear is a powerful weapon that our “adversary, the Devil,” tries to use against us. (1 Pet. 5:8, 9) What can we do now to strengthen ourselves?

<sup>3</sup> In this article, we will consider how we can strengthen our bond with Jehovah and why it is vital that we do that now. We will also discuss what we can do to build up our courage. And finally, we will examine how we can cope with hatred from opposers.

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1. Why do we need to prepare for persecution?

2-3. (a) What should we recognize about fear? (b) What will we consider in this article?

## HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND WITH JEHOVAH

***4 Be convinced that Jehovah loves you and that he will never abandon you. (Read Hebrews 13:5, 6.)*** Many years ago, *The Watchtower* observed: “The person who knows God best will trust him the most in time of test.” How true! To face persecution successfully, we must love Jehovah and trust in him completely, never doubting that he has affection for us.—Matt. 22:36-38; Jas. 5:11.

***5 Read the Bible daily with the goal of drawing closer to Jehovah. (Jas. 4:8)*** As you read, focus on Jehovah’s tender qualities. Feel his love and affection expressed in the things he says and does. (Ex. 34:6) Some may struggle to believe that God loves them because they have never been shown love. If you face that challenge, try making a list each day of ways that Jehovah has shown mercy and kindness to you. (Ps. 78:38, 39; Rom. 8:32) As you consider your own experiences and meditate on what you have read in God’s Word, you will likely be able to list many things that Jehovah has done for you. The

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4. According to Hebrews 13:5, 6, of what must we be convinced, and why?

5. What will help you to feel Jehovah’s love?

more you appreciate what Jehovah does, the stronger your bond with him will be.—Ps. 116:1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Pray regularly.* Imagine a young boy in his father's loving embrace. The boy feels so secure that he openly talks to his father about both the good and the bad things that happened to him that day. You can enjoy that same type of bond if you draw close to Jehovah in heartfelt prayer each day. (Read Psalm 94:17-19.) As you pray to Jehovah, “pour out your heart like water” and tell your loving Father about all your fears and anxieties. (Lam. 2:19) What will be the result? You will experience what the Bible calls “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) The more you pray this way, the closer you will feel to Jehovah.—Rom. 8:38, 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Be convinced that the blessings of God's Kingdom will come true.* (Num. 23:19) If your faith in such promises is weak, it will be easier for Satan and his agents to terrify you. (Prov. 24:10; Heb. 2:15) How can you build confidence in God's Kingdom now? Make it a study project to examine God's promises about his Kingdom and the reasons why you can be certain that they will come true. How will that help?

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6. According to Psalm 94:17-19, how can heartfelt prayer help you?  
7. Why must you be convinced that the promises God makes about his Kingdom will come true?

Consider the example of Stanley Jones, who was imprisoned for seven years because of his faith.\* What helped him to endure faithfully? He said: “Being fortified with a knowledge of God’s kingdom, being sure of it, never doubting it for a moment, I couldn’t be moved.” If you have strong faith in God’s promises, you will draw closer to Jehovah and you will not give in to fear.—Prov. 3:25, 26.

**<sup>8</sup> Regularly attend Christian meetings.** Meetings help us to draw closer to Jehovah. Our attitude toward attending meetings is a good indicator of how successful we will be at dealing with persecution in the future. (Heb. 10:24, 25) Why so? If we allow small obstacles to keep us from attending meetings now, what will happen in the future if we have to risk our safety to meet with fellow believers? On the other hand, if we develop a firm resolve to attend meetings, we will not give in when opposers try to stop us from gathering together. Now is the time to develop a love for our meetings. When we love to attend meetings, no opposition, not even a government ban, will stop us from obeying God rather than men.—Acts 5:29.

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\* See *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1965, pp. 756-767.

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**8.** Our attitude toward meetings is a good indicator of what? Explain.

<sup>9</sup> *Memorize your favorite scriptures.* (Matt. 13:52) Your memory may not be perfect, but Jehovah can use his powerful holy spirit to bring those scriptures back to your mind. (John 14:26) Note what one brother who was imprisoned in East Germany and put in solitary confinement said: “What a blessing it was that by then I had learned several hundred scriptures by heart! I could fill those empty days by meditating on a variety of Bible subjects.” Those scriptures helped our brother to stay close to Jehovah—and to endure faithfully.

<sup>10</sup> *Memorize and sing songs that praise Jehovah.* When imprisoned in Philippi, Paul and Silas sang

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9. Why is memorizing scriptures a good way to prepare for persecution?

10. Why should we memorize songs?

## “Give Me Courage”

The 2018 regional convention program concluded with a powerful new song entitled “Give Me Courage.” After the convention, an eight-year-old girl named Lumia wrote: “I would like to thank you for the new song. It touched my heart! During the song, I decided that when I go to the second grade, I will tell my classmates that I am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I am sure that Jehovah is with me.”



Memorizing scriptures and Kingdom songs now can serve you well during persecution (See paragraphs 9-10)

spiritual songs that they knew from memory. (Acts 16:25) Similarly, when our brothers in the former Soviet Union were exiled to Siberia, how did they strengthen themselves? Sister Mariya Fedun recalled: “We sang all the songs that we knew, the songs from the songbook.” She said that those songs encouraged all of them and helped them to feel closer to Jehovah. Do you feel strengthened when you sing your favorite spiritual songs? Then memorize those songs now!—See the box “Give Me Courage.”

## HOW TO BUILD UP YOUR COURAGE

<sup>11</sup> To face persecution, you need courage. If you

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**11-12.** (a) According to 1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47, why was David courageous? (b) What important lesson do we learn from David’s example?



feel that you lack that quality, what can you do? Remember that true courage does not depend on your size, strength, or ability. Consider the example of young David when he faced Goliath. Compared with that giant, David was smaller, weaker, and poorly armed. David did not even have a sword. Yet, he was full of courage. David boldly ran to fight that arrogant giant.

<sup>12</sup> Why was David so courageous? He firmly believed that Jehovah was with him. (Read 1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47.) David did not concentrate on how big Goliath was compared with him. Instead, he focused on how tiny Goliath was compared to Jehovah. What do we learn from this account? We will feel courageous if we are confident that Jehovah is with us and if we are certain that our opposers are tiny

in comparison to Almighty God. (2 Chron. 20:15; Ps. 16:8) How can we build up our courage now—before persecution comes?

<sup>13</sup> We can build up our courage now by publicly preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom. Why so? Because preaching teaches us to trust in Jehovah and overcome any fear of man. (Prov. 29:25) Just as our muscles are strengthened when we exercise, our courage is strengthened when we preach from house to house, in public places, informally,

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13. How can we build up courage? Explain.

Courage comes from having  
confidence in Jehovah and his Kingdom  
(See paragraphs 7, 14-15)



**Stanley Jones** fortified himself with a sure knowledge of God’s Kingdom



**Nancy Yuen** refused to stop preaching the good news



**Valentina Garnovskaya** was convinced that Jehovah was with her

and in business territory. If we develop the courage to preach now, we will be well-prepared to keep preaching even if our work is banned.—1 Thess. 2:1, 2.

<sup>14</sup> We can learn much from the example of two faithful sisters who displayed remarkable courage. Nancy Yuen stood no more than five feet (1.5 m) tall, but she was not easily intimidated.\* She refused to stop preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom. As a result, she was imprisoned for some 20 years in Communist China. The officials who interrogated her said that she was “the most stubborn person” in their country!

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Valentina Garnovskaya was imprisoned in the former Soviet Union on three separate occasions and for a total of some 21 years.# Why? She was so determined to keep preaching that officials labeled her “an especially dangerous offender.” What made these two faithful women so

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\* See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1979, pp. 4-7. See also the video *Jehovah’s Name Will Be Made Known* on JW Broadcasting®. Look under INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES.

# See the *2008 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, pp. 191-192.

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**14-15.** What lessons can we learn from Nancy Yuen and Valentina Garnovskaya?

courageous? They were convinced that Jehovah was with them.

<sup>16</sup> As we have discussed, to build courage, we must not focus on our own strengths and abilities. Instead, we must believe that Jehovah is with us and that he is the one fighting for us. (Deut. 1:29, 30; Zech. 4:6) That is the key to true courage.

## HOW TO COPE WITH HATRED FROM MEN

<sup>17</sup> We enjoy gaining the respect of others, but we must not make the mistake of measuring our worth by how popular we are. Jesus said: “Happy are you whenever men hate you, and when they exclude you and reproach you and denounce your name as wicked for the sake of the Son of man.” (Luke 6:22) What did Jesus mean?

<sup>18</sup> Jesus was not saying that Christians would enjoy being hated. Instead, he was being realistic. We are no part of the world. We live according to Jesus’ teachings and preach the message that he preached. As a result, the world hates us. (Read John 15:18-21.) We want to please Jehovah. If men hate us because we love our Father, that is their problem.

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16. What is the key to true courage?

17-18. As recorded at John 15:18-21, what warning did Jesus give us? Explain.

<sup>19</sup> Never allow anything that mere humans say or do to make you feel ashamed of being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. (Mic. 4:5) We can learn to cope with fear of man by considering the example set by the apostles in Jerusalem just after Jesus was put to death. They knew how much the Jewish religious leaders hated them. (Acts 5:17, 18, 27, 28) Yet, every day they continued to go to the temple and publicly identify themselves as disciples of Jesus. (Acts 5:42) They refused to cower in fear. We too can defeat our own fear of man by regularly and publicly identifying ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses—at work, at school, and in our neighborhood.—Acts 4:29; Rom. 1:16.

<sup>20</sup> Why were the apostles happy? They knew why they were hated, and they considered it an honor to be mistreated for doing Jehovah’s will. (Luke 6:23; Acts 5:41) The apostle Peter later wrote: “Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are happy.” (1 Pet. 2:19-21; 3:14) When we understand that we are hated for doing what is right, we will never allow the hatred of men to paralyze us with fear.

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19. How can we imitate the example of the apostles?

20. Why were the apostles happy even though they were hated?

## YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM PREPARING

<sup>21</sup> We do not know when a wave of persecution or even an outright ban will affect our worship of Jehovah. However, we do know that we can prepare now by strengthening our relationship with Jehovah, by building up our courage, and by learning to cope with hatred from men. The preparations that we make now will help us stand firm in the future.

<sup>22</sup> But what if a ban on our worship does come? In the following article, we will discuss principles that will help us continue serving Jehovah even when under ban.

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**21-22.** (a) What have you decided to do to prepare for persecution? (b) What will we consider in the next article?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 8:** During family worship, parents use flash cards to help their children memorize scriptures. **Page 9:** On the way to a meeting, a family practices singing Kingdom songs in the car.

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### WHAT DO THESE VERSES TEACH YOU ABOUT PREPARING FOR PERSECUTION?

■ Psalm 116:1, 2      ■ 2 Chronicles 20:15      ■ 1 Peter 3:14

**SONG 118**  
“Give Us More Faith”

# Keep Worshipping Jehovah When Under Ban

*“We cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.”—ACTS 4:19, 20.*

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## SONG 122

Be Steadfast, Immovable!

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## PREVIEW

What should we do if the government bans our worship of Jehovah? This article will provide practical suggestions on what to do and what to avoid so that we will never have to stop worshipping our God!

IN 2018, more than 223,000 publishers of the good news lived in lands where our spiritual activities were banned or severely restricted. This is not surprising. As we learned in the preceding article, true Christians expect to be persecuted. (2 Tim. 3:12) No matter where we live, secular authorities may suddenly and unexpectedly ban us from worshipping our loving God, Jehovah.

<sup>2</sup> If the government where you live decides to ban the worship of Jehovah, you may ask yourself such questions as these: ‘Does persecution mean that we have lost God’s favor? Will a ban end our worship of Jehovah? Should I move to a land where I can worship God freely?’ In this article, we will discuss those questions. We will also consider how we can continue to worship Jehovah when our work is under ban and what traps we must avoid.

## **DOES PERSECUTION MEAN THAT WE HAVE LOST GOD’S FAVOR?**

<sup>3</sup> If a government bans our worship, we might wrongly conclude that we do not have God’s bless-

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1-2. (a) Why should a ban on our worship not surprise us?  
(b) What will we consider in this article?

3. According to 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, what persecution did the faithful apostle Paul experience, and what do we learn from his example?

ing. But remember, persecution does not mean that Jehovah is unhappy with us. Take, for example, the apostle Paul. He certainly had God's approval. He had the privilege of writing 14 letters of the Christian Greek Scriptures, and he was an apostle to the nations. Yet, he faced intense persecution. (Read **2 Corinthians 11:23-27.**) We learn from the apostle Paul's experience that Jehovah allows his faithful servants to be persecuted.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus explained why we should expect opposition. He said that we would be hated because we are no part of the world. (John 15:18, 19) Persecution is not a sign that we lack Jehovah's blessing. Instead, it indicates that we are doing what is right!

## **WILL A BAN END OUR WORSHIP OF JEHOVAH?**

<sup>5</sup> Mere human opposers cannot stamp out the worship of the almighty God, Jehovah. Many have tried and failed. Consider what happened during World War II. At that time, governments in many countries intensely persecuted God's people. The work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned not only by the Nazi party in Germany but also by governments in

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4. Why are we hated by the world?

5. Can mere humans end the worship of Jehovah? Explain.

Australia, Canada, and other lands. Yet, note what took place. In 1939 when the war began, there were 72,475 publishers worldwide. Reports showed that by the end of the war in 1945, with Jehovah's blessing, there were 156,299 publishers. The number of publishers had more than doubled!

<sup>6</sup> Rather than intimidate us, opposition can motivate us to serve Jehovah more fully. For example, one couple who had a young child lived in a country where the government decided to ban our worship. Instead of shrinking back in fear, the couple began regular pioneering. The wife even quit her well-paying job to do so. The husband said that the ban made many people curious about Jehovah's Witnesses. As a result, he found it easier to start Bible studies. The ban had a positive effect on others as well. An elder in the same country commented that many who had stopped serving Jehovah began to attend meetings and were reactivated.

<sup>7</sup> When our enemies ban our worship, they hope to make us afraid to serve Jehovah. In addition to the ban, they may circulate false stories, send officials to

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6. Rather than intimidate us, what can opposition do? Give an example.

7. (a) What do we learn from Leviticus 26:36, 37? (b) What will you do when under ban?

search our homes, drag us to court, or even imprison some of us. They hope that we will be terrified because they managed to put a small number of us in prison. If we were to allow them to instill fear in our heart, we might even begin to “ban” our own worship. We would not want to become like those described at **Leviticus 26:36, 37. (Read.)** We will not allow fear to cause us to reduce or to stop our spiritual activities. We trust completely in Jehovah and refuse to panic. (Isa. 28:16) We prayerfully seek Jehovah’s guidance. We know that with his backing, not even the most powerful human government can prevent us from faithfully worshipping our God.—Heb. 13:6.

## **SHOULD I MOVE TO ANOTHER LAND?**

<sup>8</sup> If the government where you live bans our worship, you may wonder if you should move to a country where you can serve Jehovah freely. This is a personal decision that no one else can make for you. Some might find it helpful to consider what Christians in the first century did when they were persecuted. After enemies stoned Stephen to death, the disciples in Jerusalem moved throughout Judea and Samaria and even as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and

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**8-9.** (a) What personal decision will each family head or individual need to make? (b) What will help a person to make a sound decision?

Antioch. (Matt. 10:23; Acts 8:1; 11:19) However, others might note that after another wave of persecution afflicted the first-century Christians, the apostle Paul decided not to move away from areas where the preaching work was opposed. Instead, he risked his safety to spread the good news and to strengthen the brothers in cities that were suffering intense persecution.—Acts 14:19-23.

<sup>9</sup> What do we learn from these accounts? Each family head must make a personal decision about moving. Before deciding, he should prayerfully and carefully consider his family's circumstances and the positive and negative effects a move might have on them. In this matter, each Christian must "carry his own load." (Gal. 6:5) We should not judge others for the decision that they make.

## **HOW WILL WE WORSHIP WHEN UNDER BAN?**

<sup>10</sup> How can you continue to worship Jehovah while under ban? The branch office will give the local elders instructions and practical suggestions about how to receive spiritual food, how to meet together for worship, and how to preach the good news. If the branch office cannot contact the elders, then the elders will help you and all in the congregation to con-

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10. What direction will the branch office and the elders give?

tinue your worship of Jehovah. They will give direction in harmony with the guidance found in the Bible and in our Christian publications.—Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 5:29; Heb. 10:24, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Jehovah has promised that his servants will be well-fed spiritually. (Isa. 65:13, 14; Luke 12:42-44) So you can be certain that his organization will do everything possible to provide the spiritual encouragement you need. What can you do? When under ban, find a good place to hide your Bible and any other spiritual food you might have. Be careful never to leave such precious material—whether it is in printed or electronic form—in a location where it could easily be discovered. Each of us must take practical steps to remain spiritually strong.

<sup>12</sup> What about weekly meetings for worship? The elders will arrange for you to attend meetings in a way that will not attract unwanted attention. They may direct you to meet in small groups, and they will likely change the meeting times and locations frequently. You can help keep everyone who attends safe by speaking quietly when coming to or leaving

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11. Why can you be certain that you will have spiritual food, and what can you do to protect that supply of food?

12. How can the elders organize meetings so as not to attract attention?

the meetings. You may also need to dress in a way that does not attract attention.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the preaching work, circumstances will vary from one location to another. But we love Jehovah and enjoy telling others about his Kingdom, so we will find a way to preach. (Luke 8:1; Acts 4:29) Commenting on the preaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the former Soviet Union, historian Emily B. Baran said: “When the state told believers that they could not evangelize their faith to others, Witnesses chatted [with] their neighbors, coworkers, and

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**13.** What can we learn from our brothers in the former Soviet Union?

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With Jehovah’s backing, we can fearlessly meet for worship  
(See paragraph 12)



friends. When these actions landed them in labor camps, Witnesses sought out converts among their fellow prisoners.” Despite the ban, our brothers in the former Soviet Union did not stop preaching. If ever the preaching work is banned where you live, may you have that same determination!

## TRAPS TO AVOID

<sup>14</sup> *Be cautious about sharing information.* During a ban, we must recognize when it is “time to be silent.” (Eccl. 3:7) We must safeguard sensitive information, such as the names of our brothers and sisters, the locations where we meet, how we carry out our ministry, and how we receive spiritual food. We would not reveal these facts to the secular authorities; nor would we share them with well-meaning friends or relatives in our country or in other countries. If we did fall into this trap, we would put the safety of our brothers at risk.—Read Psalm 39:1.

<sup>15</sup> *Do not allow minor issues to divide us.* Satan knows that a divided house cannot stand. (Mark 3: 24, 25) He will constantly try to cause divisions among us. In that way, he hopes that we will start fighting one another instead of fighting him.

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14. Psalm 39:1 can help us to avoid what trap?

15. What will Satan try to do to us, and how can we avoid his trap?

Despite government bans, we will not stop preaching

(See paragraph 13)



**16** Even mature Christians need to be on guard not to fall into this trap. Consider the example of two anointed sisters, Gertrud Poetzinger and Elfriede Löhr. They were imprisoned together with other Christian sisters in a Nazi concentration camp. Gertrud became jealous when Elfriede gave encouraging talks to the other sisters in the camp. Later, Gertrud felt ashamed and pleaded with Jehovah for help. She wrote: “We have to learn to accept it when others have greater abilities or are more highly favored.” How did she overcome her jealousy? Gertrud focused on Elfriede’s good qualities and pleasant disposition. In this way, she regained her good relationship with Elfriede. Both survived the concentration camp and served Jehovah faithfully until they finished their earthly course. If we work hard to over-

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**16.** What fine example did Sister Gertrud Poetzinger set?

come differences with our brothers, we will avoid the trap of disunity.—Col. 3:13, 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Avoid being presumptuous.* If we heed the direction we receive from trusted, responsible brothers, we will avoid problems. (1 Pet. 5:5) For example, in a land where the work is under ban, the responsible brothers had directed that the publishers not leave printed literature in the ministry. Yet, a pioneer brother in that location felt that he knew better and distributed literature. What was the result? Shortly after he and some others finished a period of informal witnessing, they were questioned by the police. Apparently, officials had followed them and were

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17. Why must we avoid being presumptuous?



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We need to know  
when to be silent  
(See paragraph 14)

able to retrieve the literature they had distributed. What do we learn from this experience? We need to follow direction even if we feel that we know better. Jehovah always blesses us when we cooperate with the brothers whom he has appointed to take the lead among us.—Heb. 13:7, 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Do not make unnecessary rules.* If elders make unnecessary rules, they will create a burden for others. Brother Juraj Kaminský recalled what took place during the ban in former Czechoslovakia: “After the responsible brothers and many elders were arrested, some of those taking the lead in congregations and circuits began prescribing rules of conduct for the publishers, making lists of dos and don’ts.” Jehovah has not given us authority to make personal decisions for others. Someone who makes needless rules is not protecting his brother’s safety—he is trying to become the master of his brother’s faith.—2 Cor. 1:24.

## NEVER STOP WORSHIPPING JEHOVAH

<sup>19</sup> Our chief adversary, Satan the Devil, will not stop trying to persecute Jehovah’s faithful servants. (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 2:10) Satan and his agents will try

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18. Why must we avoid making unnecessary rules?

19. Despite Satan’s efforts, what reason for confidence does 2 Chronicles 32:7, 8 provide?

to ban our worship of Jehovah. However, there is no reason for us to be paralyzed by fear! (Deut. 7:21) Jehovah is on our side, and he will continue to support us even if our work is banned.—Read **2 Chronicles 32:7, 8**.

<sup>20</sup> May we have the same resolve as did our first-century brothers, who told the rulers of their day: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.”—Acts 4:19, 20.

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**20.** What is your resolve?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS** All images depict Witnesses serving in lands where our work is restricted. **Page 22:** A small group gathers for a meeting in a brother’s storeroom. **Page 24:** A Christian sister (on the left) who is casually conversing with a woman looks for an opportunity to discuss spiritual things. **Page 25:** A brother who is being interrogated by police refuses to reveal information about his congregation.

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**HOW WILL THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES HELP YOU TO KEEP WORSHIPPING JEHOVAH WHEN UNDER BAN?**

■ Leviticus  
26:36, 37

■ Psalm 39:1

■ 2 Chronicles  
32:7, 8

**SONG 73**  
Grant Us Boldness

# “Go . . . Make Disciples”

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations.”—MATT. 28:19.*

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## SONG 60

It Means Their Life

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## PREVIEW

The Christian congregation has a primary mission—to help people become disciples of Christ. This article provides practical suggestions that will help us carry out our mission.

THE apostles must have been full of anticipation as they gathered on a mountainside. Jesus had, after his resurrection, arranged for them to meet him at that location. (Matt. 28:16) That was perhaps the occasion when “he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time.” (1 Cor. 15:6) Why had Jesus called his disciples to this meeting? To give them an exciting mission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations.”—Read Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>2</sup> The disciples who heard Jesus’ words became part of the first-century Christian congregation. The primary mission of that congregation was to make more disciples of Christ.\* Today, there are tens of thousands of true Christian congregations throughout the earth, and the primary mission of those congregations remains the same. In this article, we will consider four questions: Why is discipling so important? What does it involve? Do

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\* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** Disciples of Christ do more than learn what Jesus taught. They put what they learn into action. They try to follow Jesus’ footsteps, or example, as closely as possible.—1 Pet. 2:21.

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1-2. (a) According to Jesus’ command recorded at Matthew 28:18-20, what is the primary mission of the Christian congregation?  
(b) What questions will we consider in this article?

all Christians have a part in making disciples? And why do we need patience for this work?

## **WHY IS DISCIPLE-MAKING SO IMPORTANT?**

<sup>3</sup> Why is the disciple-making work so important? Because only disciples of Christ can be friends of God. In addition, those who follow Christ improve their lives now and have the hope of enjoying endless life in the future. (Read John 14:6; 17:3.) Certainly, Jesus has entrusted us with an important responsibility, but we do not do this work by ourselves. The apostle Paul wrote about himself and certain close associates: “We are God’s fellow workers.” (1 Cor. 3:9) What a privilege Jehovah and Christ have given to imperfect humans!

<sup>4</sup> The disciple-making work can bring us much joy. Consider the example of Ivan and his wife, Matilde, in Colombia. They witnessed to a young man named Davier, who told them: “I want to make changes in my life, but I can’t.” Davier was a prizefighter who used drugs, drank excessively, and lived with his girlfriend, Erika. Ivan explains: “We began visiting

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3. According to John 14:6 and 17:3, why is the disciple-making work so important?

4. What can we learn from the experience involving Ivan and Matilde?

him in his isolated village, which meant riding our bicycles many hours along muddy roads. After noticing improvements in Davier’s behavior and attitude, Erika joined in the Bible study.” In time, Davier gave up drugs, drinking, and boxing. He also married Erika. Says Matilde: “When Davier and Erika got baptized in 2016, we remembered that Davier used to say, ‘I want to change, but I can’t.’ We just couldn’t hold back our tears.” Without a doubt, we feel intense joy when we help people become disciples of Christ.

## **WHAT DOES DISCIPLE-MAKING INVOLVE?**

<sup>5</sup> We take the first step in making disciples when we “search out” those with the right heart condition. (Matt. 10:11) We prove that we truly are Jehovah’s Witnesses by witnessing to all whom we meet. We prove that we are genuine Christians by following Christ’s command to preach.

<sup>6</sup> Some people are eager to learn Bible truths, but many we meet may seem to be indifferent at first. We may have to stimulate their interest. To be successful in the ministry, we need to have a well-thought-out strategy. Select specific subjects that

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5. What is the first step in making disciples?

6. What can help us to be successful in the ministry?

will likely interest those you will meet. Then plan how you will introduce the topic.

<sup>7</sup> For example, you might ask a householder: “Would you mind if I ask your opinion on something? Many problems facing us today affect people around the world. Do you think that it would take a world government to solve the world’s problems?” Then you could discuss Daniel 2:44. Or you might say to a neighbor: “What do you think is the key to raising well-behaved children? I would like to hear your opinion.” Then discuss Deuteronomy 6: 6, 7. Whatever subject you choose to discuss, think about the people who will hear you. Imagine how they will benefit from learning what the Bible really teaches. When talking with them, it is important that you listen to them and respect their viewpoint. That way you will understand them better, and they will be more likely to listen to you.

<sup>8</sup> Before a person decides to study the Bible, you may need to invest time and effort in making return visits. Why? Because people may not be available when we call on them again. Also, you may need to return several times before the householder feels

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7. How might you start a conversation with someone, and why do you think it is important to listen and show respect?

8. Why does making return visits require persistence?

comfortable enough with you to accept a Bible study. Remember, a plant is more likely to grow when it is watered regularly. Similarly, an interested person's love for Jehovah and Christ is more likely to grow when we regularly discuss God's Word with that person.

## **DO ALL CHRISTIANS HAVE A PART IN MAKING DISCIPLES?**

<sup>9</sup> Every Christian minister is involved in helping to find honesthearted ones. We could liken this work to finding a lost child. In what way? Consider the real-life example of a three-year-old boy who wandered away from home. About 500 people were involved in searching for him. Finally, some 20 hours after the child went missing, a volunteer discovered the little boy in a cornfield. That volunteer refused to take credit for locating the boy. He said: "It took hundreds of people to find him."

<sup>10</sup> Many people are like that child. They feel lost. They have no hope, but they want help. (Eph. 2:12) Over eight million of us are involved in trying to find these deserving ones. You may not personally find someone who will study the Bible with you.

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**9-10.** Why can we say that every Christian minister is involved in finding honesthearted ones?

However, other publishers working the same territory may find someone who wants to learn the truth found in God's Word. When a brother or sister meets someone who becomes a disciple of Christ, everyone who shared in the search has good reason to rejoice.

<sup>11</sup> Even if you are not presently conducting a Bible study, you can assist in making disciples in other

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**11.** Even if you are not conducting a Bible study, in what other ways could you help to make disciples?

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Witnesses worldwide are involved  
in the search for deserving ones  
(See paragraphs 9-10)



ways. For example, you can welcome new ones and befriend them when they come to the Kingdom Hall. In that way, you can help to convince them that love identifies us as true Christians. (John 13:34, 35) The answers you give during the meetings, though brief, can teach newly associated ones to express their convictions in a sincere and respectful manner. You can also accompany a new publisher in the ministry and help him to use the Scriptures to reason with people. By doing that, you will be teaching him to imitate Christ.—Luke 10:25-28.

<sup>12</sup> None of us should think that we need exceptional abilities to teach others to be disciples of Jesus. Why not? Consider the example of Faustina, who lives in Bolivia. She could not read when she began associating with Jehovah’s Witnesses. Since then, she has learned to read to a limited degree. She is now baptized, and she loves to teach others. Usually, she conducts five Bible studies each week. Although Faustina cannot yet read as well as most of her students, she has helped six people to the point of baptism.—Luke 10:21.

<sup>13</sup> Many Christians are very busy caring for

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12. Do we need exceptional abilities to make disciples? Explain.

13. Even if we are very busy, what are some of the blessings that we can enjoy in the disciple-making work?

important responsibilities. Still, they make time for conducting Bible studies, and they get much joy from it. Note Melanie's example. She was a single parent, raising her eight-year-old daughter in Alaska. She also had a full-time job and helped care for a parent with cancer. Melanie was the only Witness in her isolated town. She used to pray for strength to face the cold and go out preaching because she really wanted to find someone with whom she could study the Bible. Eventually she met Sara, who was thrilled to learn that God has a personal name. After some time, Sara accepted a Bible study. Says Melanie: "On Friday evenings, I would be exhausted, but my daughter and I both benefited by going out to conduct that study. We enjoyed researching answers to Sara's questions, and we were so pleased to see her become Jehovah's friend." Sara courageously faced opposition, left her church, and got baptized.

## **WHY MAKING DISCIPLES REQUIRES PATIENCE**

<sup>14</sup> Even if your ministry seems to be unproductive, do not give up hope of finding potential disciples. Remember that Jesus likened disciple-making

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14. (a) How is disciple-making like fishing? (b) What effect do Paul's words recorded at 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 have on you?

to fishing. Fishermen may spend many hours before they catch any fish. Often they work late at night or early in the morning, and sometimes they have to sail long distances. (Luke 5:5) In like manner, some disciple-makers spend many hours patiently “fishing” at different times and in various locations. Why? To improve their chances of meeting people. Those who put in the extra effort are often rewarded by meeting people who are interested in our message. Could you try preaching at a time of day when you are more likely to meet people or at a location where you are more likely to find them?—Read **2 Timothy 4:1, 2.**

<sup>15</sup> Why does conducting Bible studies require patience? One reason is that we need to do more than help the student come to know and love the doctrines found in the Bible. We need to help the student come to know and love the Author of the Bible, Jehovah. And in addition to teaching a student *what* Jesus requires of his disciples, we need to help the student come to know *how* to live as a true Christian. We must patiently assist him as he struggles to put Bible principles into practice. Some are able to change their thinking and habits in just a few months; others take longer.

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15. Why does conducting Bible studies require patience?



Patiently assist your students  
to make spiritual progress  
(See paragraphs 15-16)



**<sup>16</sup> A missionary in Peru had an experience that illustrates the benefit of being patient. “I had studied two books with a Bible student named Raúl,” says the missionary. “But he still faced serious challenges in his life. He had a stormy marriage, used foul language, and had children who found it difficult to respect him. He came to the meetings regularly, so I continued visiting him to help him and his family. More than three years after I met him, he qualified for baptism.”**

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**16.** What did you learn from the experience involving Raúl?

<sup>17</sup> Jesus told us to “go . . . make disciples of people of all the nations.” To fulfill that commission, we often have to speak with people whose way of thinking is very different from our own, including those who do not belong to any religious organization or who may not believe that God exists. The next article considers how we can present the good news to people with different backgrounds.

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17. What will we discuss in the next article?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 34:** A man leaving on vacation accepts literature from Witnesses at an airport. Later, while sightseeing, he sees other Witnesses doing public witnessing. After he returns home, publishers call at his door. **Page 38:** The same man accepts a Bible study. Eventually, he qualifies for baptism.

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### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why is disciple-making important?
- Who is involved in making disciples?
- Why does disciple-making require patience?

# Reaching the Hearts of Nonreligious People

*“I have become all things to people of all sorts, so that I might by all possible means save some.”—1 COR. 9:22.*

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## SONG 82

“Let Your Light Shine”

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## PREVIEW

We may meet nonreligious people more often now than ever before. This article discusses how we might share Bible truth with them and how we can help them to cultivate trust in the Bible and faith in Jehovah God.

FOR thousands of years, the majority of people in the world seemed to have some form of religious belief. But in recent decades a remarkable change has taken place. More and more people do not view themselves as religious. In fact, in some countries the majority of the population describe themselves as not being religious.\*—Matt. 24:12.

<sup>2</sup> Why do a growing number of people consider themselves to be nonreligious?# Some may be distracted by pleasures or anxieties. (Luke 8:14) Some have become atheists. Others believe in God but think that religion is old-fashioned, irrelevant, and incompatible with science and logical thinking. They may hear friends, teachers, or media personalities say that life evolved, but they rarely hear logical reasons for believing in God. Others are repelled by clergy who are greedy for money and power. In some places, governments officially limit religious activity.

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\* According to surveys, some of those lands are: Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam.

# **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** In this article, the term **nonreligious** refers to people who either do not belong to an organized religion or do not believe in God.

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1. What change has occurred in some areas in recent decades?
  2. What might explain why so many people are not religious?

<sup>3</sup> Jesus expects us to “make disciples of people of all the nations.” (Matt. 28:19) How can we help non-religious people to learn to love God and become disciples of Christ? We must recognize that a person’s reaction to our message may depend on where he was raised. For example, people with a European background may not respond the same way as may those who come from Asia. Why? In Europe, many know something about the Bible and are familiar with the idea that God created all things. But in Asia, the majority of people know little or nothing about the Bible, and they may not believe in a Creator. The purpose of this article is to help us reach the hearts of all those we meet in the ministry, no matter what their background may be.

## MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

<sup>4</sup> *Be Positive.* Every year, there are nonreligious people who become Jehovah’s Witnesses. Many already had high moral standards and felt disgusted by religious hypocrisy. Others had low moral standards and many had bad habits that they needed to abandon. With Jehovah’s help, we can be sure that we will find those who are “rightly disposed for everlasting life.”—Acts 13:48; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4.

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3. What is the purpose of this article?
  4. Why can we keep a positive attitude?

<sup>5</sup> ***Be Kind and Tactful.*** Often, people respond well to our message, not because of *what* we say, but because of the *way* we say it. They appreciate it when we are kind, tactful, and genuinely interested in them. We do not force them to hear our point of view. Instead, we try to discern the reasons for their view of religion. For example, we learn that some do not like talking about religion with a stranger. Others feel that it is bad manners to ask a person what he thinks about God. Still others feel embarrassed to be seen reading the Bible, especially with one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Whatever the case, we try to be sensitive to their feelings.—2 Tim. 2:24, ftn.

<sup>6</sup> What can we do if someone seems uncomfortable when we use such words as “Bible,” “creation,” “God,” or “religion”? We can imitate the apostle Paul and adapt our approach to them. When speaking with Jews, Paul reasoned from the Scriptures. However, when he spoke with Greek philosophers at the Areopagus, he made no direct reference to the Bible. (Acts 17:2, 3, 22-31) How can we follow Paul’s example? If you meet a person who does not accept the Bible, it may be best not to make direct references to it when reasoning with him. If you sense that a person might

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5. What often makes people respond well to our message?

6. How did the apostle Paul show that he was adaptable, and how can we imitate him?



Adapt your approach when witnessing to those who are skeptical about the Bible  
(See paragraphs 5-6)

be uncomfortable being seen reading the Bible with you, try showing him scriptures in a less obvious way, such as on an electronic device.

***7 Be Understanding and Listen.*** We must try to understand the factors that have influenced the people we meet. (Prov. 20:5) Consider again Paul's example. He grew up among Jews. He surely had to adapt his preaching to Gentiles, people who knew little or nothing about Jehovah and the Scriptures. We might have to do some research or consult experienced ones in the congregation so that we can empathize with and

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7. To be like Paul, as described at 1 Corinthians 9:20-23, what might we have to do?

understand the people in our territory.—Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-23.

<sup>8</sup> Our goal is to find “deserving” ones. (Matt. 10:11) To be effective, we must invite people to express their opinions and then listen attentively. A brother in England asks people for their opinion about how to have a happy marriage, how to raise children, or how to cope with injustice. After listening to their comments, he says, “What do you think of this advice written nearly 2,000 years ago?” Then, without saying the word “Bible,” he shows them well-chosen scriptures on his phone.

## REACH THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE

<sup>9</sup> We can reach the hearts of people who usually avoid talking about God by discussing something that is already close to them. For example, many marvel at nature. So we might say something like the following: “You probably know that many inventions came about when scientists copied things that already existed in nature. For instance, microphone designers study ears, and camera designers study eyes. What comes to your mind when you think of nature? Do you think that it is a marvelous force, a person, or

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8. What is one way to start a conversation about the Bible?

9. How might we help people who usually avoid talking about God?

something else?” After listening attentively, we could add: “When engineers learn from the design of ears and eyes, we might wonder whom they are learning from. I was intrigued by something an ancient poet wrote: ‘The One who made the ear, can he not hear? The One who formed the eye, can he not see? . . . He is the One who imparts knowledge to people!’ Some scientists have come to a similar conclusion.” (Ps. 94: 9, 10) We could then show a video from [jw.org](http://jw.org)<sup>®</sup> under “Interviews and Experiences” in the series “Viewpoints on the Origin of Life.” (Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS.) Or we could give them either the brochure *Was Life Created?* or the brochure *The Origin of Life—Five Questions Worth Asking*.

<sup>10</sup> Most people long for a better future. However, many fear that the earth will be destroyed or be made uninhabitable. A traveling overseer in Norway says that people who are not inclined to talk about God are often willing to talk about world conditions. After greeting people, he says: “What do you think about our prospects for a better future? Does our best hope lie with politicians, scientists, or someone else?” After listening carefully, he reads or quotes a scripture that points to a bright future. Some are intrigued by the Bible’s promise that the earth will last

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**10.** How might we start a conversation with someone who is not inclined to talk about God?

forever and that good people will live on it eternally.  
—Ps. 37:29; Eccl. 1:4.

<sup>11</sup> We do well to use a variety of approaches with those we meet. Why? Because each person is unique. What attracts one may repel another. Some do not mind discussing God or the Bible, while others respond better to a more indirect approach. In either case, we should take the opportunity to speak to all sorts of people. (Read Romans 1:14-16.) Of course, we keep in mind that Jehovah is the one who makes the truth grow in the hearts of those who are righteously inclined.—1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

## **SHARING THE TRUTH WITH PEOPLE FROM ASIA**

<sup>12</sup> Worldwide, many publishers are meeting people from nations in Asia, including some who come from places where governments have put limits on religious activity. In a number of Asian countries, many have never given serious consideration to the idea of a Creator. Some are curious and accept a direct offer of a Bible study, but others initially hesitate to explore new ideas. What can we do to reach them? Some

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**11.** Why should we try a variety of approaches, and how can we imitate Paul's example, as described at Romans 1:14-16?

**12.** What can we do to reach people from Asian lands who have not thought about the idea of a Creator?

experienced publishers have success by starting a casual conversation, showing personal interest, and then when appropriate relating how their life improved when they started applying a specific Bible principle.

<sup>13</sup> Many people are first attracted to the practical wisdom found in the Bible. (Eccl. 7:12) In New York, a sister who visits Mandarin-speaking people says: “I try to take an interest in people and listen to them. If I learn that they are new immigrants, I might ask: ‘How are you settling in? Have you found work? Are the local people treating you well?’” Sometimes this opens the way to introduce a Bible teaching. When appropriate, the sister may add: “What would you say is the key to getting along with people? May I show you a proverb from the Bible? It says: ‘Beginning a fight is like opening a floodgate; before the quarrel breaks out, take your leave.’ Do you think that this advice could help us to get along with others?” (Prov. 17:14) Such conversations can help us to identify people who would welcome further visits.

<sup>14</sup> What about those who tell us that they do not believe in God? A brother with much experience preaching to nonreligious people in the Far East explains:

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13. What can attract people to the Bible? (See cover picture.)

14. How does one brother in the Far East help people who say that they do not believe in God?

“Typically, when a person here says, ‘I don’t believe in God,’ he means that he does not believe in worshipping traditional gods. So I usually agree that most gods are man-made and are not real. I often read Jeremiah 16:20: ‘Can a man make gods for himself when they are not really gods?’ Then I ask: ‘How could we tell a real god from man-made ones?’ I listen carefully, and then I read Isaiah 41:23: ‘Tell us what will happen in the future, so that we may know that you are gods.’ Then I show an example of how Jehovah has foretold the future.”

<sup>15</sup> A brother in East Asia uses the following approach when making return visits. He says: “I show them examples of Bible wisdom, fulfilled Bible prophecies, and laws that control the universe. Then I show them how all of it points to a living and wise Creator. When a person accepts the possibility that God exists, I start showing him what the Bible says about Jehovah.”

<sup>16</sup> When we conduct Bible studies with people from nonreligious backgrounds, we must continually build up their belief in the existence of God. (Read Hebrews 11:6.) And we need to help them to build faith in the Bible. This might require that we repeat some

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15. What can we learn from the example of a brother in East Asia?

16. According to Hebrews 11:6, why do students need to have faith in God and in the Bible, and how can we help them develop it?

points a number of times. During each study session, we may need to discuss evidence that the Bible is God's Word. This may include a brief discussion of the Bible's fulfilled prophecies, scientific and historical accuracy, or practical wisdom.

<sup>17</sup> We help people to become disciples of Christ by displaying love for them, whether they are religious or not. (1 Cor. 13:1) As we teach them, our goal is to show that God loves us and wants us to love him. Every year thousands who previously had little or no interest in religion get baptized because they have grown to love God. So be positive, and take a loving interest in all sorts of people. Listen to them. Try to understand them. By your example, teach them to be disciples of Christ.

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17. What effect can our love have on people?

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**PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 44:** A brother witnesses to a fellow hospital worker, who later explores our Online Bible Study Lessons.

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#### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- How can we maintain a positive attitude in our ministry?
- How might we reach the hearts of nonreligious people?
- Why should we share the truth with everyone we meet?

**SONG 76**

How Does It Make You Feel?

# Jehovah's Blessings Surpassed All My Expectations

AS TOLD BY MANFRED TONAK

'I OUGHT to be a pioneer. But can pioneering really be that exciting?' I wondered. I loved my job in Germany, where I managed food exports to exotic places in Africa, such as Dar es Salaam, Elisabethville, and Asmara. Little did I know that one day I would serve Jehovah full-time in those and many other places throughout Africa!

When I finally overcame my doubts and started pioneering, a door opened to a life that surpassed all my expectations. (Eph. 3:20) But you may wonder how that happened. Let me start from the beginning.

I was born in Berlin, Germany, just a few months after World War II broke out in 1939. As the war neared its end in 1945, Berlin came under heavy aerial



bombing. During one bombing raid, our street was hit, and my family and I escaped to an air-raid shelter. For our safety, we later fled to Erfurt, my mother's birthplace.

Mother searched eagerly for the truth. She read the works of philosophers and examined various religions but was not satisfied. About 1948, two of Jehovah's Witnesses called at our home. My mother invited them in and raised one question after another. Less than an hour later, she told my younger sister and me, "I have found the truth!" Soon after that, my mother, my sister, and I were attending meetings in Erfurt.

In 1950 we moved back to Berlin, where we associated with the Berlin-Kreuzberg Congregation. After

another move within Berlin, we attended the Berlin-Tempelhof Congregation. In time, Mother got baptized, but I hesitated. Why?

## OVERCOMING MY SHYNESS AND RELUCTANCE

I made little progress because I was very shy. Although I went in the ministry, for two years I never spoke up to give a witness. Things changed when I spent time with brothers and sisters who had proved their courage and devotion to Jehovah. Some had endured Nazi concentration camps or East German prisons. Others had risked their freedom, smuggling literature into East Germany. Their example deeply impressed me. I reasoned that if they had risked their lives and freedom for Jehovah and their brothers, then I at least should work on being less timid.

I started to overcome my shyness when I participated in a special preaching campaign in 1955. In a letter, published in the *Informant*,\* Brother Nathan Knorr announced that the campaign was one of the biggest the organization had ever arranged. He said that if all publishers took part, “we should have the most wonderful month of witnessing ever experienced on this

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\* Later called *Our Kingdom Ministry* and now replaced by *Our Christian Life and Ministry—Meeting Workbook*.

earth.” How true that was! Not long after, I dedicated myself to Jehovah, and in 1956, I got baptized along with my father and my sister. But soon I faced another important decision.

For years, I knew that pioneering would eventually be the right career to pursue, but I kept postponing it. First, I decided to do an apprenticeship in the wholesale and import-export trade in Berlin. After that, I wanted to work for a while in my profession to gain experience and expertise. Therefore, in 1961, I accepted a job in Hamburg, Germany’s biggest port city. The more I got into my job, the more I wanted to postpone entering full-time service. What would I do?

I am grateful that Jehovah used loving brothers to help me establish spiritual priorities. Several of my friends had started pioneering and set a fine example for me. In addition, Brother Erich Mundt, a concentration camp survivor, encouraged me to trust in Jehovah. He said that in the concentration camp, brothers who relied on themselves later became weak. But those who trusted fully in Jehovah remained faithful and became pillars in the congregation.

Also, Brother Martin Poetzinger, who later served on the Governing Body, kept encouraging the brothers, saying, “Courage is the best asset you can have!” After meditating on these words, I finally quit my sec-

ular job and began pioneering in June 1963. That was the best decision I could ever have made! After two months, even before I started looking for a new job, I was invited to serve as a special pioneer. A few years later, Jehovah surpassed all my expectations. I was invited to the 44th class of Gilead School.

## **LEARNING A VALUABLE LESSON AT GILEAD**

“Do not give up quickly in your assignment” was one of the most profound lessons I learned, especially from Brothers Nathan Knorr and Lyman Swingle. They urged us to make our assignment a success. Brother Knorr said: “What will you focus on? The dirt, the bugs, the poverty? Or will you notice the trees, the flowers, and the happy faces? Learn to love the people!” One day, when Brother Swingle explained why some brothers quickly gave up, he struggled with his emotions as tears welled up in his eyes. He had to interrupt his talk to regain his composure. I was deeply touched and was determined to disappoint neither Christ nor his faithful brothers.—Matt. 25:40.

When we received our assignments, some Bethelites curiously asked a group of us where we would be going. They commented positively on each assignment until I said: “Congo (Kinshasa).” They paused and only said: “Oh, Congo! May Jehovah be with you!”

In those days, Congo (Kinshasa) was big news with war, mercenaries, and assassinations. But I kept in mind the lessons I had learned. Shortly after our graduation in September 1967, Heinrich Dehnbostel, Claude Lindsay, and I set off for Congo's capital, Kinshasa.

## **AN EXCELLENT TRAINING GROUND FOR MISSIONARIES**

After we arrived in Kinshasa, we studied French for three months. Then we flew to Lubumbashi, formerly Elisabethville, near the border of Zambia in the far south of Congo. We moved into a missionary home in the center of the city.

Since much of Lubumbashi was untouched territory, we were thrilled to be the first ones to share the truth with many of the residents. Before long, we had more Bible studies than we could conduct. We also witnessed to officials who worked for the government or the civil police. Many showed great respect for God's Word and our preaching work. The people mainly spoke Swahili, so Claude Lindsay and I also learned that language. Soon afterward, we were assigned to a Swahili-speaking congregation.

Although we enjoyed many wonderful experiences, we also faced challenges. We often had to put up with

drunken gun-wielding soldiers or troublesome policemen, who made false accusations. Once a whole group of armed policemen stormed into our congregation meeting at the missionary home and took us to the central police station, where they kept us sitting on the ground until about ten o'clock in the evening before they released us.

In 1969, I was assigned to the traveling work. In that circuit, I got a taste of the African bush, with long walks through tall grass on muddy trails. In one village, a hen with her chicks roosted under my bed at night. I will never forget how she gave an enthusiastic start to the day with a loud wake-up call before daybreak. I have fond memories of talking with the brothers about Bible truths while sitting around a campfire in the evenings.

One of the greatest challenges was dealing with false brothers, who supported the Kitawala movement.\* Some of them had infiltrated congregations and held positions of responsibility. Many of these 'hidden rocks' were exposed by genuine brothers and

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\* "Kitawala" is derived from a Swahili term that means "to dominate, direct, or govern." The goal of this movement was political—to establish independence from Belgium. Kitawala groups acquired, studied, and circulated publications of Jehovah's Witnesses and twisted Bible teachings to support their political views, superstitious customs, and immoral way of life.



- A. With my parents and sister in Germany, c. 1950
  - B. When I started pioneering, 1963
  - C. Me, Claude, and Heinrich in our missionary assignment in Lubumbashi, Congo, 1967
  - D. Speaking at a convention in Asmara, 1992
  - E. In the traveling work in the Ethiopian countryside, 1996
- 

sisters. (Jude 12) Eventually, Jehovah cleansed the congregations and laid the foundation for phenomenal growth.

In 1971, I was assigned to the branch office in Kinshasa, where I cared for various work assignments, such as correspondence, literature orders, and service matters. At Bethel, I learned to organize the work in a huge country that had a limited infrastructure. Occasionally, our airmail took months to reach congregations. The mail would be unloaded from an airplane onto boats that afterward got stuck for weeks



in a thick carpet of water hyacinths. Nevertheless, the work got done despite these and other challenges.

I was amazed to see how the brothers set up large conventions with only limited funds. They carved platforms out of termite hills, used long elephant grass as walls and, in rolled form, as cushions for seating. They turned bamboo into framework for buildings and reed mats into roofs or tables. And they sliced up tree bark to use in place of nails. I could not help but admire these resilient and ingenious brothers and sisters. They became very dear to my heart. How I missed them when I had to leave for a new assignment!

## **SERVING IN KENYA**

In 1974, I was transferred to the branch office in Nairobi, Kenya. We had much to do, as the Kenya branch supported the preaching work in ten nearby

countries, some of which had banned our work. I was repeatedly assigned to visit these countries, especially Ethiopia, where our brothers were persecuted and faced severe trials. Many of them were brutally mistreated or put into prisons; some were even killed. But they endured faithfully because they had a good relationship with Jehovah and one another.

In 1980, my life took a delightful turn when I married Gail Matheson, who is originally from Canada. Gail and I were in the same class of Gilead. We had kept in touch by letter. Gail was serving in her missionary assignment in Bolivia. After 12 years, we met again in New York. Soon thereafter, we got married in Kenya. I am very grateful to Gail for her truly spiritual outlook and exemplary contentment. She continues to be my precious support and loving companion.

In 1986, Gail and I were assigned to the traveling work while I at the same time served on the Branch Committee. The traveling work included serving in many of the countries under the Kenya branch.

I fondly remember making preparations for a convention in Asmara (in Eritrea) in 1992 when our work was not under ban in that region. Sadly, we could find only an unattractive barn that looked even worse on the inside than it did on the outside. On convention day, I was amazed at how the brothers trans-

formed the interior into a place worthy for worshipping Jehovah. Many families brought decorative cloth and skillfully covered anything unsightly. We enjoyed a happy and thrilling convention with 1,279 in attendance.

The traveling work was quite a change for us as accommodations varied greatly. Once we stayed in a luxurious guest wing in a seaside villa; another time, we were in a metal shack in a workers' camp, with restrooms over 300 feet (100 m) away. But regardless of where we served, the memories we cherish most are of the busy days in service with zealous pioneers and publishers. When we received our next assignment, we had to leave behind many dear friends whom we would miss very much.

## **REAPING BLESSINGS IN ETHIOPIA**

During the late 1980's and early 1990's, our work was legally established in several countries under the Kenya branch. As a result, separate branch and country offices were set up. In 1993, we were assigned to serve at the office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where after decades of underground activity, the work was now legally recognized.

Jehovah has blessed the work in Ethiopia. Many brothers and sisters took up the pioneer ministry.

Over 20 percent of all publishers have served as regular pioneers each year since 2012. In addition, theocratic schools have provided needed training, and over 120 Kingdom Halls have been built. In 2004 the Bethel family moved into a new facility, and an Assembly Hall on the same property has also proved to be a blessing.

Over the years, Gail and I have cherished close bonds of friendship with our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia. Their warmth and kindness are truly endearing. We have recently been struggling with health issues, which made it necessary for us to be reassigned to the Central Europe branch. There, we are lovingly taken care of, but we deeply miss our dear friends in Ethiopia.

## **JEHOVAH MADE IT GROW**

We have experienced how Jehovah has made his work grow. (1 Cor. 3:6, 9) For example, when I first witnessed to Rwandan miners in the Congo's Copperbelt, no publishers were reporting in Rwanda. Now there are over 30,000 brothers and sisters in that country. In 1967, Congo (Kinshasa) had about 6,000 publishers. Now there are some 230,000, and more than a million people attended the Memorial in 2018. In all the countries that were once cared for by the



Kenya branch, the number of publishers has increased to more than 100,000.

Over 50 years ago, Jehovah used various brothers to help me take up the full-time ministry. Although I still struggle with shyness, I have learned to trust fully in Jehovah. What I have experienced in Africa has helped me to cultivate patience and contentment. Gail and I admire the dear brothers and sisters who show outstanding hospitality, resilience, and trust in Jehovah. I feel deep gratitude for his undeserved kindness. Jehovah's blessings have indeed surpassed anything I could ever have hoped for.—Ps. 37:4.

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### COVER PICTURE:

Many Kingdom publishers show personal interest in others from non-Christian lands and share with them the practical wisdom found in the Bible (See study article 30, paragraphs 12-13)

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