

SEPTEMBER 2020

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
NOVEMBER 2–DECEMBER 6, 2020

Are You Ready to Become a Fisher of Men?

“Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive.”—LUKE 5:10.

SONG 73

Grant Us Boldness

PREVIEW

Jesus invited humble, hardworking fishermen to be his disciples. Today, Jesus continues to invite people with those qualities to be fishers of men. This article will discuss what Bible students who hesitate to accept Jesus' invitation need to do.

THE disciples Peter, Andrew, James, and John were commercial fishermen. Imagine how surprised they were to hear Jesus' invitation: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."* What was the response? The Bible says: "At once they abandoned their nets and followed him." (Matt. 4:18-22) That decision would change their lives forever. Instead of catching literal fish, they would be "catching people alive." (Luke 5:10, ftn.) Today, Jesus extends that same invitation to honesthearted ones who love the truth. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Have you accepted Jesus' invitation to become a fisher of men?

² Perhaps you have progressed in your Bible study and are at the point of deciding whether you want to become a publisher of the good news. If you are unsure about accepting Jesus' invitation, do not be discouraged. Your hesitation likely means that you know just how important this decision is. True, the Bible says that Peter and his companions

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** The phrase "fishers of men" refers to all those who preach the good news and teach others to become disciples of Christ.

1. What invitation did Jesus extend to four fishermen, and how did they respond?
2. Why should we take seriously the decision to become fishers of men, and what will help us to take that step?

abandoned their literal nets “at once.” However, Peter and his brother did not make that decision hastily. They had come to know and accept Jesus as the Messiah more than six months earlier. (John 1: 35-42) Similarly, you probably have already learned much about Jehovah and Jesus, and you want to continue to progress spiritually. But you should not make this decision without counting the cost. What helped Peter, Andrew, and others to make their decision?

³ Jesus’ first disciples were motivated, knowledgeable, courageous, and self-disciplined. These same qualities no doubt helped them to become effective fishers of men. This article will discuss how you can develop those qualities so that you can be an effective disciple of Christ.

STRENGTHEN YOUR MOTIVATION

⁴ Peter caught fish to support his family, but it was more than just a job for him. Peter apparently loved fishing. (John 21:3, 9-15) He also learned to love being a fisher of men. And with Jehovah’s

3. What qualities will strengthen your desire to accept Jesus’ invitation?

4. What motivated Peter to be a fisherman?

backing, Peter became very good at that work.
—Acts 2:14, 41.

⁵ We preach because we love Jehovah; that is our primary motivation for doing this work. Our love for Jehovah can help us to overcome any feelings of inadequacy. When Jesus invited Peter to become a fisher of men, he told him: “Stop being afraid.” (Read Luke 5:8-11.) Peter was not gripped by fear of what might happen if he became a disciple. Rather, he was astonished at the miraculous catch of fish that Jesus had just given the men, and Peter felt

5. Based on Luke 5:8-11, why was Peter afraid, and what can help us to overcome similar feelings?



Peter and others became fishers of men. This vital work is continuing in our day
(See paragraphs 4-5)

unworthy of being asked to work with Jesus. On the other hand, you may feel overwhelmed when you realize what is involved in being a disciple of Christ. If so, strengthen your love for Jehovah, Jesus, and your neighbor, and you will be motivated to accept Jesus' invitation to become a fisher of men.—Matt. 22:37, 39; John 14:15.

⁶ Consider some other reasons why we are motivated to preach. We want to obey Jesus' command: "Go . . . and make disciples." (Matt. 28:19, 20) We also preach because people are "skinned and thrown about" and are in dire need of learning the truth about the Kingdom. (Matt. 9:36) Jehovah wants all sorts of people to come to an accurate knowledge of the truth and be saved.—1 Tim. 2:4.

⁷ We will be moved to take up this lifesaving work when we think about the effect our preaching can have. Unlike a commercial fisherman who sells or eats the fish he catches, we "catch" people in order to save their lives.—Read Romans 10:13-15; 1 Tim. 4:16.

6. What else motivates us to preach?

7. How does Romans 10:13-15 show that the preaching work is important?

DEEPEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE

⁸ In Jesus' day, an Israelite fisherman had to know what type of sea creature he could catch. (Lev. 11: 9-12) He also had to know where the fish could be found. Fish usually stay in an area where the water conditions suit them and where there is plenty of food. Does it matter at what time a fisherman does his work? Regarding the best time to catch literal fish, note what a local Witness on a Pacific island said when he invited a missionary to go fishing. The missionary said, "I'll meet you at nine o'clock tomorrow morning." The brother replied, "You do not understand. We go when it is the right time for the fish, not when it is the right time for us."

⁹ Likewise, fishers of men in the first century went to places where the "fish" would be and at a time when they were likely to be there. For example, Jesus' followers preached at the temple and in the synagogues, from house to house, and in the marketplace. (Acts 5:42; 17:17; 18:4) We too need to be familiar with the habits of people who live in our assigned territory. We need to be flexible and preach where and when we are most likely to find people.—1 Cor. 9:19-23.

8-9. What must a fisherman know, and why?

¹⁰ A fisherman needs the right equipment and must know how to use it. We too need to be properly equipped for our work. And we need to know how to use that equipment. Jesus gave clear instructions to his disciples on how to fish for men. He told them what to carry, where to preach, and what to say. (Matt. 10:5-7; Luke 10:1-11) Today, Jehovah’s organization provides a Teaching Toolbox that contains tools that have proved to be effective.* And we are taught how to use those tools. That training helps us to gain the confidence and skill we need to be effective in our work.—2 Tim. 2:15.

BUILD COURAGE

¹¹ Commercial fishermen need to be courageous. They sometimes face unpredictable conditions at sea. They often work at night and on waters that may be subject to sudden storms. Fishers of men also need courage. When we start to preach and identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses, we may face “storms” of family opposition, ridicule from

* See the article “Teaching the Truth” in *The Watchtower*, October 2018, pp. 11-16.

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10. What tools does Jehovah’s organization supply for us?
 11. Why must fishers of men be courageous?

SKILLED FISHERMEN . . .



1. work when and where they are most likely to find fish
(See paragraphs 8-9)
2. are trained to use the right equipment
(See paragraph 10)
3. courageously work in changing conditions
(See paragraphs 11-12)

acquaintances, and resistance to our message. But this does not surprise us. Jesus warned that he would send his followers into a hostile environment.—Matt. 10:16.

¹² How can you build your courage? First, be convinced that Jesus continues to direct this work from heaven. (John 16:33; Rev. 14:14-16) Next, strengthen your faith in Jehovah’s promise to care for you. (Matt. 6:32-34) The stronger your faith becomes, the more courageous you will be. Peter and his companions showed great faith when they abandoned their livelihood to follow Jesus. Likewise, you showed great faith when you informed acquaintances and members of your family that you had begun to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses and to attend their meetings! No doubt you have made significant changes in your conduct and lifestyle in order to live by Jehovah’s righteous standards. That too took faith and courage. As you continue to build courage, you can be confident that “Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.”—Read Joshua 1:7-9.

¹³ How else can you build courage? Pray for courage and boldness. (Acts 4:29, 31) Jehovah will answer your prayers and never abandon you. He is always there to give you support. Also, you can meditate on how Jehovah has saved others in the past. Think, too, about how he has helped you over-

12. In line with Joshua 1:7-9, what can help us to build courage?

13. How can meditation and prayer help you to build courage?

come challenges and given you the strength to make changes in your lifestyle. Certainly the One who led his people through the Red Sea can help you to be a disciple of Christ. (Ex. 14:13) Maintain the same conviction as did the psalmist who said: “Jehovah is on my side; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”—Ps. 118:6.

¹⁴ Another way to build courage is by learning how Jehovah has helped people who are naturally timid but who have learned to be bold. Consider the experience of a sister named Masae. She was shy and felt that she could never speak out publicly about her faith. The very thought of talking to strangers loomed like a high wall that she believed she could never scale. So she made a special effort to deepen her love for God and for her neighbors. She reflected on the urgency of the times we live in and prayed for help to heighten her desire to preach. She overcame her fears and even served as a regular pioneer. Jehovah can also help new publishers to “be courageous.” Note the experience of a sister named Tomoyo. When she started to preach from house to house, the first householder she met shouted: “I don’t want anything to do with Jehovah’s Witnesses!” and slammed the door. Tomoyo

14. What do you learn from the experiences of Masae and Tomoyo?

courageously told her companion: “Did you hear that? I didn’t have to say a word, and she recognized me as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I’m so happy!” Tomoyo now serves as a regular pioneer.

CULTIVATE SELF-DISCIPLINE

¹⁵ Successful fishermen are self-disciplined. Self-discipline has been described as “the ability to make yourself do things that should be done.” Commercial fishermen must discipline themselves to get up early, stay until the work is done, and persist despite bad weather. We too need self-discipline if we are to endure and complete our work.—Matt. 10:22.

¹⁶ We do not inherit self-discipline. On the contrary, our natural inclination often is to follow the course of least resistance. It takes self-control to be self-disciplined. Therefore, we need help to train ourselves to do the things that may be difficult for us to do. Jehovah gives us that help through his holy spirit.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

¹⁷ The apostle Paul was self-disciplined. But he admitted that he had to “pummel” his body in or-

15. What is self-discipline, and why is it important for Christians?

16. How can we develop self-discipline?

17. As recorded at 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, how does the apostle Paul describe his efforts to cultivate self-discipline?

der to do what was right. (Read 1 Corinthians 9: 25-27.) He urged others to discipline themselves and to do all things “decently and by arrangement.” (1 Cor. 14:40) We must exercise self-discipline to maintain a good spiritual routine that includes a regular share in the symbolic fishing work.—Acts 2:46.

DO NOT DELAY

¹⁸ A commercial fisherman judges his success by how many fish he catches. On the contrary, we do not judge our success by the number of people we bring into God’s organization. (Luke 8:11-15) As long as we endure in preaching the good news and teaching others, Jehovah will view us as being successful. Why? Because we are being obedient to him and his Son.—Mark 13:10; Acts 5:28, 29.

¹⁹ In some countries, fishing is permitted only during certain months. In such lands, a fisherman’s sense of urgency may intensify as the fishing season draws to a close. As fishers of men, we have this additional incentive to preach now: The end of this system is fast approaching! The time left to share in this lifesaving work is greatly reduced. Do not

18. What will make Jehovah view us as successful?

19-20. What special incentive do we have to preach now?

delay or feel that you have to wait for the perfect circumstances to take part in this vital activity. —Eccl. 11:4.

²⁰ Act now to strengthen your motivation, deepen your knowledge of the Bible, build your courage, and cultivate self-discipline. Join the more than eight million fishers of men, and you will experience the joy of Jehovah. (Neh. 8:10) Be determined to have a full share in this work and to see it through to completion. The next article will discuss three ways in which we can strengthen our resolve to continue in the Kingdom-preaching work as fishers of men.

HOW CAN YOU DO THE FOLLOWING?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Strengthen your motivation | ■ Build your courage | ■ Cultivate self-discipline |
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“Do Not Let Your Hand Rest”

“Sow your seed in the morning and do not let your hand rest until the evening.”—ECCL. 11:6.

SONG 68

Sowing Kingdom Seed

PREVIEW

The preceding article encouraged progressive Bible students to accept Jesus’ invitation to become fishers of men. This article will discuss three ways that all publishers, both new and experienced, can strengthen their resolve to continue in the Kingdom-preaching work until Jehovah says it is finished.

IN SOME countries, people respond eagerly when they hear the good news. It is just what they have been waiting for! In other lands, people show little interest in God or the Bible. What is the common response where you live? Whatever it is, Jehovah expects us to keep right on preaching until the work is completed to his satisfaction.

² At Jehovah's set time, the preaching work will reach its conclusion and "the end will come." (Matt. 24:14, 36) Meanwhile, how can we obey the words "do not let your hand rest"?*—Read Ecclesiastes 11:6.

³ The preceding article considered four things we need to do in order to become effective "fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19) This article will discuss three ways in which we can strengthen our resolve to preach, no matter what circumstances we face. We will learn why it is important to (1) stay focused, (2) be patient, and (3) maintain strong faith.

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** In this article, the expression "do not let your hand rest" means that we need to be resolved to keep preaching the good news until Jehovah says that the work is finished.

1-2. How does Ecclesiastes 11:6 relate to the preaching of the Kingdom good news?

3. What will we consider in this article?

STAY FOCUSED

⁴ Jesus foretold events and conditions that would mark the last days and that could distract his followers from accomplishing the preaching work. He admonished his disciples to “keep on the watch.” (Matt. 24:42) Today, we face distractions similar to those that prevented the people of Noah’s day from paying attention to the warning proclaimed by Noah. (Matt. 24:37-39; 2 Pet. 2:5) Therefore, we want to stay focused on the work Jehovah has given us to do.

⁵ The work of Kingdom preaching deserves our careful attention today. Jesus foretold that this work would expand in scope and continue long after his death. (John 14:12) After Jesus died, some of his disciples went back to fishing. Following his resurrection, Jesus gave some of his disciples a miraculous catch of fish. He used that occasion to confirm that their assignment to be fishers of men was more important than any other endeavor. (John 21:15-17) Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, he informed his disciples that the witnessing work he had started would expand far beyond the borders of Israel. (Read Acts 1:6-8.) Years later, Jesus gave a vision to the

4. Why do we need to stay focused on the work Jehovah has given us to do?

5. How does Acts 1:6-8 describe the scope of the preaching work?

apostle John to show him what would take place “in the Lord’s day.”* Among other things, John saw this awe-inspiring event: Under angelic direction, “everlasting good news” was being preached to “every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” (Rev. 1:10; 14:6) Clearly, Jehovah’s will for us today is to share in this grand witnessing work until it is finished.

⁶ We can stay focused on the preaching work if we reflect on how much Jehovah is doing to help us. For example, he is providing an abundance of spiritual food in the form of printed and digital publications, audio and video recordings, and Internet broadcasts. Just think: On our official website, information is available in over 1,000 languages! (Matt. 24:45-47) In a world fragmented by political, religious, and economic differences, more than eight million servants of God are truly united in a worldwide brotherhood. For example, on Friday, April 19, 2019, Witnesses around the world were united in a discussion of the daily text. That evening, a crowd of 20,919,041 gathered to observe the Memorial of Jesus’ death. We are moved to stay focused on the Kingdom work

* “The Lord’s day” began when Jesus was enthroned as King in 1914 and runs to the end of his Thousand Year Reign.

6. How can we stay focused on the preaching work?

when we reflect on our privilege to see and to be a part of this modern-day miracle.

⁷ Another way we can stay focused on preaching is by following Jesus' example. He allowed nothing to distract him from bearing witness to the truth. (John 18:37) He was not enticed when Satan offered him "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory"; nor was he tempted when others wanted to make him king. (Matt. 4:8, 9; John 6:15) He was not swayed by a desire for material riches; nor was he deterred by fierce opposition. (Luke 9:58; John 8:59) When we face tests of our faith, we can stay focused if we remember the apostle Paul's counsel. He urged Christians to follow Jesus' example so that they would "not get tired and give up"—Heb. 12:3.

7. How does Jesus' example help us to stay focused?



Jesus refused
to be distracted
from bearing witness
to the truth
(See paragraph 7)

BE PATIENT

⁸ Patience is the ability to wait calmly for a situation to change. Whether we are looking forward to the end of an unpleasant condition or to the fulfillment of a long-awaited desire, we need patience. The prophet Habakkuk longed for an end to the violent conditions in Judah. (Hab. 1:2) Jesus' disciples hoped that the Kingdom would "appear instantly" and rescue them from Roman oppression. (Luke 19: 11) We yearn for the day when God's Kingdom will remove wickedness and usher in the new world of righteousness. (2 Pet. 3:13) However, we need to be patient and wait on Jehovah's appointed time. Consider some ways Jehovah teaches us to be patient.

⁹ Jehovah sets the perfect example of patience. He allowed Noah sufficient time to build the ark and to serve as "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Pet. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:20) Jehovah listened as Abraham repeatedly questioned him about His decision to destroy the inhabitants of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 18:20-33) For centuries, Jehovah was extraordinarily patient with the unfaithful nation of Israel. (Neh. 9:30, 31) We see evidence of Jehovah's

8. What is patience, and why is it especially needed now?

9. What examples illustrate Jehovah's patience?

patience today as he allows time for all whom he draws “to attain to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9; John 6:44; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Jehovah’s example gives us good reason to exercise patience as we continue to preach and teach. He also teaches us patience through an illustration found in his Word.

¹⁰ Read James 5:7, 8. The example of the farmer growing crops teaches us how to be patient. True, some plants grow rapidly. However, most plants, especially those that bear fruit, take much longer to mature. The growing season in Israel was about six months long. The farmer planted his seeds after the early rain in the fall and reaped the grain after the late rain in the spring. (Mark 4:28) May we wisely imitate the farmer’s patience. However, this may not be easy.

¹¹ Imperfect humans tend to want immediate results from their efforts. Yet, if we want our garden to produce, we must give it constant attention—digging, planting, weeding, and watering. The disciple-making work also requires continuous effort. It takes time for us to root out weeds of prejudice and indifference in those whom we teach. Our patience will help us

10. As recorded at James 5:7, 8, what is noteworthy about the example of the farmer?

11. How will patience help us in our ministry?



Like a hardworking but patient farmer, we await results from our efforts
(See paragraphs 10-11)



to avoid becoming discouraged when we encounter difficulties. When we do receive some positive response, we must still be patient. We cannot force a Bible student to grow in faith. At times, even Jesus' disciples were slow to grasp the meaning of what he taught. (John 14:9) Let us remember that we may plant and water, but God makes it grow.—1 Cor. 3:6.

¹² One area in which we may find it difficult to be patient is when witnessing to unbelieving relatives. The principle found at Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7 can help us. It states: “There is . . . a time to be silent and a time

12. How can we exercise patience when witnessing to unbelieving relatives?

to speak.” We can let our good conduct be a silent witness, yet we are always alert to opportunities to speak about the truth. (1 Pet. 3:1, 2) We are patient with all people—including family members—as we preach and teach with zeal.

¹³ We can learn patience from the examples of faithful ones in the Bible as well as in modern times. Habakkuk longed for an end to wickedness, but he confidently declared: “At my guardpost I will keep standing.” (Hab. 2:1) The apostle Paul expressed his heartfelt desire to “finish” his ministry. Yet, he patiently continued “to bear thorough witness to the good news.”—Acts 20:24.

¹⁴ Consider the example of a married couple who graduated from Gilead and were assigned to a country where there are few Witnesses and where the predominant religion is not Christian. Not many people were inclined to study the Bible. In contrast, their Gilead classmates serving in other countries would send them glowing reports of conducting many fruitful Bible studies. Despite the slow progress in their territory, the couple patiently carried out their ministry. After preaching for eight years in what seemed to be an unproductive territory, they finally had the joy of seeing one of their Bible students get baptized.

13-14. What are some examples of patience that we can imitate?

What do these ancient and modern-day examples have in common? These faithful ones did not become sluggish or let their hand rest, and Jehovah rewarded them for their patience. May we “be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”—Heb. 6:10-12.

MAINTAIN STRONG FAITH

¹⁵ We have faith in the message we preach, so we are eager to share it with as many people as possible. We trust the promises found in God’s Word. (Ps. 119:42; Isa. 40:8) We have seen Bible prophecies fulfilled in our day. We have witnessed how people change their lives for the better when they start to apply the Bible’s counsel. This evidence bolsters our confidence that the good news of the Kingdom is a message everyone needs to hear.

¹⁶ We also have faith in Jehovah, the Source of the message we preach, and in the one whom he has enthroned as King of the Kingdom, Jesus. (John 14:1) No matter what circumstances we face, Jehovah will always be our refuge and strength. (Read Psalm 46:1-3.) In addition, we are confident that Jesus is directing the preaching work from heaven, using the

15. What is one way that faith strengthens our resolve to preach?

16. In line with Psalm 46:1-3, how does faith in Jehovah and Jesus strengthen our resolve to preach?

power and authority Jehovah has given him.—Matt. 28:18-20.

¹⁷ Faith builds our confidence that Jehovah will bless our efforts, sometimes in ways we do not expect. (Eccl. 11:6) For example, every day thousands of people walk by our literature displays and carts. Is this preaching method effective? Absolutely! The November 2014 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry* reported on a young university student who wanted to write an essay on Jehovah's Witnesses. She was unable to find a Kingdom Hall, but she did find our literature display on campus, and she also found the material for her essay. Eventually, she became a baptized Witness who now serves as a regular pioneer. Such experiences motivate us to keep preaching because they reveal that there are still people who need to find and hear the Kingdom message.

BE DETERMINED NOT TO LET YOUR HAND REST

¹⁸ We can be sure that the Kingdom-preaching work will be completed with no delay. Consider what happened in the days of Noah. Jehovah proved that he is the perfect Timekeeper. Some 120 years in

17. Give an example of why we should keep on preaching.

18. Why are we sure that the Kingdom-preaching work will be completed as Jehovah wants?

advance, Jehovah fixed the time for the Flood to begin. Decades later, Jehovah commissioned Noah to build the ark. For perhaps 40 or 50 years before the Flood began, Noah continued to work hard. Despite facing an unresponsive audience, he kept preaching the warning message until Jehovah said that it was time to bring the animals into the ark. Then, right on time, “Jehovah shut the door.”—Gen. 6:3; 7:1, 2, 16.

¹⁹ Soon Jehovah will bring the Kingdom-preaching work to a conclusion; he will “shut the door” on Satan’s system of things and usher in a righteous new world. Until then, may we imitate Noah, Habakkuk, and others who have not let their hand rest. May we stay focused, be patient, and maintain strong faith in Jehovah and his promises.

19. What can we look forward to if we do not let our hand rest?

HOW CAN THE FOLLOWING HELP US NOT TO LET OUR HAND REST?

- Staying focused
- Being patient
- Maintaining strong faith

SONG 75

“Here I Am! Send Me!”

Act Wisely During a Time of Peace

“The land had no disturbance and there was no war against him during these years, for Jehovah gave him rest.”

—2 CHRON. 14:6.

SONG 60

It Means Their Life

PREVIEW

Do you live in a country where you can worship Jehovah freely? If so, how are you using this period of peace? This article will help you consider how you can imitate King Asa of Judah and the first-century Christians. They made wise use of time when there was no disturbance.

WHEN, do you think, might it be most challenging to serve Jehovah—when you are dealing with difficult problems or when your life is relatively peaceful? When we face challenges, we readily rely on Jehovah. But what do we do when our lives are peaceful? Might we become distracted from serving God? Jehovah warned the Israelites about this very possibility.—Deut. 6:10-12.

² King Asa is an excellent example of a man who acted wisely by relying completely on Jehovah. He served Jehovah not only in bad times but also during times of peace. From early on, “Asa’s heart was completely devoted to Jehovah.” (1 Ki. 15:14, ftn.) One way Asa demonstrated his devotion was by clearing out false worship from Judah. The Bible says that “he removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the sacred poles.” (2 Chron. 14:3, 5) He even removed Maacah, his grandmother, from being a sort of first lady in the kingdom. Why? Because she promoted false worship of an idol.—1 Ki. 15:11-13.

³ Asa did more than clear away false worship. He promoted pure worship, helping the kingdom of Ju-

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- 1. When might it be a challenge to serve Jehovah?**
 - 2. What example did King Asa set?**
 - 3. What will we consider in this article?**

dah return to Jehovah. Jehovah blessed Asa and the Israelites with a time of peace.* For a period of ten years during Asa's rulership, "the land had no disturbance." (2 Chron. 14:1, 4, 6) In this article, we will discuss how Asa used that time of peace. Then we will consider the example of first-century Christians who, like Asa, took advantage of a peaceful time. Finally, we will answer this question: If you live in a

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** The term "peace" implies more than just an absence of war. The Hebrew word also conveys the thought of good health, safety, and welfare.

King Asa acted decisively against false worship
(See paragraph 2)



land that grants freedom of worship, how can you make wise use of that time of peace?

HOW ASA USED A TIME OF PEACE

⁴ Read 2 Chronicles 14:2, 6, 7. Asa told the people that it was Jehovah who had “given [them] rest all around.” Asa did not feel that this period of peace was a time to relax. On the contrary, he set out to build cities, walls, towers, and gates. He told the people of Judah: “The land is still at our disposal.” What did Asa mean? He meant that the people could move about freely in their God-given land and build without opposition from enemies. He urged the people to take advantage of this time of peace.

⁵ Asa also used the time of peace to strengthen his military force. (2 Chron. 14:8) Does this mean that he did not trust in Jehovah? No. Rather, Asa knew that it was his duty as king to prepare the people for the troubles they might face in the future. Asa knew that the period of peace that Judah enjoyed likely would not last indefinitely, and this proved true.

4. According to 2 Chronicles 14:2, 6, 7, how did Asa use a time of peace?

5. Why did Asa build up his military force?

HOW FIRST-CENTURY CHRISTIANS USED A TIME OF PEACE

⁶ Although the first-century Christians were often persecuted, they also enjoyed periods of peace. How did the disciples use those opportunities? Those faithful men and women preached the good news without letup. The account in Acts says that they “walked in the fear of Jehovah.” They kept on preaching the good news, and as a result, they “kept on multiplying.” Jehovah obviously blessed their zealous preaching during times of peace.—Acts 9: 26-31.

⁷ The first-century disciples took every opportunity to spread the good news. As one example, when the apostle Paul recognized that a large door was opened to him while in Ephesus, he took advantage of the opportunity to preach and to make disciples in that city.—1 Cor. 16:8, 9.

⁸ Another opportunity presented itself to Paul and other Christians when the issue of circumcision was settled in 49 C.E. (Acts 15:23-29) After the decision was communicated to the congregations, the disciples put forth great effort to declare “the good news

6. How did first-century Christians use a time of peace?

7-8. What did Paul and others do when they had the opportunity? Explain.

of the word of Jehovah.” (Acts 15:30-35) What resulted? The Bible says that “the congregations continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number day by day.”—Acts 16:4, 5.

USING TIMES OF PEACE TODAY

⁹ In many lands today, we can preach without disturbance. Do you live in a country that grants freedom of worship? If so, ask yourself, ‘How am I using this freedom?’ During these exciting last days, Jehovah’s organization has spearheaded the greatest preaching and teaching campaign the world has ever known. (Mark 13:10) Many possibilities are open to Jehovah’s people.

¹⁰ How can you take advantage of a time of peace? (Read 2 Timothy 4:2.) Why not examine your circumstances and see if you or a member of your family could have an increased share in the preaching work, perhaps even serving as a pioneer? Now is not the time to amass riches and material possessions—things that will not survive with us through the great tribulation.—Prov. 11:4; Matt. 6:31-33; 1 John 2:15-17.

9. What is the situation in many lands today, and what can we ask ourselves?

10. What does 2 Timothy 4:2 encourage us to do?



Many have enjoyed rich blessings by engaging in the ministry in another land or by witnessing to those who speak another language
(See paragraphs 10-12)

¹¹ Many publishers have learned a new language so that they can use it in preaching and teaching. God’s organization supports them by producing Bible-based material in an increasing number of languages. For example, in 2010, our literature was available in some 500 languages. Today, that number has increased to over 1,000 languages!

¹² What impact does it have on people when they are able to hear the truth from God’s Word in their

11. What have some done to reach as many people as possible with the good news?

12. How do people benefit by hearing the Kingdom message in their native tongue? Give an example.

native tongue? Consider the experience of a sister who benefited from a regional convention in Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A. The convention was presented in Kinyarwanda, a language that is primarily spoken in Rwanda, Congo (Kinshasa), and Uganda. After the convention, the Kinyarwanda-speaking sister said: “This is the first time I have been able to understand a spiritual program fully since moving to the United States 17 years ago.” Clearly, this sister was deeply touched when she heard the program in her native tongue. If your circumstances permit, can you learn another language to help some in your territory? Might it be especially appealing because in your congregation’s territory, there are some who are most comfortable speaking another language? The rewards are worth the effort.

¹³ Not all our brothers enjoy freedom to preach openly. At times, governmental restrictions have severely limited how we accomplish our ministry. For example, consider our brothers in Russia. Following decades of persecution, they received official recognition in March 1991. At that time, there were about 16,000 Kingdom proclaimers in Russia. Twenty years later, that number had grown to over 160,000 publishers! Clearly, our brothers acted wisely when they

13. How did our brothers in Russia use a time of peace?

had the opportunity to preach freely. That time of peace did not last. But a change in circumstances has not dampened their zeal to advance pure worship. They continue to serve Jehovah, using every means at their disposal.

THE TIME OF PEACE WILL NOT LAST

¹⁴ In Asa's day, the time of peace eventually came to an end. A huge military force—one million strong—came from Ethiopia. Its commander, Zerah, was confident that he and his army could defeat Judah. However, King Asa trusted, not in numbers, but in his God, Jehovah. Asa prayed: "Help us, O Jehovah our God, for we are relying on you, and in your

14-15. How did Jehovah show his power in behalf of Asa?

After King Asa prayed fervently, Jehovah gave Judah victory over a vast enemy force
(See paragraphs 14-15)



name we have come against this crowd.”—2 Chron. 14:11.

¹⁵ Although the Ethiopian army had almost double the number of soldiers, Asa acknowledged Jehovah’s power and ability to act in behalf of His people. And Jehovah did not disappoint him; the Ethiopian army suffered a humiliating defeat.—2 Chron. 14:8-13.

¹⁶ Although we do not know in detail what the future holds for us as individuals, we do know that any time of peace God’s people enjoy will be temporary. In fact, Jesus foretold that in the last days, his disciples would “be hated by all the nations.” (Matt. 24:9) Likewise, the apostle Paul said that “all those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted.” (2 Tim. 3:12) Satan has “great anger,” and we would be fooling ourselves if we were to imagine that we could somehow avoid his wrath.—Rev. 12:12.

¹⁷ In the near future, all of us will face tests of our integrity. Soon, the world will experience “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now.” (Matt. 24:21) During that time, family members may turn against us and our work may be banned. (Matt. 10:35, 36) Will we

16. How do we know that the time of peace will end?

17. In what ways may our faith be tested?

personally, like Asa, trust in Jehovah for help and protection?

¹⁸ Jehovah has been preparing us spiritually for what lies ahead. He is guiding “the faithful and discreet slave” to provide nourishing spiritual “food at the proper time” to help us remain steadfast in our worship. (Matt. 24:45) But we must do our part and build unshakable faith in Jehovah.—Read Hebrews 10:38, 39.

¹⁹ Like King Asa, we need to “search for Jehovah.” (2 Chron. 14:4; 15:1, 2) We begin that search by coming to know Jehovah and getting baptized. We take every opportunity to strengthen our love for Jehovah. To test how we are doing in this regard, we might ask ourselves, ‘Do I regularly attend congregation meetings?’ When we attend the meetings provided by Jehovah’s organization, we receive true spiritual refreshment along with upbuilding association. (Matt. 11:28) We might also ask ourselves, ‘Do I have good personal study habits?’ If you live with your family, do you set aside time every week for family worship? Or if you live alone, do you still set aside

18. According to Hebrews 10:38, 39, what will help us to prepare for the end of peace?

19-20. In view of 1 Chronicles 28:9, what questions should we ask ourselves, and why should we ask them?

time just as if you were part of a family? Also, do you share as fully as possible in the preaching and disciple-making work?

²⁰ Why should we ask those questions? The Bible tells us that Jehovah examines our thoughts and what is in our hearts, so we should do the same. (Read 1 Chronicles 28:9.) If we see that we need to make some changes in our goals, attitude, or thinking, we should ask Jehovah to help us make those changes. Now is the time to prepare ourselves for the tests that lie ahead. Let nothing stop you from making wise use of a time of peace!

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 29: King Asa had his grandmother removed from her position because she promoted false worship.

Asa's loyal supporters followed his lead and destroyed idols.

Page 33: A zealous couple are simplifying their life so that they can serve where there is a need for more publishers.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

■ How did King Asa and first-century Christians make good use of times of peace?

■ How can Christians today make good use of times of peace?

■ What can we expect in the near future?

Give Christian Women Your Support

“The women proclaiming the good news are a large army.”
—PS. 68:11.

SONG 137

Faithful Women, Christian Sisters

PREVIEW

Christian women face many challenges. This article will consider how we can give support to our spiritual sisters by imitating Jesus’ example. We can learn from how Jesus spent time with women, appreciated them, and spoke up for them.

HOW grateful we are to have so many sisters working hard in the congregation! For example, they participate at the meetings and in the ministry. Some share in maintaining the Kingdom Hall, and they show personal interest in fellow worshippers. Of course, they face challenges. Some provide care for elderly parents. Others endure opposition from family members. And still others who are single parents work hard to provide for their children.

² Why focus on giving support to sisters? Because the world does not always treat women with the dignity that they deserve. In addition, the Bible encourages us to give them support. For instance, the apostle Paul alerted the congregation in Rome to welcome Phoebe and “give her whatever help she may need.” (Rom. 16:1, 2) As a Pharisee, Paul had likely been immersed in a culture that treated women as being inferior. Yet, now that he was a Christian, he imitated Jesus and treated women with dignity and kindness.—1 Cor. 11:1.

³ Jesus treated all women with dignity. (John 4:

-
- 1. What support do sisters give to the organization, but what challenges do many face? (See cover picture.)**
 - 2. Why consider the need to give support to sisters?**
 - 3. How did Jesus treat women, and how did he view women who did God’s will?**

27) He did not view women as did the Jewish religious leaders of his day. In fact, one Bible reference states: “No saying of Jesus ever denigrates or belittles women.” Jesus, however, had special regard for women who did the will of his Father. Significantly, he viewed them as sisters and mentioned them along with the men whom he viewed as part of his spiritual family.—Matt. 12:50.

⁴ Jesus was always ready to help his spiritual sisters. He appreciated them and spoke up for them. Let us discuss how we can imitate Jesus in showing consideration to our sisters.

CONSIDER OUR PRECIOUS SISTERS

⁵ All of us, brothers and sisters, need to have good association. At times, however, sisters may find it challenging to fill this need. Why? Note the following comments. One sister named Jordan* says, “Because I am single, I often feel that I can’t find my place in the congregation, that I do not really fit in.” Kristen, a pioneer who

* Some names have been changed.

4. What will we discuss in this article?

5. Why might some sisters find it difficult to benefit from upbuilding association?

moved to expand her ministry, says, “When you are new to a congregation, you may feel alone.” Some brothers might feel similarly. Those who live in a religiously divided home may feel somewhat separated from their literal family and at the same time feel isolated from their spiritual family. Those who are housebound may feel lonely, as may those who must care for sick family members. Annette states, “I wasn’t able to accept invitations to gatherings because I was the main caregiver for my mother.”

⁶ Jesus spent time with his spiritual sisters, and he was a true friend to them. Consider his friendship with Mary and Martha, both of whom were apparently single. (Read Luke 10:38-42.) By his words and actions, Jesus obviously made them feel comfortable. Mary felt welcome to sit at his feet as a disciple.* And Martha, disturbed because Mary

* One reference work states: “Disciples sat at the feet of their teachers. Serious disciples were preparing to be teachers—a role not permitted to women. . . . Mary’s posture and eagerness to absorb Jesus’ teaching at the expense of a more traditional womanly role . . . would have shocked most Jewish men.”

6. How did Jesus help Martha and Mary, as recorded at Luke 10:38-42?



Like Jesus, we can show loving concern for faithful sisters
(See paragraphs 6-9)

was not helping, felt free to tell Jesus what was on her mind. In that informal setting, Jesus was able to help both women spiritually. And he showed his care for these women and their brother, Lazarus, by visiting with them on other occasions. (John 12: 1-3) It is no wonder that when Lazarus fell seriously ill, Mary and Martha knew that they could turn to Jesus for help.—John 11:3, 5.

⁷ For some sisters, the meetings are their main opportunity to be with fellow worshippers. So we want to use those occasions to welcome them, speak with them, and let them see our concern for them. Jordan, mentioned earlier, says, “It means so much when others notice my comments, arrange to work with me in the ministry, or reach out to me in some other way.” We must let our sisters know that they are important to us. “If I miss a meeting,” says Kia, “I know I will get a text message to see if I am OK. That lets me know that the brothers and sisters care about me.”

⁸ Like Jesus, we can make time to socialize with sisters. Perhaps we can invite them over for a simple meal or for some recreation. When we do, we want to keep the conversation upbuilding. (Rom. 1: 11, 12) Elders do well to keep Jesus’ attitude in mind. He knew that singleness could be challenging for some, but he made it clear that neither getting married nor having children is the key to lasting happiness. (Luke 11:27, 28) Rather, permanent happiness comes from putting Jehovah’s service first.—Matt. 19:12.

7. What is one way we can encourage sisters?

8. In what other ways can we imitate Jesus?

⁹ Elders especially need to treat Christian women as their spiritual sisters and mothers. (1 Tim. 5: 1, 2) Elders do well to make time before or after meetings to talk with the sisters. “One elder noticed that I was very busy and wanted to understand what my schedule was like,” says Kristen. “I really appreciated his sincerity.” When elders regularly make time to talk with their spiritual sisters, they prove that they care about them.* Annette, mentioned earlier, highlights one benefit of regularly talking with the elders. She says: “I get to know them better, and they get to know me. Then, when I’m going through a difficult trial, I feel more comfortable reaching out to them for help.”

APPRECIATE SISTERS

¹⁰ All of us, men and women, thrive when others acknowledge our abilities and tell us they appreciate the work we do. On the other hand, if our talents and work are taken for granted, we get discouraged. A single pioneer named Abigail admits

* Elders exercise due caution when assisting sisters. For example, they should avoid going alone to visit a sister.

9. What can elders do to help sisters?

10. What can help our sisters thrive?

that sometimes she feels overlooked: “I’m just seen as the fleshly sister of so-and-so or the daughter of so-and-so. Sometimes I feel invisible.” Note, however, the comment from a sister named Pam. While single, she served for many years as a missionary. Eventually, she returned home to care for her parents. Now in her 70’s, she is still pioneering. Pam says: “What has been most helpful to me is when others tell me that they appreciate me.”

¹¹ Jesus valued the help he received from the godly women who ministered to him “from their belongings.” (Luke 8:1-3) He not only allowed them to have that privilege but also revealed to them deep spiritual truths. For example, he informed them that he would die and be resurrected. (Luke 24:5-8) He prepared these women, as he had the apostles, for the trials they would encounter. (Mark 9:30-32; 10:32-34) It is worth noting that though the apostles fled when Jesus was arrested, some of the women who had supported him were by his side while he was dying on the torture stake. —Matt. 26:56; Mark 15:40, 41.

¹² Jesus entrusted women with important work.

11. How did Jesus show that he valued the women who accompanied him in his ministry?

12. What work did Jesus entrust to women?

For example, godly women were the first witnesses of his resurrection. He assigned those women to tell the apostles that he had been raised from the dead. (Matt. 28:5, 9, 10) And at Pentecost 33 C.E., women may have been present when the holy spirit was poured out. If so, these newly anointed sisters could have received the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages and tell others about “the magnificent things of God.”—Acts 1:14; 2:2-4, 11.

¹³ Our sisters deserve to be commended for all they do in Jehovah’s service. That service includes constructing and maintaining buildings, supporting foreign-language groups, and volunteering at Bethel facilities. They assist in disaster relief work, help to translate our publications, and serve as pioneers and missionaries. As do brothers, sisters attend pioneer school, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, and Gilead School. In addition, wives help their husband to carry a heavy load in the congregation and in the organization. These responsible brothers would not be able to serve so fully as “gifts in men” were it not for the support of their

13. What are Christian women doing today, and how can we show our appreciation for what they do?

wife. (Eph. 4:8) Can you think of ways to support these sisters in the work they do?

¹⁴ Wise elders realize that sisters are “a large army” of willing workers and that they are often among the most capable preachers of the good news. (Read Psalm 68:11.) So elders look for ways to benefit from their experience. Abigail, mentioned earlier, appreciates it when brothers ask her what she has found to be effective ways to approach people in the territory. She says, “That helps me to see that Jehovah has a place for me in his organization.” In addition, elders recognize that faithful, mature sisters are effective in helping younger sisters deal with challenges. (Titus 2:3-5) Certainly, our sisters deserve to be appreciated!

SPEAK UP FOR SISTERS

¹⁵ At times, sisters may need someone to speak up for them when they face a specific challenge. (Isa. 1:17) For example, a widow or a divorced sister may need someone to be her advocate and help her care for some tasks that her husband used to do. An elderly sister may need help to

14. In light of the statement made at Psalm 68:11, what do wise elders do?

15. When might sisters need someone to speak up for them?

Speak to medical professionals. Or a pioneer sister who works on other theocratic projects may need someone to speak up for her if she is criticized for not being in the ministry as often as other pioneers are. How else can we help our sisters? Again, let us consider Jesus' example.

¹⁶ Jesus was quick to speak up for his spiritual sisters when they were misunderstood. For instance, he defended Mary when Martha criticized her. (Luke 10:38-42) And he defended Mary a second time when others berated her for making what they thought was a bad decision. (Read Mark 14:3-9.) Jesus understood Mary's motive and commended her, saying: "She did a fine deed toward me. . . . She did what she could." He even prophesied that her kind act would be recounted "wherever the good news is preached in all the world," just as this article is doing right here. How remarkable that Jesus mentioned the global extent of the preaching work in connection with this woman's unselfish action! How his words must have reassured Mary after she had been misjudged!

¹⁷ Do you speak up for your spiritual sisters when

16. How did Jesus come to Mary's aid, as recorded at Mark 14:3-9?

17. Give an example of when we might need to speak up for a sister.

they need it? For example, consider the following scenario. Some publishers see that a sister in a divided home often arrives late to the meetings and leaves right away at the end. They note that she seldom brings her children along. So they question why she does not take a more forceful stand with her unbelieving husband, and they criticize her. However, the reality is that the sister is doing the best she can. She does not have complete control over her schedule; nor does she have the final say over her children. What can you do? If you commend the sister and mention to others what she is doing well, you may stop the negative talk.

¹⁸ We can show our sisters how much we care for them by offering practical help. (1 John 3:18) Annette, the sister who cared for her ailing mother, says: “Some of the friends would come over to relieve me, or they would bring food. This made me feel loved and a part of the congregation.” Jordan received help too. A brother offered her tips on car maintenance. She says: “It’s nice to know that my brothers and sisters care about my safety.”

¹⁹ Elders likewise look out for the needs of sis-

18. In what other ways can we help our sisters?

19. In what additional ways can elders help sisters?

ters. They know that it matters to Jehovah how such ones are treated. (Jas. 1:27) They therefore imitate Jesus' reasonableness, not making rules when it would be more appropriate to make exceptions. (Matt. 15:22-28) Elders who take the initiative to render aid make their sisters feel supported. When Kia's group overseer learned that she was moving to a different home, he immediately arranged for help. "It took away so much of the stress," relates Kia. "Between their encouraging words and their practical assistance, the elders clearly showed me that I'm an important part of the congregation and that I'm not alone when I have a difficult situation."

ALL SPIRITUAL SISTERS NEED OUR SUPPORT

²⁰ When we look around our congregations today, we find countless examples of hardworking Christian women worthy of our support. As we have learned from Jesus' example, we can help them by spending time with them and getting to know them. We can show appreciation for what they do in God's service. And we can speak up for them when necessary.

20-21. How can we show that we treasure all our Christian sisters?

²¹ At the close of his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul specifically mentioned nine Christian women. (Rom. 16:1, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15) Those women were no doubt encouraged by hearing his greetings and commendation. Let us likewise support all the sisters in our congregation. We thereby show that we treasure them as part of our spiritual family.

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 43: Imitating Jesus' interest in faithful women, a brother helps two sisters change a tire on their car, another visits an infirm sister, and a third goes with his wife to enjoy family worship with a sister and her daughter.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ■ How can we help our sisters by spending time with them? | ■ In what ways can we show that we appreciate what our sisters do? | ■ When might we need to speak up for our sisters? |
|---|--|---|

SONG 136

“A Perfect Wage” From Jehovah

“Guard What Has Been Entrusted to You”

“Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you.”

—1 TIM. 6:20.

SONG 29

Living Up to Our Name

PREVIEW

We have the great privilege of knowing the truth and teaching it to others. This article will help us to hold on to that privilege and never let it go.

WE OFTEN place our valuable things in the care of others. For instance, we may deposit our money in a bank. When we do, we expect that our funds will be kept secure and not be lost or stolen. So we understand what it means to entrust another person with something that we view as precious.

² Read 1 Timothy 6:20. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that he had received something precious—accurate knowledge of God’s purpose for humankind. Timothy was also entrusted with the privilege to “preach the word” and to “do the work of an evangelizer.” (2 Tim. 4:2, 5) Paul urged Timothy to guard what had been entrusted to him. Like Timothy, we have been entrusted with valuable things. What are they? And why must we safeguard the treasure that Jehovah has given to us?

ENTRUSTED WITH PRECIOUS TRUTHS

³ Jehovah has favored us with an accurate knowledge of the precious truths found in his Word, the Bible. These truths are precious because they teach us how to have a good relationship with Jehovah and they explain what brings real happiness in life. When we accept those truths and live by them, we are freed

1-2. According to 1 Timothy 6:20, what had Timothy been given?

3-4. What are some reasons why Bible truths are precious?

from enslavement to false teachings and immoral practices.—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

⁴ Another reason why the truths found in God’s Word are precious is that Jehovah reveals them only to humble ones who are “rightly disposed.” (Acts 13:48) Such individuals accept the channel he uses to dispense those truths today. (Matt. 11:25; 24:45) We cannot learn these truths on our own, and nothing else is anywhere near as valuable.—Prov. 3:13, 15.

⁵ Jehovah has also entrusted us with the privilege of teaching others the truth about him and his purposes. (Matt. 24:14) The message we bear is invaluable because it helps people become part of Jehovah’s family and gives them the opportunity to gain everlasting life. (1 Tim. 4:16) Whether our personal share in the ministry is large or small, we are supporting the most important work being done at this time. (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) What an honor it is to be God’s fellow workers!—1 Cor. 3:9.

HOLD ON TO WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN!

⁶ Some of Timothy’s contemporaries failed to appreciate their privilege of being fellow workers with

5. What else has Jehovah entrusted us with?

6. What happened to some who failed to stay on guard?



Timothy had to stand firm in the truth when others chose to deviate from it

(See paragraph 6)

God. Because Demas loved this system of things, he gave up his privilege of serving with Paul. (2 Tim. 4:10) Phygelus and Hermogenes apparently abandoned their ministry because they feared that they would suffer the kind of persecution that Paul faced. (2 Tim. 1:15) Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus succumbed to apostasy and left the truth. (1 Tim. 1: 19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18) Apparently, all these people were once spiritually strong, but they lost their sense of what was truly valuable.

⁷ How does Satan try to make us give up the treasures that Jehovah has entrusted us with? Note some of Satan's tactics. He uses entertainment and the

7. What tactics does Satan use against us?

media to promote values, thinking, and behavior that he hopes will cause us to loosen our grip on the truth. He attempts to intimidate us through peer pressure or persecution so that we will stop preaching. And he tries to entice us to listen to “the falsely called ‘knowledge’” of apostates so that we will abandon the truth.—1 Tim. 6:20, 21.

⁸ If we are not careful, we could gradually lose our grip on the truth. Consider the experience of Daniel,* who loved video games. He explains: “I began playing video games when I was about ten years old. At first, I played games that were relatively harmless. But gradually I started to play games that were violent and demonic.” Eventually, he was playing video games for about 15 hours each day. “Deep down, I knew that the type of games I was playing and the amount of time I spent playing them were distancing me from Jehovah. However, my heart had become hardened into believing that Bible principles did not apply to me,” says Daniel. The subtle influence of entertainment could easily cause us to loosen our hold on the truth. If that happens, we might end up losing the valuable things Jehovah has given to us.

* Name has been changed.

8. What do you learn from the experience of a brother named Daniel?

HOW WE CAN HOLD ON TO THE TRUTH

⁹ **Read 1 Timothy 1:18, 19.** Paul compared Timothy with a soldier and urged him to “go on waging the fine warfare.” That warfare was, not literal, but spiritual. In what ways are Christians like soldiers engaged in battle? What qualities do we need to cultivate as soldiers of Christ? Let us consider five lessons we can learn from Paul’s illustration. These lessons can help us to hold on to the truth.

¹⁰ ***Develop godly devotion.*** A good soldier is loyal. He will fight hard to protect someone he loves or something he values. Paul encouraged Timothy to develop godly devotion—that is, a loyal attachment to God. (1 Tim. 4:7) The deeper our love and devotion for God, the greater our desire to hold on to the truth.—1 Tim. 4:8-10; 6:6.

¹¹ ***Cultivate self-discipline.*** A soldier must discipline himself if he is to remain fit for duty. Timothy remained spiritually fit because he followed Paul’s inspired advice to flee from wrong desires, to pursue godly qualities, and to associate with fellow believ-

9. According to 1 Timothy 1:18, 19, with whom did Paul compare Timothy?

10. What is godly devotion, and why do we need it?

11. Why do we need self-discipline?



After a long workday, we may need to push ourselves to attend a meeting. But we are blessed for doing it!

(See paragraph 11)



ers. (2 Tim. 2:22) That required self-discipline. We need self-discipline to win the war against our fleshly desires. (Rom. 7:21-25) In addition, we need self-discipline to keep working at stripping off the old personality and putting on the new. (Eph. 4:22, 24) And when we are tired at the end of a long day, we may need to push ourselves to attend a meeting. —Heb. 10:24, 25.

¹² A soldier needs to practice using his weapons. To be skillful, he needs to do so regularly. Similarly, we need to become skillful in handling God's Word. (2 Tim. 2:15) We can learn some of these skills at our meetings. But if we are to convince others that Bible

12. In what ways can we improve in our use of the Bible?

truth is truly valuable, we need to stick to a regular routine of personal Bible study. We need to use God's Word to strengthen our faith. This involves more than just reading the Bible. It requires that we meditate on what we read and do research in our publications so that we can correctly understand and apply the Scriptures. (1 Tim. 4:13-15) Then we will be able to use God's Word to teach others. Again, this involves more than just reading a Bible text. We want to help our listeners to understand the verse and how it applies to them. By sticking to a regular schedule of personal Bible study, we can improve in our ability to use God's inspired Word to teach others.—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

¹³ ***Be discerning.*** A soldier must be able to anticipate danger and avoid it. We too must learn to recognize situations that could harm us and then act to avoid the danger. (Prov. 22:3; read Hebrews 5:14.) For instance, we need to choose our recreation and entertainment wisely. Television shows and movies often portray immoral conduct. Such conduct offends God and will inevitably bring about harm. Accordingly, we avoid entertainment that could gradually undermine our love for God.—Eph. 5:5, 6.

13. In line with Hebrews 5:14, why must we be discerning?

¹⁴ Daniel, mentioned earlier, began to discern that playing violent and demonic video games was a problem. He did research in *Watchtower Library* for material to help him deal with his problem. How did that affect him? He stopped playing inappropriate video games. He canceled his subscriptions to on-line games and broke off his association with other players. Daniel says, “Instead of playing video games, I began spending time doing things outdoors or associating with friends from the congregation.” Daniel is now serving as a pioneer and an elder.

¹⁵ Like Timothy, we must also discern the danger of false information spread by apostates. (1 Tim. 4: 1, 7; 2 Tim. 2:16) For example, they might try to spread false stories about our brothers or raise doubts about Jehovah’s organization. Such misinformation could undermine our faith. We must avoid being fooled by this propaganda. Why? Because these types of stories are spread “by men who are corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth.” Their goal is to start “arguments and debates.” (1 Tim. 6:4, 5) They want us to believe their slander and develop wicked suspicions about our brothers.

14. How did discernment help Daniel?

15. Why are false stories dangerous?

¹⁶ ***Avoid distractions.*** As “a fine soldier of Christ Jesus,” Timothy had to stay focused on the ministry rather than become sidetracked by secular or material pursuits. (2 Tim. 2:3, 4) Like Timothy, we cannot afford to become distracted by a desire for more material things. “The deceptive power of riches” could choke our love for Jehovah, our appreciation for God’s Word, and our desire to share it with others. (Matt. 13:22) We must keep our life simple and use our time and energy to “keep . . . seeking first the Kingdom.”—Matt. 6:22-25, 33.

¹⁷ ***Be prepared to act quickly.*** A soldier needs to plan in advance how he will act. If we are to safeguard the things that Jehovah has entrusted to us, we need to act quickly when we see danger. What can help us to respond promptly? We need to plan in advance how we will react to a threat.

¹⁸ To illustrate, when attending an event, audience members are often asked to locate the nearest exit before the program begins. Why? So that they will be able to leave quickly if an emergency arises. In the same way, we can rehearse beforehand which “exit” we will take if we suddenly encounter an immoral scene, graphic violence, or apostate material while

16. What distractions must we avoid?

17-18. What can we do to avoid spiritual harm?

using the Internet or while watching a movie or TV program. If we prepare for what might happen, we can act quickly to escape spiritual harm and remain clean in Jehovah's eyes.—Ps. 101:3; 1 Tim. 4:12.

¹⁹ We must guard the valuable things that Jehovah has given to us—precious Bible truths and the privilege of teaching them to others. When we do, we will have a clean conscience, a life that has real meaning, and the joy of helping others come to know Jehovah. With his help, we will be able to guard what has been entrusted to us.—1 Tim. 6:12, 19.

19. What blessings will we experience if we safeguard the valuable things that Jehovah has given to us?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| ■ What valuable things have been entrusted to us? | ■ How does Satan try to get us to loosen our grip on the truth? | ■ How can we hold on to the truth? |
|---|---|------------------------------------|

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COVER PICTURE:

Our busy, zealous sisters participate at the meetings, share in the ministry, help maintain the Kingdom Hall, and show interest in fellow worshippers (See study article 39, paragraph 1)

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) September 2020 is published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; Harold L. Corkern, President; Mark L. Questell, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. © 2020 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

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