

***Examining
the Scriptures
Daily***

2020



es20-E
190722

***Examining
the Scriptures
Daily***

2020

Yeartext

**“Go, therefore, and make disciples
. . . , baptizing them.”**

—Matthew 28:19.

Name

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

To make a donation, please visit donate.jw.org.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Examining the Scriptures Daily—2020

July 2019 Printing

English (es20-E)

© 2019

**WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Publishers

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.
Wallkill, New York, U.S.A.

Made in the U.S.A.

2020

JANUARY

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

FEBRUARY

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | |

MARCH

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

APRIL

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

MAY

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

JUNE

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

JULY

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

AUGUST

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

SEPTEMBER

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |

OCTOBER

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

NOVEMBER

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | | | | 1 | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

DECEMBER

| M | T | W | T | F | S | S |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE FOR 2020

January

- 6 Genesis 1-2
- 13 Genesis 3-5
- 20 Genesis 6-8
- 27 Genesis 9-11

February

- 3 Genesis 12-14
- 10 Genesis 15-17
- 17 Genesis 18-19
- 24 Genesis 20-21

March

- 2 Genesis 22-23
- 9 Genesis 24
- 16 Genesis 25-26
- 23 Genesis 27-28
- 30 Genesis 29-30

April

- 6 Week of Memorial
- 13 Genesis 31
- 20 Genesis 32-33
- 27 Genesis 34-35

May

- 4 Genesis 36-37
- 11 Genesis 38-39
- 18 Genesis 40-41
- 25 Genesis 42-43

June

- 1 Genesis 44-45
- 8 Genesis 46-47
- 15 Genesis 48-50
- 22 Exodus 1-3
- 29 Exodus 4-5

July

- 6 Exodus 6-7
- 13 Exodus 8-9
- 20 Exodus 10-11
- 27 Exodus 12

August

- 3 Exodus 13-14
- 10 Exodus 15-16
- 17 Exodus 17-18
- 24 Exodus 19-20
- 31 Exodus 21-22

September

- 7 Exodus 23-24
- 14 Exodus 25-26
- 21 Exodus 27-28
- 28 Exodus 29-30

October

- 5 Exodus 31-32
- 12 Exodus 33-34
- 19 Exodus 35-36
- 26 Exodus 37-38

November

- 2 Exodus 39-40
- 9 Leviticus 1-3
- 16 Leviticus 4-5
- 23 Leviticus 6-7
- 30 Leviticus 8-9

December

- 7 Leviticus 10-11
- 14 Leviticus 12-13
- 21 Leviticus 14-15
- 28 Leviticus 16-17

Wednesday, January 1

Moses was by far the meekest of all the men on the face of the earth.

—Num. 12:3.

When Moses was a member of the Egyptian royal family, he was not meek. In fact, he had been so quick-tempered that he killed a man who he judged was acting unfairly. Moses assumed that Jehovah would agree with his actions. Jehovah spent 40 years helping Moses to understand that he needed more than courage to lead the Israelites; he needed to be meek. And to be meek, he also needed to be humble, submissive, and mild. He learned that lesson well and became an excellent overseer. (Ex. 2:11, 12; Acts 7:21-30, 36) Today, family heads and elders do well to imitate Moses. When treated disrespectfully, do not become easily offended. Humbly acknowledge any faults you have. (Eccl. 7:9, 20) Submissively follow Jehovah's direction on how to handle problems. And always answer mildly. (Prov. 15:1) Family heads and overseers who respond that way please Jehovah, promote peace, and set an example of how to be meek. *w19.02 8 ¶1; 10 ¶9-10*

Thursday, January 2

He was moved with pity for them.—Mark 6:34.

Note the reason why Jesus felt pity, which can reflect fellow feeling. He observed that the people “were as sheep without a shepherd.” Maybe Jesus saw that some of them were poor and were working long hours to provide for their families. Perhaps others were dealing with the loss of a loved one. If so, Jesus could likely relate to their situation. He may have faced some of these problems himself.

Jesus was concerned about others, and he felt moved to bring them a message of comfort. (Isa. 61:1, 2) What do we learn from Jesus' example? Like Jesus, we are surrounded by people who are “as sheep without a shepherd.” They struggle with many problems. We have what they need—the Kingdom message. (Rev. 14:6) So in imitation of our Master, we preach the good news because we “have pity on the lowly and the poor.” (Ps. 72:13) We feel for people, and we want to do something to help them. *w19.03 21-22 ¶6-7*

Friday, January 3

May Jehovah be praised, who daily carries our load.—Ps. 68:19.

We have many reasons to love Jehovah. Not only does he supply the good things we enjoy each day but he also teaches us the truth about himself and his purposes. (John 8:31, 32) He has given us the Christian congregation to guide and support us. He helps us carry our burdens now, and he offers us the hope of living forever in perfect conditions in the future. (Rev. 21:3, 4) When we meditate on how much Jehovah has already done to show that he loves us, we are drawn to love him. And when we love Jehovah, we gain a balanced view of fear. We fear hurting the One we have come to love so much. When you continue to recognize how much you benefit from Jehovah's guidance, your love for him and his standards will grow. Then nothing Satan offers you will entice you away from serving Jehovah. Imagine yourself a thousand years from now. You will look back on your decision to get baptized as the best decision you ever made! *w19.03 6 ¶14; 7 ¶19*

Saturday, January 4

Who can find a capable wife? Her value is far more than that of corals.—Prov. 31:10.

The entire family benefits when each member expresses appreciation. The more marriage mates show gratitude to each other, the closer they become. They also find it easier to forgive each other's mistakes. A husband who appreciates his wife not only notices the good things she says and does but also "rises up and praises her." (Prov. 31:28) And a wise wife lets her husband know specifically what she appreciates about him. Parents, how can you teach your children to show appreciation? Remember that your children will imitate what you say and do. So set a good example by saying thank you when your children do things for you. In addition, teach your children to say thank you when people do things for them. Help your children understand that expressing gratitude comes from the heart and that their words can do much good. *w19.02 17 ¶14-15*

Sunday, January 5

Until I die, I will not renounce my integrity!—Job 27:5.

That is a statement of vital importance. Job refused to give in to Satan's assault, and we can do the same. Satan makes the same charges about each of us. How are you involved? In effect, he says that you do not really love Jehovah God, that you will stop serving him to save yourself, and that any integrity you have is false! (Job 2:4, 5; Rev. 12:10) How does that make you feel? It is hurtful, is it not? However,

think about this: Jehovah trusts you enough to offer you a marvelous opportunity. Jehovah is allowing Satan to test your integrity. Jehovah is confident that you can keep your integrity and help to prove Satan a liar. And He promises to help you do that. (Heb. 13:6) What a privilege to be trusted by the Sovereign of the universe! Do you see why integrity is so important? It enables us to refute Satan's lies and to uphold our Father's good name and support his way of ruling. *w19.02 5 ¶9-10*

Monday, January 6

The hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he has offered a sacred service to God.

—John 16:2.

Jesus told the apostles of the trials that lay ahead of them. Then, pointing to his own example, he urged them to "take courage!" (John 16:1-4a, 33) Many years later, Jesus' disciples were still following his self-sacrificing course and displaying courage. At great cost to themselves, they supported one another in their various trials. (Heb. 10:33, 34) Likewise today, we follow Jesus' example of showing courage. For instance, it takes courage to assist our brothers who are persecuted because of their faith. At times, our brothers may be unjustly imprisoned. When that happens, we must do all that we can for them, including speaking up in their behalf. (Phil. 1:14; Heb. 13:19) Another way we show courage is by continuing to preach "with boldness." (Acts 14:3) Like Jesus, we are determined to preach the Kingdom message, even though people may oppose and persecute us. *w19.01 22-23 ¶8-9*

Tuesday, January 7

Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another.

—*Heb. 10:24, 25.*

What can help you to give encouraging comments at the meetings? Most important is that you prepare for each meeting. When you plan ahead and prepare well, you will feel more confident about commenting. (Prov. 21:5) What is involved in preparing well for the meeting? Begin each study session by asking Jehovah to give you holy spirit. (Luke 11:13; 1 John 5:14) Then take a few minutes to look over the lesson. Analyze the title, subheadings, illustrations, and teaching boxes. As you now study each paragraph, read as many of the cited scriptures as you can. Meditate on the information, giving special attention to points you wish to comment on. The better you prepare, the more you will benefit and the easier it may be for you to comment.—2 Cor. 9:6. *w19.01 9 ¶6; 11-12 ¶13-15*

Wednesday, January 8

Write down the vision.

—*Hab. 2:2.*

By inspiring Habakkuk to write down his concerns, Jehovah provided us with an important object lesson: We must not be afraid to tell Him about our concerns or doubts. Indeed, he kindly invites us to pour out our heart to him in prayer. (Ps. 50:15; 62:8) Habakkuk took the initiative to draw close to Jehovah, his trusted Friend and Father. Habakkuk did not just fret over his situation, relying on his own under-

standing. Instead, he prayed about his feelings and worries, setting a good example for us. Moreover, Jehovah, the Hearer of prayer, invites us to show our trust by prayerfully sharing our concerns with him. (Ps. 65:2) Doing so will help us to experience Jehovah's response—his warm embrace by means of his kind guidance. (Ps. 73:23, 24) He will help us to know his thoughts no matter what afflicts us. Our heartfelt prayers are one of the deepest expressions of our trust in God. *w18.11 13 ¶2; 14 ¶5-6*

Thursday, January 9

The holy ones in the earth, the majestic ones, bring me great delight.

—*Ps. 16:3.*

The psalmist David did not limit his circle of friends to just his peers. Can you recall the name of a “majestic” one who became his dear friend? His name was Jonathan. In fact, their friendship was one of the most beautiful recorded in the Scriptures. Did you know, however, that Jonathan was about 30 years older than David? What, then, was the basis for their friendship? Faith in God, mutual respect, and seeing each other's courage as they fought God's enemies. (1 Sam. 13:3; 14:13; 17:48-50; 18:1) Like David and Jonathan, we too find “great delight” in loving those who love Jehovah and who show their faith in him. Kiera, who has served God for years, says, “I've made friends with people from around the world, people of many different backgrounds and cultures.” When you broaden out in this way, you will see clear evidence of the uniting power of God's Word and spirit. *w18.12 26 ¶11-13*

Friday, January 10

Whoever divorces his wife, except on the grounds of sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.—Matt. 19:9.

The expression “sexual immorality” covers a range of sexual sins outside of marriage: adultery, prostitution, sex relations between unmarried individuals, homosexuality, and bestiality. If, for example, a married man engages in sexual immorality, his wife can decide whether to divorce him or not. Significantly, Jesus did not say that a mate’s immorality (*por-nei’a*) must absolutely lead to divorce. For example, a wife might choose to maintain the marriage despite her husband’s having been immoral. She might still love him; she might be willing to forgive him and work with him to improve their marriage. Realistically, if she got a divorce but did not remarry, she would face challenges. What of her material and sexual needs? What about loneliness? Are there children to consider? (1 Cor. 7:14) Clearly, the divorced innocent one would face serious issues. *w18.12 12 ¶10-11*

Saturday, January 11

O you who love Jehovah, hate what is bad.—Ps. 97:10.

Jehovah hates unrighteousness. (Isa. 61:8) While he knows that we have some wrong inclinations because of inherited imperfection, he exhorts us to cultivate similar hatred for unrighteousness. Meditating on why Jehovah detests badness will help us make his view our own, giving us added strength to resist wrongdoing. Cultivating Jehovah’s view of unrighteousness will also

help us identify certain practices as wrong, even though they are not specifically mentioned in God’s Word. For example, lap dancing is a form of lewd conduct that is becoming more common in the world. Some might excuse such conduct, reasoning that it is not the same as outright sexual relations. But do such actions reflect the thinking of God, who abhors every kind of badness? Let us stay far from wrongdoing by cultivating self-control as well as an abhorrence for what Jehovah hates.—Rom. 12:9. *w18.11 25 ¶11-12*

Sunday, January 12

The righteous one will live by his faithfulness.—Hab. 2:4.

The apostle Paul saw Jehovah’s assurance as so significant that he quoted this verse three times! (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38) Whatever difficulties the righteous one may suffer, he will by his faith and trust live to see the fulfillment of God’s purposes. Jehovah tells us to look beyond the present. The book of Habakkuk provides a powerful lesson for all of us living in these last days. Jehovah extends his promise of life to any righteous person who displays faith and trust in Him. Let us continue to strengthen our faith and trust in God, no matter what distress and anxiety we face. Through Habakkuk, Jehovah assures us that He will support and deliver us. He kindly asks us to trust in him and to wait patiently for his appointed time when, under God’s Kingdom, the whole earth will be filled with his happy and mild-tempered worshippers.—Matt. 5:5; Heb. 10:36-39. *w18.11 16-17 ¶15-17*

Monday, January 13

Go on walking in the truth.

—3 John 4.

In the first century, some who initially responded favorably to the teachings of Jesus failed to continue walking in the truth. For example, after a large crowd had been fed in a miraculous way by Jesus, the crowd followed him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus said something that startled them: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves.” Instead of asking Jesus to explain, they were stumbled by his words and said: “This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?” As a result, “many of his disciples went off to the things behind and would no longer walk with him.” (John 6:53-66) Sadly, some today have failed to hold on to the truth. Some were stumbled by what a prominent brother said or did. Others were offended by Scriptural counsel they received, or they let go of the truth because of a personality clash with a fellow Christian. *w18.11 9 ¶3-5*

Tuesday, January 14

Your Leader is one, the Christ.

—Matt. 23:10.

When we do not fully understand the reasons for some organizational changes, we do well to reflect on how Christ exercised his leadership in the past. Whether in Joshua’s day or in the first century, Christ has always provided wise direction to protect God’s people as a whole, to strengthen their faith, and to maintain unity among God’s

servants. (Heb. 13:8) Jesus’ loving concern for our spiritual welfare is clearly reflected in the timely direction given by “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) When we discern Christ’s direction, we sense his keen interest in our spiritual advancement. In addition to caring for our spiritual needs, Christ helps us to keep our focus on the most important work being done on earth today—our preaching activity.—Mark 13:10. *w18.10 25 ¶13-16*

Wednesday, January 15

Walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility.—Eph. 4:1, 2.

A remarkable example of showing self-control when we are provoked can be found at 2 Samuel 16:5-13. David and his servants endured reproach and physical assault by Shimei, a relative of King Saul’s. David did so despite having the power to put an end to it. How did David muster up the strength to control his spirit? The superscription of Psalm 3 indicates that it was composed when David “was fleeing from his son Absalom.” Verses 1 and 2 fit events described in chapter 16 of Second Samuel. Then Psalm 3:4 highlights David’s confidence: “I will call aloud to Jehovah, and he will answer me.” We too can pray when under attack. In response, Jehovah provides his holy spirit, which can help us to endure. Can you think of a situation in which you need to exercise self-restraint or freely forgive unwarranted animosity? Are you confident that Jehovah can see your affliction and bestow a blessing? *w18.09 6-7 ¶16-17*

Thursday, January 16

We are God's fellow workers.

—1 Cor. 3:9.

When witnessing, we should *always* be considerate and respectful, which includes getting to know the local people well. Remember that when we go from door to door, we are uninvited guests. How important, then, that we call at a time when people might be more inclined to converse! (Matt. 7:12) For example, do people in your territory like to sleep longer on weekends? If so, you may be able to start your ministry by doing street work, public witnessing, or return visits on people you know will be up and about. Many people are very busy, so it may be appropriate to keep your visits brief, at least initially. (1 Cor. 9:20-23) When people see that we are aware of their circumstances or busy schedules, they may be more willing to have us call back. Clearly, the fruitage of God's spirit should be reflected in our ministry. When it is, we truly become "God's fellow workers"—even a means by which Jehovah may draw someone to the truth. —1 Cor. 3:6, 7. *w18.09 32 ¶15-17*

Friday, January 17

*Happy are the mild-tempered,
since they will inherit the
earth.—Matt. 5:5.*

How can being mild-tempered contribute to happiness? After coming to an accurate knowledge of the truth, individuals change. At one time, they may have been harsh, quarrelsome, and aggressive. But now they have clothed themselves with "the new personality" and display "the tender affections of compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience." (Col. 3:9-12) As

a result, they now enjoy a peaceful, loving, and happier life. Furthermore, God's Word promises that such ones will "inherit the earth." (Ps. 37:8-10, 29) In what sense do the mild-tempered "inherit the earth"? Jesus' spirit-anointed disciples inherit the earth when they rule over it as kings and priests. (Rev. 20:6) Millions of others who do not have the heavenly calling, however, will inherit the earth in the sense that they will be allowed to live here forever in perfection, peace, and happiness. *w18.09 19 ¶8-9*

Saturday, January 18

Everyone must be quick to listen.

—Jas. 1:19.

Jehovah himself sets the superlative example in this regard. (Gen. 18:32; Josh. 10:14) Consider what we can learn from the interchange recorded at Exodus 32:11-14. Although not needing Moses' input, Jehovah gave Moses an opportunity to reveal how he felt. What human would listen at length to the reasoning of someone who has displayed faulty thinking and then act on that person's word? Yet, Jehovah listens patiently to humans who call on him in faith. Each of us does well to ask: 'If Jehovah can stoop down to deal with people and listen to them as he did with Abraham, Rachel, Moses, Joshua, Manoah, Elijah, and Hezekiah, should I not be better at honoring all my brothers, dignifying them, listening to their ideas, and even acting on their good ideas? Does someone in my congregation or in my family deserve my attention right now? What should I do about that? What will I do about that?'—Gen. 30:6; Judg. 13:9; 1 Ki. 17:22; 2 Chron. 30:20. *w18.09 6 ¶14-15*

Sunday, January 19

The generous person will prosper, and whoever refreshes others will himself be refreshed.—Prov. 11:25.

It can be a challenge to maintain a generous spirit when we are surrounded by people who put their own interests ahead of those of others. However, Jesus stated that the two greatest commandments are to love Jehovah with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:28-31) Those who love Jehovah imitate him. Jehovah gives to others, and so does Jesus. And they recommend that we do the same, for it will make us truly happy. If we strive to manifest this generous spirit in our dealings with both God and neighbor, we will bring honor to Jehovah and benefit ourselves and others. No doubt you are already striving to give of yourself to help others, especially fellow believers. (Gal. 6:10) If you continue to do so, you will surely be loved and appreciated, and you will be happy as a result. *w18.08 22 ¶19-20*

Monday, January 20

Stop judging by the outward appearance.—John 7:24.

Jehovah places no significance on racial, ethnic, national, tribal, or linguistic differences. Any man or woman who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Gal. 3:26-28; Rev. 7:9, 10) No doubt, you acknowledge that this is true. But what if you have grown up in a land or in a home filled with prejudice? While you might see yourself as being impartial, deep inside, prejudice may linger. Even Peter, who had the privilege of revealing

Jehovah's impartiality, later manifested prejudice. (Gal. 2:11-14) How can we stop judging by the outward appearance? We need to examine ourselves carefully in the light of God's Word to see if we are holding on to any prejudiced thoughts or feelings. (Ps. 119:105) We might also need loving help from others who may see prejudiced attitudes in us, even if we cannot see them in ourselves. (Gal. 2:11, 14) It could be that these attitudes are so ingrained in us that we are not conscious of them. *w18.08 9 ¶5-6*

Tuesday, January 21

*Let your light shine before men.
—Matt. 5:16.*

Ask yourself: 'Is my complete allegiance to Jehovah evident to others? Do I look for opportunities to identify myself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?' Jehovah would be deeply saddened if after he has selected us as his people, we were to hesitate to let others know that we belong to him. (Ps. 119:46; Mark 8:38) Sad to say, some individuals have blurred the distinction between their serving God and their not serving him by imitating "the spirit of the world." (1 Cor. 2:12) That is a spirit that caters to 'the desires of one's flesh.' (Eph. 2:3) For example, despite all the counsel that has been given on the subject, some still prefer styles of dress and grooming that are immodest. They wear tight-fitting and revealing clothing, even to Christian gatherings. Or they have adopted extreme haircuts and hairdos. (1 Tim. 2:9, 10) As a result, when they are in a crowd, it may be difficult to tell who belongs to Jehovah and who is "a friend of the world."—Jas. 4:4. *w18.07 24-25 ¶11-12*

Wednesday, January 22

All of you are brothers.

—Matt. 23:8.

One sense in which we are “brothers” is that all of us have descended from Adam. (Acts 17:26) But there is more. Jesus explained that his disciples were brothers and sisters because they recognized Jehovah as their heavenly Father. (Matt. 12:50) In addition, they had become members of one large spiritual family, united by love and faith. Thus in their letters, the apostles often referred to fellow disciples as ‘brothers and sisters.’ (Rom. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:17; 1 John 3:13) After making it clear that we should view one another as brothers and sisters, Jesus stressed the need for humility. (Matt. 23:11, 12) Undue pride among his apostles had led to some disunity. And pride of race could also have been a problem. Did the Jews have reason to be proud because they were descendants of Abraham? Many Jews had that deep-seated conviction. But John the Baptist told them: “God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones.”—Luke 3:8. *w18.06 9-10 ¶8-9*

Thursday, January 23

A man of knowledge restrains his words.—Prov. 17:27.

When faced with frustrating situations or recurring personality conflicts, do we control our lips and our temper? (Prov. 10:19; Matt. 5:22) When provoked by others, we need to learn to “yield place to the wrath.” Whose wrath? Jehovah’s wrath. (Rom. 12:17-21) If we keep looking to Jehovah, we will show him due respect by yielding to his wrath, patiently waiting for him to take action when he deems it nec-

essary. To do otherwise and avenge ourselves in some way would be tantamount to disrespecting Jehovah. Do we faithfully follow the latest directions that Jehovah has given us? If so, we will not rely on always doing things the way we have done them in the past. Rather, we will be quick to follow any new direction that Jehovah provides through his organization. (Heb. 13:17) At the same time, we will be careful that we “do not go beyond the things that are written.” (1 Cor. 4:6) In so doing, we keep our eyes fixed on Jehovah. *w18.07 15-16 ¶17-18*

Friday, January 24

Press on to maturity.

—Heb. 6:1.

As you advance toward Christian maturity, you will find that principles become more important to you. That is because laws may apply to a specific situation, whereas principles are far broader in application. For example, a young child does not understand the dangers of bad associations, so a discerning parent will set rules to protect him. (1 Cor. 15:33) But as the child matures, his thinking ability develops, and he is able to reason on Bible-based principles. Thus, he can increasingly make wise decisions in choosing his associates. (1 Cor. 13:11; 14:20) When we reason on godly principles, our conscience increasingly becomes a more reliable guide, attuned to God’s thinking. Do we have everything we need to make wise decisions that please Jehovah? Yes. By making skilled use of the laws and principles found in God’s Word, we will be “fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”—2 Tim. 3:16, 17. *w18.06 19 ¶14; 20 ¶16-17*

Saturday, January 25

Who really is my neighbor?

—Luke 10:29.

Jesus' story showed that a Samaritan could teach the Jews the meaning of true neighborly love. (Luke 10:25-37) To fulfill their commission, Jesus' disciples needed to conquer the pride and prejudice they had. Before ascending to heaven, he assigned them to bear witness to "all Judea and Samaria, and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Jesus had earlier prepared them for such an extensive assignment by drawing their attention to good qualities in foreigners. He praised a foreign army officer for his outstanding faith. (Matt. 8:5-10) In his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus spoke of how Jehovah had favored foreigners, such as the Phoenician widow from Zarephath and the Syrian leper Naaman. (Luke 4:25-27) And Jesus not only preached to a Samaritan woman but he spent two days in a Samaritan town because of the people's interest in his message.—John 4:21-24, 40. *w18.06* 10 ¶10-11

Sunday, January 26

Put on the complete suit of armor from God so that you may be able to stand firm against the crafty acts of the Devil.—Eph. 6:11.

The apostle Paul likened our life as Christians to that of soldiers engaged in hand-to-hand combat. Of course, the war we fight is spiritual, not literal. Even so, our enemies are real. Satan and the demons are skilled warriors with vast experience. At first glance, our prospects may seem bleak. Young Christians

in particular may appear to be vulnerable. How can they hope to win against superhuman, wicked spirit forces? The fact is, young ones can win, and they are winning! Why? Because they "go on acquiring power in the Lord." But they do more than draw on God's power. They are dressed for battle. Like well-trained soldiers, they have "put on the complete suit of armor from God." (Eph. 6:10-12) When developing his illustration, Paul perhaps had in mind the armor worn by Roman legionnaires.—Acts 28:16. *w18.05* 27 ¶1-2

Monday, January 27

Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.

—Matt. 6:9.

The foremost reason why we share in the preaching work is to glorify Jehovah and sanctify his name before mankind. (John 15:1, 8) Yet, we cannot make God's name more sacred. It is already sacred, or holy, in the absolute sense. But note what the prophet Isaiah stated: "Jehovah of armies—he is the One you should regard as holy." (Isa. 8:13) We sanctify God's name, among other ways, by regarding it as separate from all other names and by helping others to regard it as holy. For instance, by proclaiming the truth about Jehovah's wonderful qualities and his unchangeable purpose for mankind, we defend God's name against Satan's lies and slander. (Gen. 3:1-5) Also, when we strive to help people in our territory to see that Jehovah is worthy "to receive the glory and the honor and the power," we sanctify God's name.—Rev. 4:11. *w18.05* 18 ¶3-4

Tuesday, January 28

It is good to give thanks to Jehovah . . . For you have made me rejoice, O Jehovah, because of your deeds; because of the works of your hands I shout joyfully.

—Ps. 92:1, 4.

The primary reason for setting spiritual goals is to show Jehovah how grateful we are for his love and for what he has done for us. As a young person, think of all you owe to Jehovah. Your life, your faith, the Bible, the congregation, and your wonderful hope for the future. Giving priority to spiritual matters is a way of showing gratitude to God for these blessings, and that brings you closer to him. Once you start working toward spiritual goals, you begin building a record of good works in Jehovah's eyes. This brings you even closer to him. The apostle Paul promised: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name." (Heb. 6:10) You are never too young to set goals. Why not consider which goals are important to you and then start working toward them?—Phil. 1:10, 11. *w18.04 26 ¶15-6*

Wednesday, January 29

Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.—2 Cor. 3:17.

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

minds of the common people, including Christians. The letters of the apostle Paul have much to say about freedom. However, the objective of his ministry was not social or political reform, the very thing people of that day were seeking. Rather than looking to any human ruler or agency for freedom, Paul and his fellow Christians worked hard to help others learn the good news of God's Kingdom and the incomparable value of the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Paul directed his fellow believers to the Source of true freedom. *w18.04 8 ¶1-2*

Thursday, January 30

Simon, Simon, look! Satan has demanded to have all of you to sift you as wheat. But I have made supplication for you that your faith may not give out; and you, once you have returned, strengthen your brothers.—Luke 22:31, 32.

On the night before his death, Jesus told the apostle Peter the above. Peter proved to be a pillar in the early Christian congregation. (Gal. 2:9) He encouraged his brothers by his courageous example at Pentecost and thereafter. Toward the end of his long ministry, he wrote to fellow Christians. Explaining why, he stated: "I have written you in few words in order to encourage you and to give an earnest witness that this is the true undeserved kindness of God. Stand firm in it." (1 Pet. 5:12) Peter's inspired letters have continued to be a source of encouragement to Christians throughout the ages and up to this day. How we need this encouragement as we await the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises!—2 Pet. 3:13. *w18.04 17 ¶12-13*

Friday, January 31

The one who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and continues in it . . . will be happy in what he does.—Jas. 1:25.

To be able to do what one wants to do or to live the way one wants to live seems to be much desired by people everywhere. How to satisfy those desires, however, is quite another matter. On the social or political level, many resort to protests, demonstrations, revolts, even revolutions. But do such confrontations achieve the desired results? On the contrary, they often lead to tragedies and loss of life. All of this once again testifies to the truthfulness of King Solomon's inspired observation: "Man has dominated man to his harm." (Eccl. 8:9) In today's text, James pointed out the key to finding true happiness and satisfaction. Jehovah, who gave that perfect law, knows best the things humans need in order to be completely happy and satisfied. He gave the first human couple everything that they needed to be happy—including true freedom. *w18.04 3 ¶1-3*

Saturday, February 1

*Fully accomplish your ministry.
—2 Tim. 4:5.*

Jesus had tender feelings for others. People sensed his love for them and responded favorably to the Kingdom message. The more we develop similar tender feelings for people, the more effective we will be in accomplishing our ministry. What can help us show fellow feeling to those to whom we preach? We want to put ourselves in the place of those we meet in the ministry and treat them as we would like to be treat-

ed. (Matt. 7:12) Consider the needs of each individual. Do not try to use the same approach with everyone we meet in our ministry. Rather, take into consideration the specific circumstances and viewpoints of each individual. Draw the person out with tactful questions. (Prov. 20:5) When we draw others out, we in effect allow them to tell us why they need the good news. Once we know that, we can show fellow feeling for their specific needs and respond accordingly, just as Jesus did.—Compare 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. *w19.03 20 ¶2; 22 ¶8-9*

Sunday, February 2

*Commit to Jehovah whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.
—Prov. 16:3.*

Adam and Eve displayed a callous lack of appreciation for all the good that Jehovah had done for them. We all have the opportunity to show just how much we disagree with the decision that they made. By getting baptized, we show Jehovah that we believe that he has the authority to set the standard of what is right and what is wrong for us. We prove that we love our Father and trust in him. The challenge we face after baptism is to live each day by Jehovah's standards, not our own. Millions of people are living that way each year. You can be like them if you continue to deepen your understanding of God's Word, the Bible; associate regularly with your brothers and sisters; and zealously share what you have learned about your loving Father. (Heb. 10:24, 25) When you make decisions, listen to the advice Jehovah gives you through his Word and his organization. (Isa. 30:21) Then all you do will be successful.—Prov. 16:20. *w19.03 7 ¶17-18*

Monday, February 3

Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of the celestial lights.—Jas. 1:17.

Jehovah has given us an abundance of spiritual food. For example, we receive helpful instruction through our meetings, our magazines, and our websites. Have you ever heard a talk, read an article, or watched a broadcast and thought, “That is just what I needed”? How can we show our appreciation to Jehovah? (Col. 3:15) One way is by regularly thanking him in our prayers for these good gifts. We also express appreciation to Jehovah when we keep our place of worship clean and tidy. We share regularly in cleaning and maintaining our Kingdom Halls, and those who handle electronic equipment used by the congregation do so carefully. When we maintain our Kingdom Halls properly, they will last longer and will need fewer major repairs. That way, we make more money available to build and renovate other Kingdom Halls around the world. *w19.02 18 ¶17-18*

Tuesday, February 4

These are just the fringes of his ways; only a faint whisper has been heard of him!
—Job 26:14.

Job spent time contemplating the marvels of Jehovah’s creation. (Job 26:7, 8) He was awestruck when he thought about the earth, the sky, the clouds, and the thunder, yet he recognized that he knew very little about the vastness of creation. He also felt awe for Jehovah’s expressions. “I have treasured up his sayings,” Job said of God’s words. (Job 23:12) Job’s awe and respect

for Jehovah moved him. He loved his Father and wanted to please him. Job’s determination to keep his integrity thus grew stronger. We need to do as Job did. We know far more about the marvels of creation than did people of Job’s time. And we have the entire inspired Bible to help us to know Jehovah as he really is. All that we learn can help to fill our heart with awe. Our awe and respect for Jehovah will, in turn, move us to love and obey him and to build up our deep desire to keep our integrity.—Job 28:28. *w19.02 5 ¶12*

Wednesday, February 5

I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?—Ps. 118:6.

Throughout history, human rulers have persecuted Jehovah’s people. They may charge us with various “crimes,” but the real issue is that we choose to “obey God as ruler rather than men.” (Acts 5:29) We might be ridiculed, imprisoned, or even physically mistreated. With Jehovah’s help, however, we will not retaliate but will remain mild throughout the test. Consider the example that three Hebrew exiles—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—set for us. Mildly, they explained to the king why they would not worship the image he had made. They were willing to accept whatever outcome Jehovah would permit. (Dan. 3:1, 8-28) When our loyalty to God is tested, how can we imitate the three Hebrews? We humbly trust that Jehovah will care for us. (Ps. 118:7) We answer those who accuse us of wrongdoing in a mild, respectful manner. (1 Pet. 3:15) And we absolutely refuse to compromise our friendship with our loving Father. *w19.02 10-11 ¶11-13*

Thursday, February 6

Take courage!—John 16:33.

We can strengthen our courage by thinking about the hope that the ransom sacrifice of Christ makes possible for us. (John 3:16; Eph. 1:7) In the weeks leading up to the Memorial, we have a special opportunity to build our appreciation for the ransom. During that time, keep up with the Memorial Bible reading and prayerfully meditate on the events surrounding Jesus' death. Then when we gather for the Lord's Evening Meal, we will understand more fully the significance of the Memorial emblems and the matchless sacrifice that they represent. When we appreciate what Jesus and Jehovah have done for us and understand how it benefits us and our loved ones, our hope grows stronger, and we are motivated to endure courageously to the end. (Heb. 12:3) How grateful we can be that Jesus continues to display humility and courage as our heavenly High Priest, who pleads in our behalf! (Heb. 7:24, 25) To show our appreciation, we must loyally commemorate Jesus' death, just as he commanded.—Luke 22:19, 20. *w19.01 22 ¶8; 23-24 ¶10-11*

Friday, February 7

Please take pleasure in my voluntary offerings of praise, O Jehovah.—Ps. 119:108.

Jehovah has given all of us the privilege to praise him. Our comments at meetings are part of our "sacrifice of praise," and no one can offer that sacrifice for us. (Heb. 13:15) Does Jehovah demand the same type of sacrifice, or comment, from each of us? No, he does not! View the congregation meetings like a meal shared with good friends. Imagine

that some friends in the congregation planned a barbecue and asked you to prepare some small item of food. How would you respond? You might feel a little anxious, but you would likely do your best to bring something that everyone could enjoy. Jehovah, our Host, has provided a table full of good things for us at our meetings. (Ps. 23:5; Matt. 24:45) And he is pleased when we bring a simple gift, the best that we can give. So prepare well and participate as freely as you can. Then you will not only feed at Jehovah's table but also bring a gift to share with the congregation. *w19.01 8 ¶3; 13 ¶20*

Saturday, February 8

Those who pursue other gods multiply their sorrows.—Ps. 16:4.

In Bible times, false worship often included gross sexual immorality. (Hos. 4:13, 14) To be sure, that form of worship appealed to the sinful flesh. But it did not bring lasting happiness. To the contrary! "Those who pursued other gods multiplied their sorrows," said David. They also brought untold suffering to countless children. (Isa. 57:5) Jehovah detested such cruelty! (Jer. 7:31) Today, too, false worship often condones sexual immorality, even homosexuality. But the end results of reveling in so-called moral freedom have not really changed since Bible times. (1 Cor. 6:18, 19) People "multiply their sorrows," as you may have observed. So young ones, listen to your heavenly Father. Be fully convinced that obedience to him is in your best interests. Impress on your heart that the harm caused by wrongdoing far outweighs any temporary pleasure.—Gal. 6:8. *w18.12 27-28 ¶16-18*

Sunday, February 9

I will behave the same way toward you.—Hos. 3:3.

If a Christian's mate committed immorality, the innocent Christian would face a decision. Jesus said that the innocent one would have a basis for getting a divorce and then be free to remarry. (Matt. 19:9) On the other hand, the innocent mate could extend forgiveness. That would not be wrong. Hosea took back Gomer. Once Gomer was back with Hosea, she was not to have relations with any other man. Hosea did "not have relations" with Gomer for a while. (Hos. 3:1-3, fn.) In time, though, Hosea must have resumed marital relations with her, thereby reflecting God's willingness to accept his people back and resume his dealings with them. (Hos. 1:11; 3:4, 5) What bearing does that have on a marriage today? If an innocent mate decided to maintain the marriage, resuming marital relations would show forgiveness. (1 Cor. 7:3, 5) That course would cancel what had been grounds for divorce. Thereafter as a couple, they should work to reflect God's view of marriage. *w18.12 13 ¶13*

Monday, February 10

The shrewd one sees the danger and conceals himself.—Prov. 22:3.

When studying, we do well to consider what bearing Jehovah's thoughts may have on situations we might face in the future. That way, should we be in a situation requiring an immediate decision, we will not be caught completely off guard. By immediately rejecting the attempted seductions of Potiphar's wife, Joseph showed that he had given thought to Jehovah's view of marital faithfulness. (Gen. 39:8, 9)

Furthermore, his reply to Potiphar's wife: "How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" indicates that he had made God's view his own. What about us? Suppose a coworker began manifesting flirtatious behavior. Or what if a sexually explicit message or image was sent to your mobile phone? It is far easier to take a stand if we have already sought out and adopted Jehovah's view on such matters and have determined in advance what we will do. *w18.11 25 ¶13-14*

Tuesday, February 11

*I will exult in Jehovah.
—Hab. 3:18.*

Some scholars think that this verse literally means "I will jump for joy in the Lord; I will spin round for delight in God." What a powerful assurance for all of us! Not only has Jehovah given us wonderful promises but he has assured us that he is swiftly working out his great purpose. No doubt, the vital message of Habakkuk is to trust in Jehovah. (Hab. 2:4) We can acquire and maintain such trust if we strengthen our relationship with Jehovah by (1) persevering in prayer, telling Jehovah all about our anxieties and concerns; (2) paying careful attention to Jehovah's Word and any direction we receive through his organization; and (3) faithfully and patiently waiting on Jehovah. That is what Habakkuk did. Though he began his book with grief, he ended with a confident and joyful exclamation. May we follow this inspiring example so that we too can feel Jehovah's fatherly embrace! What greater comfort could we find in this darkening world? *w18.11 17 ¶18-19*

Wednesday, February 12

[Christ] died for all so that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up.

—2 Cor. 5:15.

True Christians also have this reason to be drawn to God's love: He "loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) What love Jesus also showed in giving his life for us! And what a powerful motivation that love is for us! God's Word promises that not even "tribulation or distress" can "separate us from the love of the Christ." (Rom. 8:35, 38, 39) When we grapple with trials that are physically, emotionally, or spiritually draining, the compelling force of Christ's love can give us the strength to endure. (2 Cor. 5:14) Jesus' love has the power to sustain us and to motivate us not to give up, even in the face of such trials as disasters, persecution, personal disappointments, or gnawing anxiety. *w18.09 14 ¶8-9*

Thursday, February 13

I will walk in your truth.

—Ps. 86:11.

To walk in the truth, we must accept and obey *all* of Jehovah's sayings. We must give the truth priority in our lives and live according to Bible principles. Like David, we must be firmly resolved to keep walking in God's truth. If we are not, we could have second thoughts about what we paid for the truth and perhaps be tempted to begin taking back part of the payment.

Rather, we carefully hold on to the complete truth. We recognize that we cannot pick which truths to accept and which to ignore. After all, we must walk in "*all* the truth." (John 16:13) To avoid drifting away from the truth, we must make wise use of our time. If we are not careful, we might start to spend excessive amounts of time on recreation, hobbies, browsing the Internet, or watching television. Although these things are not wrong in themselves, the time we spend on them can begin to encroach on time previously spent in personal study and other spiritual activities. *w18.11 10 ¶7-8*

Friday, February 14

I have calmed and quieted my soul.—Ps. 131:2.

When our life takes an unexpected turn, the changes that we have to face may cause us apprehension and emotional stress. (Prov. 12:25) We may even find it hard to accept those changes. In such circumstances, how can we 'calm and quiet' our soul? (Ps. 131:1-3) Despite adverse circumstances, we today can experience firsthand the soothing effect of "the peace of God" that guards our mental powers. (Phil. 4:6, 7) Thus, if we turn to Jehovah when we feel overwhelmed by anxiety, God's peace can strengthen our determination to reach spiritual goals and guard us against any tendency to give up. In addition to calming us down, God's spirit can draw our attention to key scriptures that will help us to keep our spiritual priorities. —John 14:26, 27. *w18.10 27 ¶2; 28 ¶5, 8*

Saturday, February 15

Speak the truth with one another.

—Zech. 8:16.

What device has had the worst possible effect on humankind? The lie! That is, saying something that one knows is not true in order to deceive someone else. And who devised the first lie? Jesus Christ identified “the Devil” as “the father of the lie.” (John 8:44) When did he utter the first lie? It happened thousands of years ago in the garden of Eden. The first human couple, Adam and Eve, were enjoying life in the Paradise that their Creator had provided for them. Then, the Devil entered the scene. He knew that God had commanded the couple not to eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad,” lest they die for their disobedience. Even so, through a serpent, Satan told Eve: “You certainly will not die [the first lie ever told]. For God knows that in the very day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and bad.”—Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-5. *w18.10 6 ¶1-2*

Sunday, February 16

*Happy are the pure in heart,
since they will see God.*

—Matt. 5:8.

To keep our hearts pure, we must be clean on the inside and nurture chaste affections and desires. We need to keep our thoughts clean so as to be spiritually untainted in our devotion to Jehovah. (2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:5) How, though, do the pure in heart “see God” when, in fact, “no man can see [God] and live”? (Ex. 33:20) The Greek word rendered

“see” can carry the sense of “to see with the mind, to perceive, know.” Those who see God with ‘the eyes of the heart’ are those who have really come to know him, appreciating his qualities. (Eph. 1:18) In addition to getting to know God’s qualities, true worshippers can “see God” by observing the way he acts in their behalf. (Job 42:5) They also focus ‘their eyes of the heart’ on the wonderful blessings that God holds out for those who strive to remain pure and to serve him loyally. *w18.09 20 ¶13, 15-16*

Monday, February 17

*Wisdom is the most important
thing, so acquire wisdom.*

—Prov. 4:7.

Doing what we know to be right brings rich blessings. Although wisdom is based on knowledge, it particularly has to do with the decisions we make rather than just the facts we understand. Even ants reveal wisdom. Ants demonstrate instinctive wisdom by preparing their food in the summer. (Prov. 30:24, 25) Christ, “the wisdom of God,” always does the things pleasing to the Father. (1 Cor. 1:24; John 8:29) God knows the difference between making the right choice and acting on that choice. And he rewards those who demonstrate humility with endurance and who practice what they know to be true. (Matt. 7: 21-23) Therefore, work to preserve the spiritual environment in which genuine humility can flourish. Applying what we know to be true takes time and requires patience, but it is a mark of humility that leads to happiness now and forever. *w18.09 7 ¶18*

Tuesday, February 18

Let each one examine his own actions, . . . and not in comparison with the other person.—Gal. 6:4.

The Creator envisioned that perfect humans would cooperate with him to accomplish his purposes. Despite mankind's current imperfect state, faithful people can still work with Jehovah each day. For example, we become "God's fellow workers" by preaching the good news of his Kingdom and making disciples. (1 Cor. 3:5-9) Just think what a privilege we have to be counted worthy of cooperating with the almighty Creator of the universe in a work that he considers important! Yet, preaching and making disciples are not the only ways that we work with Jehovah. Other ways we can do so are by assisting our family and fellow worshippers, by being hospitable, by volunteering for theocratic projects, and by expanding our sacred service. (Col. 3:23) However, do not compare what you can do for Jehovah with what others can do. Remember that age, health, circumstances, and abilities vary from one person to another. *w18.08 23 ¶1-2*

Wednesday, February 19

Keep in expectation of it! For it will without fail come true.

—Hab. 2:3.

Jehovah assured Habakkuk that he would receive answers to his sincere questions. Relief for all his worries would come before too long. God, in effect, told the prophet: "Be patient, trust in me. My answer will come despite the apparent delay!" Jehovah reminded him that He had an appointed time for fulfilling His promises. He counseled Habakkuk to wait for the accomplishment of

His purposes. Ultimately, the prophet would not be disappointed. Patiently waiting on Jehovah and paying close attention to what he tells us will give us confidence and will help us to acquire a calm heart despite adversities and hardships. Jesus confirmed that we can trust in Jehovah as the Great Timekeeper, not focusing on "times or seasons" that God has not yet revealed. (Acts 1:7) Therefore, may we not give up but wait in humility, faith, and patience, making good use of the time we have to serve Jehovah to the best of our abilities.—Mark 13:35-37; Gal. 6:9. *w18.11 16 ¶13-14*

Thursday, February 20

God has shown me that I should call no man defiled or unclean.

—Acts 10:28.

Like other Jews of his time, Peter grew up believing that Gentiles were unclean. Yet, Peter had experienced events that caused him to reevaluate that position. For example, Peter had a miraculous vision. (Acts 10:9-16) Like Peter, we must examine ourselves carefully and be willing to receive help so that we can identify any remaining traces of prejudice in our hearts. What else can we do? If we open our heart wide, we will allow love to replace prejudice. (2 Cor. 6:11-13) Are you in the habit of having close association only with those of your own race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, or language group? If so, widen out. Why not invite those of a different background to work with you in the field ministry or invite them to your home for a meal or a gathering? (Acts 16:14, 15) If you do so, you will fill your heart with so much love that there will be no room for prejudice. *w18.08 9 ¶3, 6; 10 ¶7*

Friday, February 21

Keep from becoming causes for stumbling.—1 Cor. 10:32.

Some Witnesses have not firmly rejected worldly conduct. Their dancing and actions at parties go beyond what is acceptable for Christians. They post on social media photos of themselves and comments that are unbecoming to spiritual people. Therefore, they can be a negative influence on their peers who are striving to maintain fine conduct among Jehovah's people. (1 Pet. 2:11, 12) The world aggressively promotes "the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life." (1 John 2:16) Yet, because we belong to Jehovah, we are admonished to "reject ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things." (Titus 2:12) Our speech, our eating and drinking habits, our dress and grooming, our work ethic—everything we do—should tell on-lookers that we are exclusively devoted to Jehovah. *w18.07 25 ¶13-14*

Saturday, February 22

*Our eyes look to Jehovah our God until he shows us favor.
—Ps. 123:2.*

If we keep our figurative eyes focused on Jehovah, we will not allow the actions of others to embitter us or damage our relationship with him. This is especially important if, like Moses, we have a measure of responsibility in God's organization. While it is true that each of us needs to 'keep working out his own salvation with fear and trembling,' we must remember that Jehovah

does not have one rigid, inflexible standard by which he judges us. (Phil. 2:12) Rather, the more responsibility we have, the greater our accountability. (Luke 12:48) But if we truly love Jehovah, nothing will stumble us or separate us from his love. (Ps. 119:165; Rom. 8:37-39) In these challenging times, may our eyes be raised continually to the One who is "enthroned in the heavens," so that we can perceive his will. (Ps. 123:1) May we never allow our relationship with Jehovah to be negatively affected by the actions of others. *w18.07 16 ¶19-20*

Sunday, February 23

Let your light shine before men, so that they may . . . give glory to your Father.—Matt. 5:16.

How thrilling it is to hear of increases that Jehovah's people are experiencing! In 2017 we regularly conducted over 10,000,000 Bible studies. This certainly indicates that God's servants are letting their light shine! And think of the millions of interested ones whom we welcomed at the Memorial. They could thus learn of the love that God expressed when he provided the ransom. (1 John 4:9) Worldwide, Jehovah's people speak many different languages. However, this does not prevent us from offering united praise to our Father, Jehovah. (Rev. 7:9) No matter what our mother tongue is or where we live, we can shine "as illuminators in the world." (Phil. 2:15) The increase we observe, the unity we enjoy, and the watchful attitude that we strive to maintain all contribute to our bringing glory to Jehovah. *w18.06 21 ¶1-3*

Monday, February 24

Rabbi, eat.—John 4:31.

Jesus' reply indicated that he was so absorbed in the spiritual discussion that his hunger could be ignored. Preaching—even to a Samaritan woman—was the will of his Father, and it was like food for him. (John 4:32-34) James and John did not grasp this lesson. When journeying with Jesus through Samaria, the disciples sought overnight lodging in a Samaritan village. The Samaritans refused to receive them, so James and John angrily suggested calling down fire from heaven to destroy the entire village. Jesus firmly rebuked them. (Luke 9:51-56) We may wonder if James and John would have reacted the same way if the inhospitable village had been in their home region of Galilee. It seems likely that prejudice had kindled their animosity. It could be that the apostle John felt embarrassed about his rash outburst when he later enjoyed a successful preaching campaign among the Samaritans.—Acts 8:14, 25. *w18.06* 10-11 ¶12-13

Tuesday, February 25

Stand firm . . . with the belt of truth fastened around your waist.—Eph. 6:14.

When Bible truth is wrapped around us tightly, as it were, we will be moved to live in harmony with it and to speak the truth at all times. Why will we avoid telling lies? Because lies have been one of Satan's most effective weapons. Lies damage both the one telling them and the one believing them. (John 8:44) So to the best of our imperfect ability, we avoid telling lies. (Eph. 4:25)

But it can be a challenge. Eighteen-year-old Abigail says: "Speaking the truth may not always seem worth it, especially when telling a lie can get you out of a difficult situation." Why, then, tell the truth? Victoria, 23, says: "When you tell the truth and stand up for your beliefs, you might get bullied. But you always get outstanding benefits: You gain confidence, you feel closer to Jehovah, and you earn the respect of those who love you." Certainly, it is worth keeping "the belt of truth fastened around your waist" at all times. *w18.05* 28 ¶3, 5

Wednesday, February 26

*Keep on the watch.
—Matt. 24:42.*

As these critical times worsen, all of us need to keep on the watch. When Jehovah acts, it will be at the right time. (Matt. 24:42-44) Meanwhile, exercise patience, being ever watchful. Read God's Word each day, and be vigilant with a view to prayers. (1 Pet. 4:7) Take note of sterling examples of brothers and sisters whose lives reflect their joy in keeping on the watch as well as letting their light shine. Fill your life with upbuilding activity and association. That will bring you great joy, and it will seem to you that time is passing quickly. (Eph. 5:16) It is faith-strengthening to know that our imperfection does not stop us from serving Jehovah acceptably. Consequently, appreciate Jehovah's provision of "gifts in men," congregation elders. (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12) The next time an elder visits you, take advantage of the opportunity to draw on his wisdom and benefit from his advice. *w18.06* 24-25 ¶15-18

Thursday, February 27

*If you observe my commandments,
you will remain in my love.*

—John 15:10.

Jesus told his disciples not only to *be* in his love but to “*remain* in [his] love.” Why? Because living as a true disciple of Christ year after year calls for endurance. Jesus stressed the need for endurance by using forms of the word “*remain*” over and over in the brief passage recorded at John 15:4-10. How do we show that we want to remain in Christ’s love and keep his approval? By observing Jesus’ commandments. Simply put, Jesus tells us, ‘Be obedient to me.’ Yet, Jesus only asked us to do what he himself did, for he added: “Just as I have observed the commandments of the Father and remain in his love.” Jesus sets the example. (John 13:15) By carrying out Jesus’ command to go and preach, we too show our love for God because Jesus’ commandments reflect his Father’s thinking. (Matt. 17:5; John 8:28) In response to our expression of love, Jehovah and Jesus keep us in their love. *w18.05 18 ¶5-7*

Friday, February 28

*The plans of the diligent surely
lead to success.—Prov. 21:5.*

Adolescents have to make decisions about education, employment, and other matters. If you know what your goals are, making good decisions becomes easier. The earlier you make plans by setting good goals, the sooner you will have success. Thousands of young ones in congregations all over the world deserve warm praise. They commit themselves to Jehovah and focus

their lives on theocratic goals. Such young people enjoy life to the full while at the same time learning to follow Jehovah’s guidance in all endeavors. This also includes family life. “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart,” wrote Solomon. “In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Prov. 3: 5, 6) Youths in the Christian congregation are precious in the eyes of Jehovah, who loves them dearly and gives them his protection, guidance, and blessing. *w18.04 26 ¶7; 27 ¶9*

Saturday, February 29

*Love one another; just as I have
loved you, you also love one
another.—John 13:34.*

The apostle John was a pillar in the early Christian congregation. His riveting Gospel account of Jesus’ ministry has been a source of encouragement to Christians throughout the centuries—and still is. His Gospel alone preserves Jesus’ statement that love is the identifying mark of his true disciples. (John 13:35) John’s three letters contain further gems of truth. When we are weighed down with the burden of sin, are we not relieved to read that “the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin”? (1 John 1:7) And if our heart continues to condemn us, do we not get a lump in our throat and tears of gratitude in our eyes when we read that “God is greater than our hearts”? (1 John 3:20) John alone wrote that “God is love.” (1 John 4:8, 16) His second and third letters commend Christians who continue “walking in the truth.”—2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4. *w18.04 18 ¶14-15*

Sunday, March 1

You rule over everything.

—1 Chron. 29:12.

When reading the first two chapters of Genesis, we can easily see that Adam and Eve enjoyed the kind of freedom that people today can only hope for—freedom from want, from fear, and from oppression. The first couple's life was completely free from worries about food, work, sickness, and death. (Gen. 1:27-29; 2: 8, 9, 15) When it comes to freedom, though, a key point for us to bear in mind is that Jehovah God alone has what can be called absolute and unlimited freedom. Why? Because he is the Creator of all things and the almighty Sovereign of the universe. (1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 4:11) Accordingly, all creatures in heaven and on earth have freedom in only a relative sense. They must recognize that Jehovah God has the ultimate authority to impose what he determines to be just, necessary, and reasonable limits. That, in fact, was what Jehovah God did with his human creation right from the beginning. *w18.04 4 ¶4, 6*

Monday, March 2

How beautiful . . . are the feet of the one bringing good news.

—Isa. 52:7.

In this present system, we endure only with Jehovah's help. (2 Cor. 4: 7, 8) But think of those who struggle to survive in this world without a close friendship with Jehovah. Like Jesus, we feel pity for them, and we are moved to bring them "good news of something better." So be patient with those whom you teach. Remember, they may never have considered some of the Bible truths we know very well. And many have

a strong emotional connection to their current beliefs. They may see their religious views as uniting them with their family, their culture, and their community. Before we ask people to give up their cherished "old" beliefs, we may first need to help them build a strong appreciation for "new" truths—Bible teachings that at the outset are unfamiliar to them. Only then will they be ready to abandon their former viewpoint. It may take time to help people make such changes.—Rom. 12:2. *w19.03 23 ¶10, 12; 24 ¶13*

Tuesday, March 3

I have approved you.—Mark 1:11.

Jehovah's example in expressing love and approval reminds us to look for opportunities to encourage others. (John 5:20) We blossom when someone we care about shows love to us and commends us for the good we do. Likewise, our brothers and sisters in the congregation and our family members need our love and encouragement. When we commend others, we strengthen their faith and help them to serve Jehovah loyally. Parents especially need to encourage their children. When parents commend their children sincerely and show them affection, they help their children to flourish. The words: "I have approved you" show that Jehovah was confident that Jesus would faithfully carry out his Father's will. Jehovah has such confidence in his Son, so we can likewise be completely confident that Jesus will faithfully carry out all of Jehovah's promises. (2 Cor. 1:20) When we consider Jesus' example, we are even more determined to learn from him and to follow in his footsteps.—1 Pet. 2:21. *w19.03 8 ¶3; 9 ¶5-6*

Wednesday, March 4

The law of the spirit that gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.—Rom. 8:2.

When we realize the true value of a costly gift, we are moved to show our gratitude to the giver. The Israelites did not appreciate the freedom that Jehovah bestowed upon them when he delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Within a few months of their deliverance, they began to long for the food and drink they once had in Egypt and complained about Jehovah's provisions, even wanting to return to Egypt. Just imagine, they put 'fish, cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions, and garlic' above their God-given freedom to worship the true God, Jehovah. Is it any wonder that Jehovah became very angry with his people? (Num. 11:5, 6, 10; 14:3, 4) What a lesson for us! The apostle Paul urged all Christians not to take for granted the freedom that Jehovah has kindly given us through his Son, Jesus Christ.—2 Cor. 6:1. *w18.04 9-10 ¶16-7*

Thursday, March 5

He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is filled with Jehovah's loyal love.—Ps. 33:5.

All of us want to be loved. And all of us want to be treated fairly. If we are repeatedly denied love and justice, we may feel worthless and hopeless. Jehovah knows that we long for love and yearn for justice. (Ps. 33:5) We can be sure that our God loves us dearly and wants us to be treated fairly. This becomes evident when we look closely at the Law that Jehovah gave to the nation of Israel through Moses.

As we study the Mosaic Law, we discover the warm feelings of our loving God, Jehovah. (Rom. 13:8-10) We can note that the Mosaic Law was built on love because love motivates all that Jehovah does. (1 John 4:8) Jehovah founded that entire code of laws on two basic commands—love God, and love your neighbor. (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-40) Each of the 600 and more commandments that make up the Law reveals a facet of Jehovah's love. *w19.02 20-21 ¶1-4*

Friday, March 6

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.—Matt. 6:21.

Job was careful about his behavior with those of the opposite sex. (Job 31:1) He knew that it was improper to pay romantic attention to any woman other than his wife. Today, we live in a world that bombards us with sexual temptation. Like Job, will we refuse to pay improper attention to anyone to whom we are not married? Will we also refuse to look at lewd or pornographic images in any form? (Matt. 5:28) If we exert such self-control daily, we will strengthen ourselves to keep our integrity. Job also obeyed Jehovah in the way he viewed material things. Job saw that if he put his trust in his possessions, he would commit a grave error deserving of punishment. (Job 31:24, 25, 28) Today, we live in a very materialistic world. If we develop a balanced view of money and possessions, as the Bible admonishes us to do, we will strengthen our determination to keep our integrity. —Prov. 30:8, 9; Matt. 6:19, 20. *w19.02 6 ¶13-14*

Saturday, March 7

Just as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.—John 15:9.

Jesus perfectly reflected Jehovah's intense love for us in everything that he did. (1 John 4:8-10) Above all, Jesus was moved from the heart to give his life in our behalf. Whether we are of the anointed or of the "other sheep," we benefit from the love that Jehovah and his Son have shown to us by means of that sacrifice. (John 10:16; 1 John 2:2) Think, too, about the very nature of the Memorial meal; it reveals Jesus' love and consideration for his disciples. How so? Jesus showed love for his spirit-begotten followers by instituting, not a complicated ritual, but a simple meal for them to observe. As time passed, those anointed disciples needed to observe the Memorial each year, doing so under various circumstances, including imprisonment. (Rev. 2:10) Were they able to obey Jesus? Yes, they were! Down to modern times, true Christians have sought to commemorate Jesus' death. *w19.01 24 ¶13-15*

Sunday, March 8

*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
—John 8:32.*

That freedom includes freedom from false religion, ignorance, and superstition. And it involves more. It will ultimately include "the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21) Taste that freedom even now by 'remaining in Christ's word,' or teachings. (John 8:31) In this way, you will come to "know the truth" not just by learning about it but also by living it. In this

old system, even a so-called good life is at best uncertain and short. We do not know what tomorrow will bring. (Jas. 4:13, 14) The wise course, then, is to stay on the path that leads to "the real life"—everlasting life. (1 Tim. 6:19) Of course, God does not force us to walk that path. The choice is ours. Make Jehovah your "portion." (Ps. 16:5) Cherish the many "good things" he has given you. (Ps. 103:5) And have faith that he can give you "abundant joy" and "happiness . . . forever." —Ps. 16:11. *w18.12 28 ¶19, 21*

Monday, March 9

A husband should not leave his wife.—1 Cor. 7:11.

All Christians should strive to show regard for marriage, even as Jesus and Jehovah do. However, some may fail to do so, for humans are imperfect. (Rom. 7:18-23) Thus, it should not shock us that some Christians in the first century had troubled marriages. Paul wrote that "a wife should not separate from her husband"; yet, in some cases that did occur. (1 Cor. 7:10) Paul did not explain what led to such a separation. The problem was not, for example, that the husband had been immoral, giving the wife a basis for divorce and remarriage. Paul wrote that a wife who was separated from her husband should "remain unmarried or else be reconciled with her husband." So the two were still united in God's eyes. Paul advised that whatever the underlying problems, if sexual immorality is not involved, the goal should be reconciliation. The two could seek Bible-based help from congregation elders. *w18.12 13 ¶14-15*

Tuesday, March 10

Keep on . . . seeking first the Kingdom and his righteousness.

—Matt. 6:33.

Today, God's will for his people is to develop a friendship with him and have as full a share as possible in his work. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Jas. 4:8) Well-meaning people might try to sway us from that course. For example, what if your employer offered you a promotion with a substantial increase in salary but the position would interfere with your spiritual activities? Or if you are in school, suppose you were offered an opportunity to move away from home to receive additional education. At that moment, would you need to do prayerful research, consult with others, and then make a decision? Why not learn Jehovah's thinking on such matters *now* and endeavor to make his thoughts your own? Then, if you are ever presented with such an offer, you may find that it hardly amounts to a temptation. Your spiritual goals are set, your heart is resolved, and all that remains for you is to carry out a decision that you have already made. *w18.11 27 ¶18*

Wednesday, March 11

Above all the things that you guard, safeguard your heart.—Prov. 4:23.

Solomon became king of Israel when he was just a young man. In the early part of his reign, Jehovah appeared to him in a dream and said: "Ask what you would like me to give you." Solomon replied: "I am just a youth and I am inexperienced. . . . So grant your servant an obedient heart to judge your people."

(1 Ki. 3:5-10) "An obedient heart"—what a modest request that was! No wonder Jehovah loved Solomon! (2 Sam. 12:24) Our God was so pleased with the young king's answer that he gave Solomon "a wise and understanding heart." (1 Ki. 3:12) As long as he was faithful, Solomon enjoyed many blessings. He had the honor of building a temple "for the name of Jehovah the God of Israel." (1 Ki. 8:20) He became famous for his God-given wisdom. And the things he said when he was inspired by God are recorded in three books of the Bible. One of these is the book of Proverbs. *w19.01 14 ¶1-2*

Thursday, March 12

Stop being molded by this system of things.—Rom. 12:2.

Some people resist the idea of having *anyone* mold or influence their thoughts. "I think for myself," they say. They probably mean that they make their own decisions and that it is proper to do so. They do not wish to be controlled, nor do they want to surrender their individuality. We can be assured, however, that bringing our thinking into harmony with Jehovah's does not mean giving up all individual thought or expression. As stated at 2 Corinthians 3:17, "where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom." We are free to develop our own distinct personalities. We can have our personal preferences and choose our fields of interest. Indeed, Jehovah designed us to do so. However, we cannot use our freedom without restraint. (1 Pet. 2:16) When it comes to issues of right and wrong, Jehovah wants us to be guided by his thinking as revealed in his Word. *w18.11 19 ¶5-6*

Friday, March 13

Demas has forsaken me because he loved the present system of things.

—2 Tim. 4:10.

When we learned the truth, our interest in material things became secondary to our spiritual pursuits. We were happy to make material sacrifices in order to walk in the truth. Over time, however, we may see others buying the latest electronic devices or enjoying other material advantages. We could begin to feel that we are losing out. No longer content with the necessities, we might put spiritual pursuits aside in favor of accumulating material possessions. Such a course reminds us of Demas. His love for “the present system of things” led him to abandon a life of service with the apostle Paul. Why did Demas leave Paul? Whether he loved material things more than spiritual activities or he was no longer willing to make personal sacrifices in order to serve with Paul, the Bible does not say. We surely do not want to rekindle a desire for material things and let those attractions crowd out our love for the truth. *w18.11 10 ¶9*

Saturday, March 14

You certainly will not die.

—Gen. 3:4.

Satan’s lie was malicious because he knew full well that if Eve believed him and ate the fruit, she would die. Eve and Adam both disobeyed Jehovah’s command and eventually died. (Gen. 3:6; 5:5) More than that, through such sin, “death spread to all men.” In fact, “death ruled as king . . . , even over those who had not sinned in the same way

that Adam transgressed.” (Rom. 5:12, 14) Now, instead of being able to enjoy perfect, endless life as God had originally intended, humans are doing well if they live “70 years, or 80 if one is especially strong.” Even then, life is often “filled with trouble and sorrow.” (Ps. 90:10) How tragic—all resulting from Satan’s lie! In explaining the Devil’s actions, Jesus stated: “He did not stand fast in the truth, because truth is not in him.” (John 8:44) Truth is still not in Satan, for he continues “misleading the entire inhabited earth” with his lies. (Rev. 12:9) We do not want to be misled by the Devil. *w18.10 6-7 ¶1-4*

Sunday, March 15

Happy are the peacemakers, since they will be called sons of God.

—Matt. 5:9.

Those who take the initiative to make peace have good reason to be happy. The disciple James wrote: “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peaceful conditions for those who are making peace.” (Jas. 3:18) When we have a strained relationship with someone either in the congregation or in the family, we can plead for God’s help to be peacemakers. Thus, Jehovah’s holy spirit, righteous conduct, and happiness can predominate. Jesus emphasized the importance of taking the initiative to make peace when he said: “If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away. First make your peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift.”—Matt. 5:23, 24. *w18.09 21 ¶17*

Monday, March 16

I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also love one another.—John 13:34.

On his final night with his disciples, Jesus mentioned love nearly 30 times. He specifically indicated that his disciples should “love one another.” (John 15:12, 17) Their love for one another would be so outstanding that it would clearly distinguish them as his true followers. (John 13:35) This love is not mere sentimentality. Jesus was referring to a most noble quality—self-sacrificing love. He said: “No one has love greater than this, that someone should surrender his life in behalf of his friends. You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you.” (John 15:13, 14) The genuine, self-sacrificing love and unbreakable unity of Jehovah’s servants today identify them as God’s people. (1 John 3:10, 11) How grateful we are that Christlike love prevails among Jehovah’s servants regardless of their nationality, tribe, language, or background! *w18.09 12 ¶1-2*

Tuesday, March 17

If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith.—1 Tim. 5:8.

Jehovah expects his servants to care for their families. For example, you may have to work to provide financially for your loved ones. Many mothers stay at home to look after their infants. And some adult children may have to care for infirm parents. These are necessary

activities. If you have such responsibilities, you likely cannot set aside as much time for theocratic activities as you would like to. But take heart! Jehovah is pleased when you provide for your family. (1 Cor. 10:31) If you do not have pressing family responsibilities, could you assist fellow worshippers who are caregivers and those who are infirm, elderly, or otherwise in need? Why not look around in your congregation and take note of who needs help? In doing so, you might be working with Jehovah to answer a prayer.—1 Cor. 10:24. *w18.08 24 ¶3, 5*

Wednesday, March 18

*God was with him, and he rescued him out of all his tribulations.
—Acts 7:9, 10.*

Joseph was about 17 years old when his own brothers out of jealousy sold him as a slave. Prior to this, Joseph had been his father’s favorite. (Gen. 37:2-4, 23-28) For about 13 years, Joseph had to endure slavery and imprisonment in Egypt, far away from his beloved father, Jacob. What helped Joseph not to give in to despair and bitterness? While suffering in prison, Joseph must have focused his mind on evidence of Jehovah’s blessing. (Gen. 39:21; Ps. 105:17-19) The prophetic dreams that Joseph had when he was younger would also have given him confidence that he had Jehovah’s favor. (Gen. 37:5-11) He likely poured out his anguish to Jehovah on more than one occasion. (Ps. 145:18) In response to Joseph’s heartfelt prayers, Jehovah gave him the inner conviction that He would be “with him” in all his trials. *w18.10 28 ¶3-4*

Thursday, March 19

The poor man is hated even by his neighbors, but many are the friends of the rich person.

—Prov. 14:20.

Material wealth is a factor that can affect our view of others. But how could a person's wealth or his poverty affect the way we view him? Holy spirit moved Solomon to record a sad truth about imperfect humans as shown in today's text. What does this proverb teach us? If we are not careful, we could desire the friendship of brothers who are wealthy while shunning brothers who are poor. Why is it so dangerous to measure the value of others solely on the basis of their material wealth? Because doing so could create class distinctions in the congregation. The disciple James warned that this problem was dividing some congregations in the first century. (Jas. 2:1-4) We must be on guard not to allow this thinking to affect our congregation today and make sure that we fight against making judgments that are based on the outward appearance. *w18.08 10 ¶18-10*

Friday, March 20

Have intense love for one another.—1 Pet. 4:8.

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

Malachi depicted Jehovah as "paying attention and listening" as His people interact with one another. (Mal. 3:16) Jehovah indeed "knows those who belong to him." (2 Tim. 2:19) He is keenly aware of every single thing we do and say. (Heb. 4:13) When we are less than kind to our fellow worshippers, Jehovah is "paying attention and listening." When we are hospitable, generous, forgiving, and kind to one another, we can be sure that Jehovah takes notice of that as well.—Heb. 13:16. *w18.07 26 ¶15, 17*

Saturday, March 21

To [Jehovah] you should cling.
—Deut. 10:20.

It makes sense to cling to Jehovah. No one is more powerful, wise, or loving than our God! Who of us would not want to be on his side? (Ps. 96:4-6) Still, some of God's worshippers have wavered when a situation called for them to take sides with Jehovah. Consider the case of Cain. He did not profess to worship any other god but Jehovah. Cain's worship, however, was not acceptable to God. There were seeds of wickedness growing deep within his heart. (1 John 3:12) Jehovah reached out to Cain and told him: "If you turn to doing good, will you not be restored to favor? But if you do not turn to doing good, sin is crouching at the door, and its craving is to dominate you; but will you get the mastery over it?" (Gen. 4:6, 7) Jehovah was, in effect, telling Cain, "If you repent and take a firm stand on my side, I will, in turn, be on your side." But Cain did not listen to the counsel. *w18.07 17 ¶1, 3; 18 ¶4*

Sunday, March 22

Let your light shine before men.

—Matt. 5:16.

One way we let our light shine is by preaching the good news and making disciples. (Matt. 28: 19, 20) In addition, we can glorify Jehovah by our Christian conduct. Householders and passersby observe our behavior. Our friendly smile and warm greeting say much about who we are and what kind of God we worship. "When you enter the house," Jesus told his disciples, "greet the household." (Matt. 10:12) In the area where Jesus and the apostles often preached, it was not unusual for people to invite strangers into their homes. Today, this is not the custom in many places. Still, your positive, friendly manner as you explain why you are there can often allay a householder's concern or ease his irritation. A pleasant smile is often the best introduction. That has also proved true when brothers and sisters engage in public witnessing using a literature cart. You may find that people often react favorably to a pleasant smile and greeting. *w18.06 22 ¶4-5*

Monday, March 23

God is not partial.

—Acts 10:34.

The apostle Peter had a custom of associating only with Jews. But after God made it clear that Christians should not be partial, Peter preached to Cornelius, a Roman soldier. (Acts 10:28, 35) Thereafter, Peter enjoyed food and association with Gentile believers. Years later, though, Peter stopped eating with non-Jewish Christians in the city of Antioch. (Gal. 2:11-14) In

that case, Paul gave Peter a fitting reproof, which he evidently accepted. When Peter wrote his first letter to Jewish and Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, he spoke warmly about the *whole* association of brothers. (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:17) Clearly, the apostles did learn from Jesus' example to love "all sorts of men." (John 12: 32; 1 Tim. 4:10) Although it took time, they adjusted their way of thinking. Putting on "the new personality," the early Christians came to view all people as equal in the sight of God.—Col. 3:10, 11. *w18.06 11 ¶15-16*

Tuesday, March 24

Stand firm . . . wearing the breastplate of righteousness.—Eph. 6:14.

One type of breastplate worn by a Roman soldier in the first century consisted of overlapping horizontal strips of iron. This type of garment required that he regularly check that the plates were firmly fixed in place in order to protect his heart and other vital organs. What an appropriate symbol of how Jehovah's righteous standards can protect our figurative heart! (Prov. 4: 23) Just as a soldier would not swap a breastplate of iron for one made of an inferior metal, we would never want to exchange Jehovah's standards of what is right for our own. Our judgment is just too flawed to offer us the protection that we need. (Prov. 3:5, 6) Instead, we regularly check that the 'iron plates' Jehovah has given us are firmly fixed over our heart. And the more we love divine truths, the easier it is to carry our "breastplate," that is, to live by God's righteous standards. —Ps. 111:7, 8; 1 John 5:3. *w18.05 28 ¶3-4, 6-7*

Wednesday, March 25

The people were quarreling with Moses.—Num. 20:3.

Despite Moses' long record of unselfish leadership, the people complained not only about the lack of water but also about Moses, as if it were his fault that they were thirsty. (Num. 20:1-5, 9-11) In the heat of anger, Moses lost his mild disposition. Rather than speak in faith to the rock, as Jehovah had commanded, Moses spoke in bitterness to the people and gave credit to himself. Then, he struck the rock twice and much water gushed out. Pride and anger caused him to make a painful mistake. (Ps. 106:32, 33) For his temporary lack of meekness, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. (Num. 20:12) From this incident, we learn valuable lessons. First, we must constantly work at maintaining our meek attitude. If we neglect it for a moment, pride may reassert itself and cause us to speak and act foolishly. Second, stress can weaken us, so we must strive to be meek, even when we are under pressure. *w19.02* 12-13 ¶19-21

Thursday, March 26

This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth.—Matt. 24:14.

Will obeying Jesus' command to preach become burdensome? On the contrary. After relating his illustration of the vine, Jesus said that as Kingdom preachers, we will experience joy. (John 15:11) In fact, he assured us that his joy will become ours. How? Jesus compared himself to a vine and his disciples to branches. (John 15:5) A vine supports the branches. As long as the branches are attached to it, they receive wa-

ter and nourishment that flows from the vine. Similarly, as long as we remain in union with Christ by closely following in his steps, we experience the same joy that he has in doing his Father's will. (John 4:34; 17:13; 1 Pet. 2:21) Notes Hanne, a pioneer for over 40 years, "The joy I always feel after I have been in the ministry stimulates me to continue in Jehovah's service." Indeed, deep-seated joy gives us the strength to keep on preaching even in challenging territories.—Matt. 5:10-12. *w18.05* 17 ¶2; 20 ¶14

Friday, March 27

I was appointed . . . a teacher of nations in the matter of faith and truth.—1 Tim. 2:7.

In the first century, perhaps the apostle who did the most to encourage his brothers was the apostle Paul. He was sent by the holy spirit to preach to the people of the nations of the Greco-Roman world, who worshipped many gods. (Gal. 2:7-9) Paul traveled far and wide in what is now Turkey, as well as in Greece and Italy, establishing Christian congregations among non-Jews. These newly converted Christians "suffered at the hands of [their] own countrymen" and needed encouragement. (1 Thess. 2:14) About the year 50 C.E., Paul wrote to the young congregation in Thessalonica: "We always thank God when we mention all of you in our prayers, for we continually remember your faithful work, your loving labor, and your endurance." (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) He also exhorted them to strengthen one another, saying: "Keep encouraging one another and building one another up." —1 Thess. 5:11. *w18.04* 18-19 ¶16-17

Saturday, March 28

The good news has to be preached first.—Mark 13:10.

A young person who focuses his life on the desire to please Jehovah gives special attention to the ministry. Because the preaching work is so urgent, it should be high on our list of priorities. Could you set the goal of sharing in the ministry more often? Could you pioneer? But what if you find little joy in preaching? And how can you be more effective at giving a witness? Two basic steps will help: Prepare well, and do not give up sharing what you know with others. It might surprise you how much joy you will then find when preaching. You could start by working out an answer to a question commonly raised by schoolmates, such as “Why do you believe in God?” Our jw.org website contains articles designed to help young people work out for themselves how to answer that question. There you will find a worksheet entitled “Why Do I Believe in God?” The worksheet will guide you in preparing your own answer. *w18.04 27 ¶10-11*

Sunday, March 29

*Be fruitful and become many.
—Gen. 1:28.*

Even though Adam and Eve initially enjoyed freedom in many ways, there were limits imposed on them. Some of them were instinctive, but they were limits nonetheless. For example, our first parents knew that to keep on living, they had to breathe, eat, sleep, and so on. Would they feel a loss of freedom for having to do these things? No, for Jehovah saw to it that even in doing such routine things, they could find enjoyment and contentment. (Ps. 104:14,

15; Eccl. 3:12, 13) Jehovah specifically commanded Adam and Eve to populate the earth and to take care of it. Did this command in some way deprive them of their freedom? Of course not! It was given to enable humans to participate in their Creator’s purpose—to make the earth into a global paradise home for a race of perfect humans forever. (Ps. 127:3; Isa. 45:18) Enjoying their marriage and family for all eternity could have been Adam and Eve’s happy lot in life. *w18.04 4-5 ¶7-8*

Monday, March 30

All those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers.—Acts 13:48.

If we are patient with people in the ministry, we will not expect them to understand or accept Bible truth the first time they hear it. As an example, consider how we might reason with someone about the hope of everlasting life on a paradise earth. Many believe that death is the end of it all or that all good people go to heaven. One brother relates an approach that he finds effective. First, he reads Genesis 1:28. Then, he asks the householder where and in what conditions God wanted the human family to live. Most people answer, “On earth, in good conditions.” Next, the brother reads Isaiah 55:11 and asks whether God’s purpose has changed. Often, the householder will answer no. Finally, the brother reads Psalm 37:10, 11 and asks what mankind’s future will be like. Using this Scriptural reasoning, he has helped a number of people to understand that God still wants good people to live forever in Paradise on earth. *w19.03 24 ¶14-15; 25 ¶19*

Tuesday, March 31

Listen to him.—Matt. 17:5.

Jehovah made it clear that he wants us to listen to his Son's words and obey them. Jesus lovingly taught his followers how to preach the good news, and he repeatedly reminded them to keep on the watch. (Matt. 24:42; 28:19, 20) He also urged them to exert themselves vigorously, and he encouraged them not to give up. (Luke 13:24) Jesus stressed the need for his followers to love one another, to remain united, and to observe his commandments. (John 15:10, 12, 13) That counsel is just as valid today as it was when Jesus gave it. Jesus said: "Everyone who is on the side of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37) We show that we are listening to his voice when we "continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely." (Col. 3:13; Luke 17:3, 4) We further show that we are listening to his voice by zealously preaching the good news "in favorable times and difficult times."—2 Tim. 4:2. *w19.03* 10 ¶9-10

Wednesday, April 1

[Jesus] said to Peter: "Get behind me, Satan! . . . You think, not God's thoughts, but those of men." —Matt. 16:23.

What about us? Do we think God's thoughts or those of this world? Granted, we have likely conformed our conduct to God's requirements. But what about our thinking? Are we bringing our thoughts and viewpoints into alignment with Jehovah's? Doing so requires a deliberate effort. On the other hand, little or no effort is needed to absorb

the world's thinking. That is because the spirit of the world is all around us. (Eph. 2:2) Furthermore, because it often appeals to self-interest, the world's way of thinking can be enticing. Yes, it is challenging to think like Jehovah but all too easy to think like the world. However, if we allow the world to mold our thinking, we will be inclined toward selfishness and a desire for moral independence. (Mark 7:21, 22) It is therefore vital that we cultivate "God's thoughts," not "those of men." *w18.11* 18 ¶1; 19 ¶3-4

Thursday, April 2

This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.—Matt. 3:17.

How encouraged Jesus must have been when Jehovah acknowledged him on three separate occasions by speaking directly from heaven. Just after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, Jehovah said the above. Evidently, John the Baptist was the only other person who heard those words. Then, about a year before Jesus' death, three of his apostles heard Jehovah say about Jesus: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved. Listen to him." (Matt. 17:5) Finally, just a few days before Jesus' death, Jehovah again spoke to his Son from heaven. (John 12:28) Even though Jesus knew that he would experience a shameful death, falsely branded as a blasphemer, he prayed that Jehovah's will be done and not his. (Matt. 26:39, 42) "He endured a torture stake, despising shame," not seeking recognition from the world, but only from his Father.—Heb. 12:2. *w18.07* 10-11 ¶15-16

Memorial Bible reading:
(Events after sunset: Nisan 9)
Mark 14:3-9

Friday, April 3

Father, if you want to, remove this cup from me.—Luke 22:42.

Just after Jesus introduced the Lord's Evening Meal, he demonstrated tremendous courage. How so? Jesus accepted his Father's will for him, even though he knew that doing so meant that he would be executed for the shameful crime of blasphemy. (Matt. 26:65, 66) Jesus maintained perfect integrity so as to honor Jehovah's name, uphold God's sovereignty, and open the way to endless life for repentant humans. At the same time, Jesus prepared his followers for what they would soon face. Jesus also showed courage by setting aside any anxiety he may have had and by focusing attention on the needs of his faithful apostles. The simple meal, which he introduced after dismissing Judas, would remind those who would become his anointed followers of the benefits of Jesus' shed blood and of sharing in the new covenant.—1 Cor. 10:16, 17. *w19.01* 22 ¶7-8

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 9)
Mark 11:1-11

Saturday, April 4

Father, glorify your name.
—John 12:28.

In response, Jesus' Father spoke from heaven: "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." Jesus was troubled because of the great responsibility he had to remain faithful to Jehovah. Jesus was aware that he was going to suffer a brutal scourging and a cruel death. (Matt. 26:38) More than all else, Jesus wanted to glorify his Father's name. Jesus was charged with blasphemy, and he was concerned that his death would

bring reproach on God. Like Jesus, we too may be concerned about reproach brought on Jehovah's name. Perhaps like Jesus, we are victims of unjust treatment. Or we may be disturbed by false stories that opposers spread about us. We may think about the reproach these reports bring on Jehovah's name. At such times, Jehovah's words are of great comfort to us. Jehovah will never fail to glorify his name.—Ps. 94:22, 23; Isa. 65:17. *w19.03* 11-12 ¶14-16

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 10)
Mark 11:12-19

Sunday, April 5

Jesus began explaining to his disciples that he must . . . suffer many things . . . and be killed.
—Matt. 16:21.

Jesus' disciples could not believe what they were hearing. Jesus, the one they expected to restore Israel's kingdom, said that he would soon suffer and die. It was the apostle Peter who spoke up. "Be kind to yourself, Lord," he said. "You will not have this happen to you at all." Jesus countered: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men." (Matt. 16:22, 23; Acts 1:6) With those words, Jesus made a distinction between thoughts that originate with God and thoughts that originate with this world under Satan's control. (1 John 5:19) Peter echoed the self-sparing attitude of the world. But Jesus knew that his Father's thinking was different. In his reply to Peter, Jesus clearly rejected the world's thinking in favor of Jehovah's. *w18.11* 18 ¶1-2

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 11)
Mark 11:20-12:27, 41-44

Monday, April 6

Keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he comes.—1 Cor. 11:26.

Imagine what Jehovah sees when millions around the world gather for the Lord's Evening Meal. He looks at more than just the large number of people; he notices each individual who is present. For instance, he sees those who faithfully come every year. Among them may be individuals who come despite facing severe persecution. Others do not come regularly to other meetings, but they view attending the Memorial as a solemn duty. Jehovah also notices those who may be at the Memorial for the first time, perhaps out of curiosity. Certainly, Jehovah is pleased to see that so many attend the Memorial. (Luke 22:19) However, he is more interested in the *reason* for their coming; motive matters to Jehovah. Are we eager to be instructed by Jehovah and the organization that he is using?—Isa. 30:20; John 6:45. *w19.01 26 ¶1-3*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 12)

Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11; Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16

MEMORIAL DATE

After Sundown

Tuesday, April 7

Christ died for us.—Rom. 5:8.

Jesus was willing not only to die for his disciples but also to live each day in a way that put their interests ahead of his own. For instance, he met with his followers even when he was physically tired or emotionally distressed. (Luke 22:39-46) And he focused on what he could give to others, not on what he could get from them. (Matt. 20:28) We belong to the only true Christian brotherhood, and we enjoy spending as much time

as possible inviting new ones to join us. However, we are particularly interested in helping those who are "related to us in the faith" but who have become inactive. (Gal. 6:10) We prove our love for them by encouraging them to attend our meetings, especially the Memorial. Like Jehovah and Jesus, we are deeply moved when an inactive one returns to Jehovah.—Matt. 18:14. *w19.01 29 ¶12, 14; 30 ¶15*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 13)

Mark 14:12-16; Matthew 26:17-19

(Events after sunset: Nisan 14)

Mark 14:17-72

Wednesday, April 8

*This means my body. . . . This means my "blood of the covenant."
—Matt. 26:26-28.*

In introducing the Memorial of his death, Jesus used only the Passover bread and the wine that were already on hand. Jesus told his apostles that those two basic items symbolized his perfect body and blood, which he would soon offer up in their behalf. The apostles may not have been surprised at the simplicity of this important new meal. Why not? Months earlier, at the home of his close friends—Lazarus, Martha, and Mary—Jesus began teaching. Martha was present, but she was distracted with preparing a large meal for her honored guest. Observing this, Jesus kindly corrected Martha, helping her to see that an elaborate meal was not always necessary. (Luke 10:40-42) Later, with just hours remaining before his sacrificial death, Jesus applied his own counsel. He kept the Memorial meal simple. *w19.01 20-21 ¶3-4*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 14)

Mark 15:1-47

Thursday, April 9

*Father, glorify me at your side
with the glory that I had.*

—John 17:5.

Jehovah honored Jesus in an unexpected way by resurrecting him to “a superior position” and giving him what no one else had received up until that time—immortal spirit life! (Phil. 2:9; 1 Tim. 6:16) What an outstanding acknowledgment of Jesus’ faithful course! What will help us to avoid seeking approval from this world? Keep close in mind that Jehovah *always* gives recognition to his faithful servants and that he often rewards them in *unexpected ways*. Who knows what unexpected blessings await us in the future? But for now, as we endure the hardships and trials of this wicked world, let us always remember that this world, is passing away. (1 John 2:17) Our loving Father, Jehovah, ‘is not unrighteous so as to forget our work and the love we show for his name.’ —Heb. 6:10. *w18.07* 11 ¶17-18

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 15)

Matthew 27:62-66

(Events after sunset: Nisan 16)

Mark 16:1

Friday, April 10

*I make request . . . that they may
all be one.—John 17:20, 21.*

Jesus was concerned about unity during his final supper with his apostles. When praying with them, he spoke of his desire that all his disciples be one, just as he and his Father are one. Their unity would give a powerful witness, offering clear evidence that Jehovah had sent Jesus to the earth to do God’s will. Love would be a mark of Jesus’ true disciples that would contrib-

ute to their unity. (John 13:34, 35) Jesus’ emphasis on unity is understandable. He had noticed a lack of unity or harmony among the apostles, such as during his final meal with them. As had happened before, a dispute arose over “which one of them was considered to be the greatest.” (Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:33, 34) Another time, James and John requested that Jesus give them prominent places alongside him in his Kingdom.—Mark 10:35-40. *w18.06* 8 ¶1-2

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 16)

Mark 16:2-8

Saturday, April 11

*A man will leave his father and
his mother and he will stick to his
wife, and they will become one
flesh.—Gen. 2:24.*

Jehovah wants married couples to develop a love so strong that it lasts for life. (Matt. 19:3-6) Adultery is one of the most unloving crimes a person can commit. With good reason, the seventh of the Ten Commandments prohibited adultery. (Deut. 5:18) It is a sin “against God” and a cruel blow to a marriage mate. (Gen. 39:7-9) A victim of adultery might feel the pain of betrayal for decades. Jehovah also cares deeply about the welfare of children. Jehovah commanded parents to provide not only for their children’s physical needs but also for their spiritual needs. Parents were to take every opportunity to help their children appreciate Jehovah’s Law and learn to love him. (Deut. 6:6-9; 7:13) Parents were to view their children, not as mere property that they could neglect or mistreat, but as an inheritance, a gift from Jehovah to be cherished.—Ps. 127:3. *w19.02* 21 ¶5, 7

Sunday, April 12

God . . . will recognize my integrity.—Job 31:6.

Job kept his integrity by focusing on the hope that God would reward him. He believed that God did care about his integrity. Despite his trials, Job was confident that Jehovah would finally reward him. This confidence surely helped him cling to his integrity. Jehovah was so delighted with Job's integrity that He rewarded him richly while he was still an imperfect man! (Job 42:12-17; Jas. 5:11) And even greater rewards lie ahead for Job. Our God has not changed. (Mal. 3:6) If we remember that he values our integrity, we can keep our hope for a bright future alive in our heart. (1 Thess. 5:8, 9) At times, you may feel lonely in such a course, but you will never be alone. You will be among millions of faithful integrity-keepers around the world. You will also join the ranks of men and women of faith who kept their integrity in the past, even under the threat of death.—Heb. 11:36-38; 12:1. *w19.02 7 ¶15-16*

Monday, April 13

Have unity of mind, fellow feeling, brotherly affection, tender compassion, and humility.—1 Pet. 3:8.

As the Memorial season passes, we do well to ask ourselves the following questions: 'How can I imitate Jesus more closely in showing love? Do I think more about the needs of my fellow worshippers than about my own? Do I expect more from my brothers and sisters than they can give, or am I aware of their limitations?' May we always

imitate Jesus and show "fellow feeling." The requirement to observe the Memorial of Christ's death will not last much longer. When Jesus "comes" during the great tribulation, he will gather his remaining "chosen ones" to heaven, and the Memorial will cease to be commemorated. (1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 24:31) Even after the Memorial meal is no longer observed, we can be sure that Jehovah's people will fondly remember this simple meal as a symbol of the greatest humility, courage, and love ever shown by a human. *w19.01 25 ¶17-19*

Tuesday, April 14

You find pleasure in truth in the inner person; teach my innermost self true wisdom.—Ps. 51:6.

Consider how our physical health illustrates the importance of who we are on the inside. First, to keep ourselves in good condition on the inside, we must choose a healthy diet, and we need to exercise regularly. Likewise, to keep ourselves in good spiritual condition, we must choose a healthy diet of spiritual food and regularly exercise our faith in Jehovah. That form of exercise involves applying what we learn and speaking about our faith. (Rom. 10:8-10; Jas. 2:26) Second, based on outward appearance, we might think that we are healthy even though we are actually diseased on the inside. In a similar way, based on our theocratic routine, we may think that our faith is strong, but wrong desires could be growing in us. (1 Cor. 10:12; Jas. 1:14, 15) We must remember that Satan would like to infect us with his thinking. *w19.01 15 ¶4-5*

Wednesday, April 15

Go and do the same yourself.

—Luke 10:37.

We might ask ourselves: ‘Am I doing the same? Am I doing what the compassionate Samaritan did?’ (Luke 10:30-35) ‘Could I more actively display mercy and engage in positive deeds of kindness toward those who are suffering? For instance, could I offer practical help to older fellow Christians, widows, and those who are spiritually fatherless children? Can I take the initiative to “speak consolingly to those who are depressed?”’ (1 Thess. 5:14; Jas. 1:27) When we display mercy toward others, we enjoy the happiness that results from giving. Moreover, we know that we are pleasing Jehovah. (Acts 20:35; Heb. 13:16) Regarding a person who shows consideration, King David said: “Jehovah will guard him and keep him alive. He will be pronounced happy in the earth.” (Ps. 41:1, 2) Giving expression to our feelings of compassion will also put us in line to receive Jehovah’s mercy, which in turn can result in our being eternally happy. —Jas. 2:13. *w18.09 19 ¶11-12*

Thursday, April 16

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you.—Isa. 41:10.

A faithful Christian sister named Yoshiko received bad news. Her doctor said that she had only a few months to live. How did she react? Yoshiko recalled a favorite Bible verse, today’s text. She then calmly told her doctor that she was not afraid, because Jehovah was grasping her hand. The comforting message found in that verse helped our

dear sister to trust in Jehovah completely. That same verse can help us remain calm when dealing with severe trials. Initially, Jehovah had Isaiah record those words to comfort the Jews who would later be taken to Babylon as exiles. However, Jehovah had that message preserved for the benefit of not only the Jewish exiles but also all his people since that time. (Isa. 40:8; Rom. 15:4) Today, we live in “critical times hard to deal with,” and more than ever, we need the encouragement found in the book of Isaiah.—2 Tim. 3:1. *w19.01 2 ¶1-2*

Friday, April 17

If the unbelieving one chooses to depart, let him depart.

—1 Cor. 7:15.

In such a separation, the two are still marriage mates and, even though living apart, would still face challenges. The apostle Paul gave this reason for staying united: “The unbelieving husband is sanctified in relation to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in relation to the brother; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” (1 Cor. 7:14) Many loyal Christians have remained with an unbelieving mate under very trying circumstances. They can testify that doing so was worthwhile in a special sense when their mate became a true worshipper. (1 Cor. 7:16; 1 Pet. 3:1, 2) Worldwide today, the Christian congregation abounds with successful marriages. You can likely find many happy couples in your local congregation. They are made up of loyal brothers who love their wife and devoted wives who prove to be loving mates, all showing that marriage can be honorable.—Heb. 13:4. *w18.12 14 ¶18-19*

Saturday, April 18

Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, . . . and there he put the man whom he had formed.—Gen. 2:8.

Eden means “Pleasure,” and that garden was indeed pleasant. There was ample food, beautiful scenery, and delightful interaction with many animals. (Gen. 1:29-31) *Pa-ra-dei-sos* is the Greek term that translates the Hebrew word for “garden.” The *Cyclopaedia* by M’Clintock and Strong says about *pa-ra’dei-sos*: “A wide, open park, enclosed against injury, yet with its natural beauty unspoiled, with stately forest-trees, many of them bearing fruit, watered by clear streams, on whose banks roved large herds of antelopes or sheep—this was the scenery which connected itself in the mind of the Greek traveller.” (Compare Genesis 2:15, 16.) God put Adam and Eve in such a paradise, but they disqualified themselves by disobeying God. Thus, Paradise was lost for them and their offspring. (Gen. 3: 23, 24) Though without human occupants, that garden apparently remained until the Deluge of Noah’s day. *w18.12 3-4 ¶3-5*

Sunday, April 19

I, Jehovah, am . . . the One teaching you to benefit yourself.—Isa. 48:17.

Parents endeavor to instill in their children good values. If the children choose to live within the values that they learned from their parents, they will be more likely to make decisions that they will not later regret. As a result, they will be free from many self-induced troubles and anxieties. Like a good parent, Jehovah wants his children to

have the most fulfilling life possible. (Isa. 48:18) He therefore provides basic principles for moral conduct and for behavior toward others. In such matters he invites us to cultivate his very way of thinking and to share his values. Far from constraining us, this enhances, elevates, and expands our thinking ability. (Ps. 92:5; Prov. 2:1-5; Isa. 55:9) It helps us make choices that lead to happiness while still allowing us to blossom as individuals. (Ps. 1:2, 3) Yes, thinking like Jehovah is beneficial and desirable! *w18.11 19-20 ¶7-8*

Monday, April 20

*They speak abusively of you.
—1 Pet. 4:4.*

To continue walking in the truth, we must not give in to pressure from others. When we started to walk in the truth, our relationship with non-Witness associates and family members changed. Some were tolerant; others became outright opposers. Family members, workmates, and schoolmates may try to get us to join them in their celebrations. How can we resist the pressure to conform to customs and holidays that do not honor Jehovah? We can do so by keeping Jehovah’s view of such practices clearly in mind. Reviewing discussions printed in our publications that show the origin of popular holidays can be helpful. When we remind ourselves of the Scriptural reasons for not participating in such holidays, we are convinced that we are walking in the way that “is acceptable to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:10) Trusting in Jehovah and his Word of truth will protect us from “trembling at men.” —Prov. 29:25. *w18.11 11 ¶10, 12*

Tuesday, April 21

Jehovah was with Joseph and Jehovah made whatever he did successful.—Gen. 39:23.

When we are faced with sudden changes, we might easily let worries about the future paralyze our life. This could have happened to Joseph. Instead, he evidently decided to make the best of his situation, thus giving Jehovah something to bless. Although in prison, Joseph worked hard to fulfill any task given him by the chief officer, just as he had done when working for Potiphar. (Gen. 39:21, 22) Like Joseph, we may find ourselves in a situation over which we have little or no control. However, if we remain patient and work hard at making the best of our circumstances, we will give Jehovah something to bless. (Ps. 37:5) True, we may at times feel “perplexed,” but we will never, as the apostle Paul put it, be “left in despair.” (2 Cor. 4:8; ftn.) These words of Paul will come true in our case, especially if we stay focused on our ministry. *w18.10 29 ¶11, 13*

Wednesday, April 22

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

How do you feel when someone you know and respect forgets your name or, worse still, does not even recognize you? Such an experience can be very discouraging. Why? It is because each one of us has a natural desire to be accepted. The type of recognition we desire goes beyond being identified by others; we also want some acknowledgment of who we are and what

we have accomplished. (Num. 11:16; ftn.; Job 31:6) Like many other natural desires, though, our desire to be appreciated can become unbalanced, distorted by our imperfections. It can make us crave inappropriate expressions of recognition. Satan’s world fuels a desire for fame and acknowledgment that distracts attention from the one who truly deserves to be recognized and worshipped, our heavenly Father, Jehovah God.—Rev. 4:11. *w18.07 7 ¶1-2*

Thursday, April 23

*The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.
—1 John 5:19.*

We are not surprised, then, that Satan and his demons would influence men in powerful positions to “speak lies.” (1 Tim. 4:1, 2) Religious leaders who lie are especially guilty because they endanger the future life prospects of those who believe their lies. If an individual accepts a false teaching and practices something that is actually condemned by God, it can cost that person his eternal life. (Hos. 4:9) Jesus knew that the religious leaders in his day were guilty of such deception. He told them to their face: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you travel over sea and dry land to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him a subject for Gehenna [everlasting destruction] twice as much so as yourselves.” (Matt. 23:15; ftn.) Jesus condemned those false religious leaders in the strongest terms. They truly were ‘from their father the Devil, a murderer.’ —John 8:44. *w18.10 7 ¶5-6*

Friday, April 24

Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you . . . for my sake.—Matt. 5:11.

What did Jesus mean? He went on to say: “Rejoice and be overjoyed, since your reward is great in the heavens, for in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you.” (Matt. 5:12) When the apostles were beaten and commanded to stop preaching, “they went out from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing.” Of course, they did not relish the pain of being whipped. Yet, they rejoiced “because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of [Jesus’] name.” (Acts 5:41) In our time, Jehovah’s people also endure with joy when they suffer in behalf of Jesus’ name or when they face difficult trials. (Jas. 1:2-4) Like the apostles, we do not take delight in any kind of suffering. But if we maintain our integrity to God during trials, Jehovah can help us to endure with fortitude. When we have the smile of approval of “the happy God,” we can be happy despite religious persecution or opposition at home.—1 Tim. 1:11. *w18.09 21 ¶18-20*

Saturday, April 25

They are filled with trouble and sorrow.—Ps. 90:10.

Because many in these “critical times” suffer from various degrees of emotional distress, countless individuals feel like just giving up. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Estimates suggest that more than 800,000 people die every year from suicide—about one death every 40 seconds. Sad to say, even some Christians have succumbed to such pressures and have taken their own life. Even if our brothers and sisters do not necessari-

ly feel like giving up, many today deal with stressful situations and need to be built up in love. Some endure persecution and ridicule. Others are the victims of criticism or backbiting at their workplace. Or they are exhausted because of working overtime or having to meet relentless deadlines. Still others deal with strength-sapping domestic problems, perhaps being the target of criticism by an unbelieving mate. As a result of these and other pressures, many in the congregation feel physically and emotionally drained. *w18.09 13 ¶3, 5*

Sunday, April 26

No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth.

—3 John 4.

Christian parents cooperate with Jehovah when they set theocratic goals before their children. Many who have done so have later seen their sons and daughters take up full-time service assignments far from home. Some are missionaries; others pioneer where the need for publishers is greater; still others serve at Bethel. Distance might mean that families cannot get together as often as they would like to. Nevertheless, the self-sacrificing parents encourage their children to persevere in their assignments. Why? They find great joy and satisfaction in knowing that their children are putting Kingdom interests first. Perhaps many of these parents feel like Hannah, who said that she “lent” her son Samuel to Jehovah. These parents rightly view such cooperation as a precious privilege. They would not want things any other way.—1 Sam. 1:28. *w18.08 24 ¶4*

Monday, April 27

It will be difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of the heavens.

—Matt. 19:23.

Jesus did not say that it would be impossible. He also said: “Happy are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.” (Luke 6:20) Yet, this did not mean that all poor people were specially blessed and responded to the teaching of Jesus. Many poor people did not respond. The point is, We simply cannot judge a person’s relationship with Jehovah by his material possessions. We are blessed to have many brothers and sisters, rich and poor, who love and serve Jehovah with a complete heart. The Scriptures instruct those who are rich “to place their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God.” (1 Tim. 6:17-19) At the same time, God’s Word admonishes all of God’s people, rich and poor, to be careful not to love money. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10) Indeed, when we open our eyes and see our brothers as Jehovah sees them, we will not be tempted to judge them solely on what they have or do not have materially. *w18.08 10-11 ¶11-12*

Tuesday, April 28

Subject yourselves to God.

—Jas. 4:7.

Surely we are eager to show our appreciation to Jehovah for the honor of being his people. We see the wisdom in acknowledging his ownership of us by voluntarily dedicating ourselves to him. We take a firm stand against badness. And we love and respect our fellow worshippers, recognizing that they too belong to Jehovah. (Rom. 12:10) The Bible promises: “Jehovah will not

forsake his people.” (Ps. 94:14) This ironclad guarantee is binding despite any calamity that might befall us. Even death cannot stand in the way of Jehovah’s love for us. (Rom. 8:38, 39) “Both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah.” (Rom. 14:8) We eagerly look forward to the day when Jehovah will bring to life all his loyal friends who have died. (Matt. 22:32) Even now we enjoy many blessings. As the Bible says, “happy is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people he has chosen as his own possession.”—Ps. 33:12. *w18.07 26 ¶18-19*

Wednesday, April 29

All things are lawful, but not all things are advantageous.

All things are lawful, but not all things build up.

—1 Cor. 10:23.

Some individuals may feel that since some choices in life, such as education, employment, or career, are personal, they should have the freedom to choose what they please as long as their conscience permits it. Perhaps they have in mind Paul’s words to the Corinthian Christians about food: “Why should my freedom be judged by another person’s conscience?” (1 Cor. 10:29) While it is true that we have the freedom to make these personal choices, we need to remember that our freedom is relative and that all decisions we make have consequences. For that reason, Paul prefaced his statement with the words of today’s text. That certainly helps us to see that there are far more important factors to consider than our own preferences when it comes to exercising personal freedom in all aspects of our life. *w18.04 10 ¶10*

Thursday, April 30

Return to me, and I will return to you.—Mal. 3:7.

A Christian today could be following the wrong path even while professing to worship Jehovah. (Jude 11) For instance, one could nurture immoral fantasies, greedy thoughts, or hateful feelings toward a fellow Christian. (1 John 2:15-17; 3:15) This thinking can lead to sinful actions. All the while, one could be active in the ministry and regular at congregation meetings. Other humans may not be aware of our thoughts and conduct, but Jehovah sees all things and knows if we are not wholeheartedly on his side. (Jer. 17:9, 10) Even so, Jehovah is not quick to give up on us. When a person's steps lead him away from God, Jehovah urges him: "Return to me." Especially when we struggle with weaknesses, Jehovah wants us to take a stand against badness. (Isa. 55:7) If we do, he will in turn prove to be on our side by giving us the spiritual, emotional, and physical strength needed to "get the mastery over" our sinful inclinations. —Gen. 4:7. *w18.07* 18 ¶5-6

Friday, May 1

*Love the foreign resident.
—Deut. 10:19.*

In recent years, many countries have experienced an influx of refugees. Why not learn a greeting in the languages commonly spoken by newcomers in your area? Additionally, why not learn a few phrases that may capture their interest? You might then be able to direct them to jw.org and show them the variety of videos and publications available in their language. Jehovah lovingly

provides the Life and Ministry Meeting so that we can become more effective in the field ministry. The practical instruction we receive at this meeting helps many of us feel more confident about making return visits and conducting Bible studies. Parents, help your children to let their light shine by teaching them to comment in their own words. Their simple, heartfelt expressions have sometimes prompted newly interested ones to recognize the ring of truth.—1 Cor. 14:25. *w18.06* 22-23 ¶7-9

Saturday, May 2

*Welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed you.
—Rom. 15:7.*

It is good to remember that at one time we were all "strangers," or foreigners, not close to God. (Eph. 2:12) But Jehovah drew us to him "with the cords of love." (Hos. 11:4; John 6:44) And Christ welcomed us. He opened the door, as it were, so that we could become part of God's family. Since Jesus has kindly accepted us, as imperfect as we are, it should be unthinkable for us to reject anyone else! Divisions, prejudice, and hostility will doubtless increase in the world as we approach the end of this wicked system. (Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:13) As servants of Jehovah, though, we seek the wisdom from above, which is impartial and promotes peace. (Jas. 3:17, 18) We rejoice as we forge friendships with people from other lands, accepting cultural differences and possibly even learning the languages of others. When we do this, peace flows just like a river, and justice like the waves of the sea. —Isa. 48:17, 18. *w18.06* 12 ¶18-19

Sunday, May 3

[Have] your feet shod in readiness to declare the good news of peace.

—Eph. 6:15.

A Roman soldier who was not wearing his boots was not ready to march into battle. His sandallike boots were made of three layers of leather fastened together that gave him an excellent foothold. The design made the footwear both durable and comfortable. While the literal boots worn by Roman soldiers carried them into war, the symbolic footwear worn by Christians helps them deliver a message of peace. (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15) Even so, it takes courage to speak up when the opportunity arises. “I was afraid to witness to my classmates,” says 20-year-old Bo. “I think I was embarrassed. Looking back, I don’t know why I should have been. Now I’m happy to witness to my peers.” Many young ones have found that if they are well-prepared to declare the good news, they feel more comfortable doing it. *w18.05 29 ¶9-11*

Monday, May 4

Keep bearing much fruit.

—John 15:8.

Jesus told his apostles: “I give you *my* peace.” (John 14:27) How does that gift—his peace—help us to bear fruit? As we endure, we experience in our heart a lasting feeling of peace that results from knowing that we have Jehovah’s and Jesus’ approval. (Ps. 149:4; Rom. 5:3, 4; Col. 3:15) After Jesus stated his desire that the joy experienced by the apostles might “be made full,” he explained to them the importance of showing self-sacrificing

love. (John 15:11-13) Next, he said: “I have called you friends.” What a precious gift to receive—friendship with Jesus! What did the apostles have to do to remain his friends? They had to “*go and keep bearing fruit.*” (John 15:14-16) Some two years earlier, Jesus had instructed his apostles: “As you *go*, preach, saying: ‘The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.’” (Matt. 10:7) So on the last evening before his death, he encouraged them to *endure* in the work they had started. —Matt. 24:13; Mark 3:14. *w18.05 20-21 ¶15-16*

Tuesday, May 5

Whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap.

—Gal. 6:7.

Youths, make up your mind to focus your life on your desire to serve Jehovah. This means centering your life on spiritual goals. Other youths of your age probably center their lives on having a good time, and they will likely invite you to join them. Sooner or later you will need to show how determined you are to stick to the choices you have made. Do not be distracted by peer pressure. There are a number of ways to combat peer pressure. For instance, avoid situations that are known to be tempting. (Prov. 22:3) And remind yourself of the painful consequences of joining others in bad behavior. A further help is to admit your own need for advice. Humility will allow you to be open to suggestions from your parents and spiritually mature ones in the congregation. (1 Pet. 5:5, 6) Are you humble enough to accept sound advice? *w18.04 28-29 ¶14-16*

Wednesday, May 6

Hold fast to what you have until I come. And to the one who conquers and observes my deeds down to the end, I will give authority over the nations.—Rev. 2:25, 26.

In his messages to certain congregations of Asia Minor, Jesus expressed appreciation for the work his followers did. For example, he began his message to the congregation in Thyatira by saying: “I know your deeds, and your love and faith and ministry and endurance, and that your deeds of late are more than those you did at first.” (Rev. 2: 19) Jesus not only mentioned their increased activity but also commended them for the qualities that motivated their good deeds. Although Jesus needed to counsel some in Thyatira, he still began and ended his message with encouragement. (Rev. 2:27, 28) Think of the authority Jesus has as head of all the congregations. He does not have to thank us for the work we do for him. Even so, he makes a point of expressing appreciation. What an excellent example he sets for elders!
w19.02 16 ¶10

Thursday, May 7

Judas and Silas . . . encouraged the brothers with many talks and strengthened them.—Acts 15:32.

The first-century governing body proved to be a source of encouragement both to those taking the lead and to Christians in general. They sent two of their number, Peter and John, to pray for the new believers to receive holy spirit. (Acts 8:5, 14-17) How Philip himself as well as those he had converted must have been encouraged by this support

from the governing body! Today, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses gives encouragement to Bethel family members, to special full-time field workers, and indeed, to the entire international brotherhood of true Christians. And the result is the same as in the first century—rejoicing over the encouragement! In addition, in 2015 the Governing Body published the brochure *Return to Jehovah*, which has proved to be a rich source of encouragement to many throughout the world. *w18.04 19 ¶18-20*

Friday, May 8

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.—John 8:32.

People may think that the more freedom they have, the better off they will be, but the reality is that having unbounded freedom is a two-edged sword. We shudder to imagine what the world would be like if there were no restraints at all. For this reason, *The World Book Encyclopedia* states: “The laws of every organized society form a complicated pattern of balanced freedoms and restrictions.” “Complicated” is surely the right word. Just think of the volumes and volumes of laws written by man, let alone the armies of lawyers and judges needed to interpret and administer them. Jesus' direction for gaining true freedom involves two requirements: First, accept the truth that he taught, and second, become his disciple. Doing so will lead to true freedom. But freedom from what? Jesus went on to explain: “Every doer of sin is a slave of sin. . . . If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.”—John 8:34, 36. *w18.04 6-7 ¶13-14*

Saturday, May 9

All of you have . . . fellow feeling.

—1 Pet. 3:8.

We enjoy being around people who care about our feelings and welfare. They try to put themselves in our place, to discern what we are thinking and feeling. They anticipate our needs and offer help—sometimes even before we ask for it. We appreciate people who show that they have “fellow feeling” for us. As Christians, we all want to show empathy, or fellow feeling. Realistically, though, we may need to work at it. Why? For one thing, we are imperfect. (Rom. 3:23) So we must fight the inborn tendency to think mainly of ourselves. Also, some of us may struggle to show empathy because of our upbringing or past circumstances. Finally, we could be influenced by the attitude of people around us. In these last days, many do not consider the feelings of others. Rather, they are “lovers of themselves.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 2) However, we can improve in showing fellow feeling by imitating Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ. *w19.03* 14 ¶1-3

Sunday, May 10

Safeguard your heart.

—Prov. 4:23.

The last of the Ten Commandments prohibited coveting, or developing a wrong desire for what belongs to another. (Deut. 5:21; Rom. 7:7) Jehovah gave this law to teach a valuable lesson—his people must guard their heart, that is, their thoughts, feelings, and reasonings. He knows that wicked acts begin as wicked thoughts and feelings. King David, for example, fell into that trap. Normally, he was a good man. But on one occasion, he cov-

eted another man’s wife. His desire led to sin. (Jas. 1:14, 15) David committed adultery, tried to deceive the woman’s husband, and then had him killed. (2 Sam. 11:2-4; 12:7-11) Jehovah sees beyond a person’s outward appearance. He sees what we really are inside, in our heart. (1 Sam. 16:7) No thought, no feeling, no action can be kept secret from him. He looks for and encourages the good in us. But he wants us to identify and control wrong thoughts before they become wrong actions. —2 Chron. 16:9; Matt. 5:27-30. *w19.02* 21 ¶9; 22 ¶11

Monday, May 11

Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth . . . Seek meekness.

—Zeph. 2:3.

The Bible describes Moses as being “by far the meekest of all the men on the face of the earth.” (Num. 12:3) Does this mean that he was weak, indecisive, and afraid of confrontations? That is how some might describe a meek person. But such an idea is far from the truth. Moses was a strong, decisive, and courageous servant of God. With Jehovah’s help, he confronted the mighty ruler of Egypt, led perhaps 3,000,000 people through a desert, and helped the nation of Israel conquer their enemies. We do not face the challenges that Moses overcame, but each day we must deal with people or situations that make it difficult to be meek. However, we have a powerful incentive to develop this quality. Jehovah promises that “the meek will possess the earth.” (Ps. 37:11) Would you describe yourself as being meek? Would others describe you that way? *w19.02* 8 ¶1-2

Tuesday, May 12

*Woe to those who say that . . .
bad is good.—Isa. 5:20.*

Humans have had a conscience ever since man has been on the earth. After Adam and Eve broke Jehovah's law, they hid themselves. This indicates that their conscience was bothering them. Those with a poorly trained conscience can be likened to a ship that is navigating with a defective compass. Setting off on a journey without an accurate compass can be treacherous. The winds and currents of the ocean can easily throw a ship off course. A properly calibrated compass can help the captain to keep the ship on course. Our conscience can be likened to a moral compass. It is an inner sense of right or wrong that can guide us in the right direction. But in order for our conscience to be an effective guide, it must be properly adjusted, or calibrated. When a person's conscience is not properly trained, it does not act as a restraint from wrongdoing. (1 Tim. 4:1, 2) Such a conscience might even convince us that "bad is good." *w18.06 16 ¶1-3*

Wednesday, May 13

*Stop being molded by this system
of things.—Rom. 12:2.*

We do well to recognize and reject worldly thinking when it is presented in less obvious ways. For example, a news report might be angled in such a way so as to favor certain political opinions. A human interest story might advance the world's view of human goals and achievements. Some movies and books promote the "me first" and "family first" philosophies, making them seem reasonable, appealing, even right.

Such viewpoints overlook the Scriptural view that our families and self-worth thrive when we love Jehovah above all. (Matt. 22:36-39) This does not mean that it is wrong to enjoy wholesome entertainment. Still, we do well to ask ourselves these questions: 'Do we recognize the world's teachings even when they are promoted indirectly? Do we limit our children's exposure—and even our own—to certain programs or reading material? Do we counteract worldly ideas heard or seen by our children with Jehovah's view of matters?' *w18.11 22 ¶18-19*

Thursday, May 14

*Do not be afraid, for I am
with you.—Isa. 41:10.*

Jehovah shows that he is with us by giving us his full attention and his warm affection. Note how he expresses his tender and deep feelings for us. "You became *precious* in my eyes," says Jehovah. "You were *honored*, and I have *loved* you." (Isa. 43:4) No force in the universe can make Jehovah abandon his love for those who serve him; his loyalty to us is unshakable. (Isa. 54:10) Jehovah does not promise to remove the challenges that make life difficult, but he will not allow "the rivers" of problems to drown us or "the flame" of trials to do us any permanent damage. He guarantees that he will be with us, helping us to "pass through" those challenges. What will Jehovah do? He will help quiet our fears so that we can maintain our integrity to him, even if we face death. (Isa. 41:13; 43:2) When we trust in God's promise "I will be with you," we too will be courageous and strong as we endure trials. *w19.01 3 ¶4-6*

Friday, May 15

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of Jehovah is what will prevail.—Prov. 19:21.

If you are a young person, you may have been encouraged by teachers, guidance counselors, or others to pursue higher education and a lucrative career. Jehovah, however, advises you to take a different course. To be sure, he wants you to work hard while you are at school so that you are able to earn a living after you graduate. (Col. 3:23) But when you are deciding on your priorities in life, he encourages you to be guided by sound principles that take into account his purpose and his will for us during this time of the end. (Matt. 24:14) Jehovah knows what lies ahead for the present world, and he knows how soon its end will come. (Isa. 46:10; Matt. 24:3, 36) He also knows us—what gives us true satisfaction and happiness as well as what leads us to disappointment and unhappiness. So no matter how reasonable human advice may seem, if it does not take God's Word into account, it is not wisdom at all. *w18.12 19 ¶1-2*

Saturday, May 16

*The wicked will be no more.
—Ps. 37:10.*

Instead, “the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.” David was also inspired to predict: “The righteous will possess the earth, and *they will live forever on it.*” (Ps. 37:11, 29; 2 Sam. 23:2) What effect do you think those assurances had on people who wanted to do God's will? They would have a basis for expecting that if only righ-

teous people were living on earth, in time a paradise like the garden of Eden would be restored. Over time, most Israelites claiming to serve Jehovah turned their backs on him and on true worship. So God let the Babylonians conquer his people, ruin their land, and carry many of them into exile. (2 Chron. 36:15-21; Jer. 4:22-27) Still, God's prophets foretold that after 70 years, his people would return to their homeland. Those prophecies were fulfilled. But they also have meaning for us—a coming paradise on earth. *w18.12 4 ¶9-10*

Sunday, May 17

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.—Isa. 55:9.

Much worldly advice is in conflict with the Scriptures. Still, might some of it be more suited to our times? “Wisdom is proved righteous by its works,” said Jesus. (Matt. 11:19) The world has made considerable advancement in technology; however, it has been unable to solve the major problems that stand in the way of happiness, such as war, racism, and crime. And what of its lenient view of morality? Many people acknowledge that this is, not solving, but contributing to family breakdown, illness, and other troubles. On the other hand, Christians who adopt God's viewpoint are enjoying improved family relationships, the healthful benefits of moral cleanness, and peace among fellow believers on a worldwide scale. (Isa. 2:4; Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) Does this not show that Jehovah's thinking is superior to that of the world? *w18.11 20 ¶8-10*

Monday, May 18

Bad associations spoil useful habits.—1 Cor. 15:33.

Although we endeavor to have good relations with family members and treat them kindly, we must be careful not to compromise the truth to please them. While we will continue to try to get along well with family members, we will have close friendships only with those who love Jehovah. All who walk in the truth must be holy. (Isa. 35:8; 1 Pet. 1:14-16) When coming into the truth, all of us had to make adjustments to conform to the Bible's righteous standards. Some had to undergo major changes. Whichever the case, we must never trade our pure, holy condition for the immoral filth of this world. How can we avoid succumbing to immoral conduct? Reflect on the high price that Jehovah paid in order for us to be holy—the precious blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:18, 19) To maintain our clean standing before Jehovah, we need to keep the value of Jesus' ransom sacrifice foremost in our mind and heart. *w18.11 11 ¶10-11*

Tuesday, May 19

I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.—Mic. 7:7.

Many full-time servants can testify that focusing on the ministry helped them to maintain their balance despite changing circumstances. As their examples show, if we make the best of our circumstances and wait confidently on Jehovah, we will maintain our inner peace. We may even realize that we have derived much spiritual benefit from adjusting to a new set of

circumstances. If life takes an unexpected turn—whether as a result of a change in our theocratic assignments, health problems, or new family responsibilities—be assured that Jehovah cares for you and will help you at the right time. (Heb. 4:16; 1 Pet. 5:6, 7) In the meantime, try to make the best of your situation. Draw close to your heavenly Father through prayer, and learn to leave yourself in his caring hands. In this way, you too will maintain inner peace despite changing circumstances. *w18.10 30 ¶17; 31 ¶19, 22*

Wednesday, May 20

[Jehovah] well knows how we are formed, remembering that we are dust.—Ps. 103:14.

The Bible provides many examples of the considerate way in which Jehovah deals with his servants. For instance, note the thoughtful way that God helped young Samuel to deliver a judgment message to High Priest Eli as recorded at 1 Samuel 3:1-18. Jehovah's Law commanded children to respect the aged, especially a chieftain. (Ex. 22:28; Lev. 19:32) Can you imagine Samuel going up to Eli in the morning and boldly telling him God's stinging judgment message? Of course not! Indeed, the account tells us that Samuel "was afraid to tell Eli of the vision." However, God made clear to Eli that He was calling Samuel. As a result, Eli took charge of the situation and told Samuel to speak and not to hide "a single word." Samuel obediently "told him everything," and his words harmonized with an earlier message. (1 Sam. 2:27-36) The account involving Samuel and Eli shows us how considerate and wise Jehovah is. *w18.09 23 ¶2; 24 ¶4-5*

Thursday, May 21

O Jehovah, who may be a guest in your tent? . . . The one who is . . . speaking the truth in his heart.

—Ps. 15:1, 2.

Spreading lies has become commonplace in today's society. As stated in the article "Why We Lie" by Y. Bhattacharjee, "lying has come to be recognized as a deeply ingrained human trait." People often resort to lying either to protect themselves or to promote themselves. They lie to cover up their mistakes and misdeeds or to gain economic and personal advantages. As the article states, there are people who "lie with ease, in ways big and small, to strangers, co-workers, friends, and loved ones." What is the result of all this lying? Trust is lost and relationships can be ruined. The psalmist David prayed to Jehovah: "You find pleasure in truth in the inner person." (Ps. 51:6) David knew that our being truthful comes from the inside, from our heart. In every aspect of life, true Christians "speak the truth with one another."—Zech. 8:16. *w18.10* 7 ¶4; 8 ¶9-10; 10 ¶19

Friday, May 22

*He led them in security,
and they felt no fear.*

—Ps. 78:53.

When the Israelites left Egypt in 1513 B.C.E., they may have numbered more than three million. Spanning three or even four generations, there were children, elderly ones, and no doubt some who were infirm or disabled. To lead such a vast crowd out of Egypt certainly called for an understanding and thoughtful Leader. Jehovah, by means of Moses, proved to be such.

As a result, the Israelites felt safe as they left the only home they had ever known. (Ps. 78:52) How did Jehovah make his people feel safe and secure? For one thing, he led them out of Egypt in well-organized "battle formation." (Ex. 13:18) Such organization surely reassured the Israelites that their God was in control. Also, Jehovah made his presence visibly manifest by means of "a cloud by day and . . . the light of a fire" at night. (Ps. 78:14) In effect, Jehovah was saying: "Do not be afraid. I am with you to guide and protect you." *w18.09* 26 ¶11-12

Saturday, May 23

O that in the Grave you would conceal me, . . . that you would set a time limit for me and remember me.—Job 14:13.

Back in Bible times, some of God's faithful servants were so overwhelmed by their circumstances that they felt that they wanted to die. For example, pain-ridden Job lamented: "I loathe my life; I do not want to go on living." (Job 7:16) Jonah was so disappointed with the way things had turned out in his assignment that he said: "Now, O Jehovah, please take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4:3) Also, at one point the faithful prophet Elijah felt so affected by his situation that he asked that he might die. He said: "It is enough! Now, O Jehovah, take my life away." (1 Ki. 19:4) However, Jehovah valued those devoted servants and wanted them to live. Instead of condemning how they felt, he helped them to overcome their desire to die and built them up in love so that they could continue serving him faithfully. *w18.09* 13 ¶4

Sunday, May 24

We are God's fellow workers.

—1 Cor. 3:9.

God's fellow workers are noted for practicing hospitality. In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the term translated "hospitality" means "kindness to strangers." (Heb. 13:2; fn.) God's Word recounts events that teach us to show such love. (Gen. 18:1-5) We can and should seize opportunities to help others regularly, whether they are "related to us in the faith" or not. (Gal. 6:10) Can you work with God by showing hospitality to visiting full-time servants? (3 John 5, 8) Such occasions often provide an opportunity for "an interchange of encouragement." (Rom. 1:11, 12) God's Word encourages men in the congregation to work with Jehovah by reaching out for privileges of service and oversight. (1 Tim. 3:1, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Those who do so want to assist others in both practical and spiritual matters. (Acts 6:1-4) And those who care for necessary congregation duties will tell you that it is most enjoyable to assist others. *w18.08 24 ¶6-7; 25 ¶10*

Monday, May 25

Do not severely criticize an older man. On the contrary, appeal to him as a father.—1 Tim. 5:1.

Although Timothy had a measure of authority over such older brothers, he was to treat them with compassion and respect. However, how far would we take that principle? For example, should we feel obligated to defer to someone older if he is willfully sinning or is advocating something displeasing to Jeho-

vah? Jehovah will not judge by the outward appearance and will not excuse a willful sinner simply because he is older. Note the principle found at Isaiah 65:20: "The sinner will be cursed, even though he is a hundred years of age." A similar principle is demonstrated in Ezekiel's vision. (Ezek. 9:5-7) Thus, our main concern must always be to show respect for the Ancient of Days, Jehovah God. (Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14) If we do so, we will not be afraid to correct a person needing counsel, regardless of his age. —Gal. 6:1. *w18.08 11 ¶13-14*

Tuesday, May 26

The naive person believes every word, but the shrewd one ponders each step.—Prov. 14:15.

As true Christians, we need to develop the ability to evaluate information and reach accurate conclusions. (Prov. 3:21-23; 8:4, 5) If we do not cultivate this ability, we will be far more vulnerable to the efforts of Satan and his world to distort our thinking. (Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8) Of course, only if we have the facts can we reach right conclusions. Today, people are bombarded with information. Internet websites, television, and other mass media present a seemingly unending array of ideas. Many people are also flooded with e-mails, text messages, and reports from well-meaning friends and acquaintances. Since the deliberate spreading of wrong information and the distorting of facts are common, we have good reason to be cautious and to evaluate carefully what we hear. *w18.08 3 ¶1, 3*

Wednesday, May 27

You have found favor with God.

—*Luke 1:30.*

When it came time for God's Son to be born as a human, Jehovah selected a humble virgin girl, Mary, to be the mother of this special child. Mary lived in the insignificant city of Nazareth, far from Jerusalem and its magnificent temple. (Luke 1:26-33) Mary revealed her deep spirituality when she later spoke to her relative Elizabeth. (Luke 1:46-55) Yes, Jehovah had been observing Mary, and he granted her this unexpected privilege because of her faithfulness. When Mary eventually gave birth to Jesus, Jehovah did not honor any of the prominent officials or rulers in Jerusalem and Bethlehem by letting them know what had happened. Angels appeared to lowly shepherds who were caring for sheep in the fields outside Bethlehem. (Luke 2:8-14) These shepherds then visited the newborn baby. (Luke 2:15-17) How pleasantly surprised Mary and Joseph must have been to see Jesus honored in such a manner! *w18.07 9-10 ¶11-12*

Thursday, May 28

Jehovah became furious at Solomon.—*1 Ki. 11:9.*

Why was Jehovah's anger raised against Solomon? The Bible reports: "Because his heart had inclined away from Jehovah . . . , who had appeared to him twice and had warned him about this very thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not obey what Jehovah had commanded." As a result, God withdrew his approval and support. Solomon's heirs lost the unified kingdom of Israel and suffered many

calamities for generations to come. (1 Ki. 11:9-13) As in Solomon's case, one of the greatest threats to spirituality is friendship with those who do not understand or respect Jehovah's standards. Some may be associated with the congregation but may be spiritually weak. Others could be relatives, neighbors, coworkers, or schoolmates who are not worshippers of Jehovah. In any case, if our close associates do not show a high regard for Jehovah's standards, they can in time destroy our good standing with God. *w18.07 19 ¶9-10*

Friday, May 29

The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.
—*1 John 5:19.*

Satan uses movies and television shows to spread his way of thinking. He understands that storytelling does much more than entertain us; it teaches us how to think, feel, and act. Jesus made good use of this method of teaching. Take, for example, his parables of the neighborly Samaritan and of the son who left home and wasted his inheritance. (Matt. 13:34; Luke 10:29-37; 15:11-32) However, those who are infected with Satan's thinking can use storytelling to corrupt us. We need to be balanced. Movies and TV shows can entertain and educate us without contaminating our thinking. But we must be cautious. When choosing entertainment, we do well to ask ourselves, 'Is this movie or TV show teaching me that it is all right to give in to my fleshly desires?' (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 2:1-3) What should you do if you detect that a program is promoting satanic thinking? Avoid it as you would a contagious disease! *w19.01 15-16 ¶6-7*

Saturday, May 30

Accept the helmet of salvation.

—Eph. 6:17.

Just as a helmet protects a soldier's brain, our "hope of salvation" protects our mind, our thinking ability. (1 Thess. 5:8; Prov. 3:21) How could Satan induce us to remove our helmet? Consider the way he dealt with Jesus. Satan surely knew that Jesus had the hope of eventually ruling mankind. But Jesus would have to wait until Jehovah's appointed time. And before then, he would have to suffer and die. So Satan offered Jesus the chance to fulfill his hope sooner. Satan suggested that if Jesus would do one act of worship, he could have it all and have it right then. (Luke 4:5-7) Similarly, Satan knows that Jehovah offers us material benefits in the new system. But we have to wait, and we might have to suffer hardships in the meantime. So Satan offers us tempting opportunities to enjoy such a life now. He wants us to seek material benefits first—to have it all and have it now. Satan urges us to seek the Kingdom second.—Matt. 6:31-33. *w18.05* 30-31 ¶15-17

Sunday, May 31

Let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.—Eccl. 11:9.

Yes, Jehovah wants you as a young person to have a joyful heart. Keep yourself focused on theocratic goals, including Jehovah in all your plans. The earlier you start to do this, the sooner you will sense Jehovah's guidance, protection, and blessing. Think of all the sound counsel you find in God's Word, and take to heart the advice: "Remem-

ber, then, your Grand Creator in the days of your youth." (Eccl. 12:1) Young people in the congregation deserve warm commendation for being determined to focus their lives on serving Jehovah. Youths do this by reaching out for spiritual goals and by giving the preaching work high priority. Moreover, they make up their mind not to be distracted by this world. Adolescents can be sure that their hard work is not in vain. They have the loving support of their brothers and sisters, and when they commit themselves to Jehovah, their plans in life will succeed. *w18.04* 29 ¶17, 19

Monday, June 1

No matter what you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you.—John 15:16.

How strengthening this promise must have been for the apostles! Though they did not clearly grasp it, their Leader's life on earth would soon end, but they would not be left without support. Jehovah was ready to answer their prayers for any help they needed to carry out the command to preach the Kingdom message. And indeed, shortly thereafter, they experienced how Jehovah answered their prayers for help. (Acts 4:29, 31) The same is true today. As we endure in bearing fruit, we enjoy Jesus' friendship. Furthermore, we can be sure that Jehovah is ready to answer our prayers for help in overcoming obstacles that we may encounter as we preach the Kingdom good news. (Phil. 4:13) How grateful we are to be blessed with answered prayers and friendship with Jesus! These gifts from Jehovah strengthen us to keep on bearing fruit.—Jas. 1:17. *w18.05* 21 ¶17-18

Tuesday, June 2

Let us [encourage] one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.—Heb. 10:24, 25.

Within just five years, Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem would see a “day of Jehovah” approaching and recognize the sign Jesus had given them to flee for their lives from that city. (Acts 2:19, 20; Luke 21:20-22) That day of Jehovah arrived in 70 C.E. when the Romans executed Jehovah’s judgment on Jerusalem. Today, we have every reason to believe that the “great and very awe-inspiring” day of Jehovah is near. (Joel 2:11) The prophet Zephaniah said: “The great day of Jehovah is near! It is near and it is approaching very quickly!” (Zeph. 1:14) That prophetic warning also applies to our time. In view of the proximity of Jehovah’s day, Paul tells us to “be concerned about one another so as to incite to love and fine works.” (Heb. 10:24, ftn.) We should, therefore, be increasingly interested in our brothers, so that we can encourage them whenever needed. *w18.04 20 ¶1-2*

Wednesday, June 3

Be courageous and strong. Do not be struck with terror or fear, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.—Josh. 1:9.

What reassuring encouragement Jehovah gave Joshua before settling His people in the Promised Land! Not only did Jehovah encourage individuals but he also gave words of encouragement to his people as a group. In prophetic terms this would prove to be of comfort to the Jews held captive in Babylon, Jehovah stated: “Do not be afraid,

for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you, I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness.” (Isa. 41:10) The early Christians had the same assurance, and so do God’s people today. (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) Jesus himself received encouragement from his Father. At his baptism, Jesus heard a voice from heaven say: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matt. 3:17) How those words must have strengthened Jesus throughout his earthly ministry! *w18.04 16 ¶3-5*

Thursday, June 4

As for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it.—Gen. 2:17.

Upon reading Jehovah’s command to Adam, many today would say that Adam was denied the freedom to do what he wanted. In saying so, they are confusing the exercise of one’s free will with the right to *decide* what is good and what is bad. Adam and Eve did have the freedom to choose whether they would obey God or not. However, only Jehovah has the right to decide in the absolute sense what is good and what is bad, as symbolized by “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad” in the garden of Eden. (Gen. 2:9) By means of his command, Jehovah lovingly taught Adam and Eve the way to exercise true freedom. As it turned out, our first parents chose to disobey. Did Adam and Eve’s choice eventually enhance their freedom in any way? Sadly, it did not. In striving for self-determination, they lost the true freedom they had been given. *w18.04 5-6 ¶9-12*

Friday, June 5

During all their distress it was distressing to him.—Isa. 63:9.

Jehovah does more than just feel compassion for his servants who suffer. He takes action to help them. For example, when the Israelites were suffering as slaves in Egypt, Jehovah understood their pain and felt moved to relieve it. Jehovah said to Moses: “I have certainly seen the affliction of my people . . . , and I have heard their outcry . . . I well know the pains they suffer. I will go down to rescue them out of the hand of the Egyptians.” (Ex. 3:7, 8) Because Jehovah felt compassion for his people, he freed them from slavery. Centuries later, in the Promised Land, the Israelites faced enemy attacks. How did Jehovah respond? He “was moved to pity over their groaning caused by those who oppressed them and those who were treating them abusively.” Again, empathy moved Jehovah to help his people. He sent judges to save the Israelites from their enemies.—Judg. 2:16, 18. *w19.03 15 ¶4-5*

Saturday, June 6

Can a woman forget her nursing child or have no compassion for the son of her womb? Even if these women forget, I would never forget you.—Isa. 49:15.

The first two of the Ten Commandments required that the Israelites devote themselves exclusively to Jehovah and warned against the worship of idols. (Ex. 20:3-6) Those commandments were not for Jehovah's benefit. Rather, they were for the benefit of his people. When they worshipped the gods of other na-

tions, they suffered. By contrast, Jehovah blessed his people when they were loyal to him and treated one another justly. (1 Ki. 10:4-9) Jehovah is not to blame when those who claim to serve him ignore his standards and harm his people. However, Jehovah loves us and knows when we suffer injustice. He feels our pain more keenly than a mother feels the suffering of her baby. Although he may not intervene immediately, in due time he will hold unrepentant wrongdoers to account for the way they have treated others. *w19.02 22 ¶13-15*

Sunday, June 7

Let, not my will, but yours take place.—Luke 22:42.

In the weeks leading up to the Memorial, our meetings often focus on the example of Jesus and the humility he showed in giving his life as a ransom. We are moved to imitate his humble attitude and to do Jehovah's will, even when it is difficult for us. We think about the courage he showed on the days before his death. He was fully aware that his enemies would soon humiliate, beat, and execute him. (Matt. 20:17-19) Still, he willingly faced death. When the time came, he said to his faithful apostles, who were with him in Gethsemane: “Get up, let us go. Look! My betrayer has drawn near.” (Matt. 26:36, 46) And when the armed mob came to arrest him, he stepped forward, identified himself, and ordered the soldiers to let his apostles go. (John 18:3-8) What outstanding courage Jesus displayed! Today, anointed Christians and those of the other sheep strive to imitate Jesus in showing courage. *w19.01 27-28 ¶7-8*

Monday, June 8

Seek meekness.—Zeph. 2:3.

Just as an artist combines a number of appealing colors to produce a painting, we must combine a number of appealing qualities to be meek. Prominent among those qualities are humility, submissiveness, mildness, and inner strength. Only humble people will submit to God's will. Part of God's will is that we be mild. (Matt. 5:5; Gal. 5:23) When we do God's will, we make Satan furious. So even though we are humble and mild, many people who are part of Satan's world hate us. (John 15:18, 19) As a result, we need inner strength to resist Satan. The opposite of a meek person is someone who is haughty, shows uncontrolled anger, and does not obey Jehovah. That describes Satan perfectly. No wonder he hates meek people! They expose the flaws in his personality. And even worse for Satan, they prove that he is a liar. Why? Because no matter what he says or does, he cannot stop meek people from serving Jehovah!—Job 2:3-5. *w19.02* 8-9 ¶3-5

Tuesday, June 9

Do not be anxious, for I am your God.—Isa. 41:10.

Jehovah knew that the inhabitants of Babylon would become afraid. Babylon would be attacked by the mighty armies of Medo-Persia. Jehovah would use this army to free his people from captivity to Babylon. (Isa. 41:2-4) When the Babylonians and people of other nations knew that their enemy was approaching, they tried to maintain their courage by saying to one another: "Be strong." They also made more idol gods, hoping that these would

protect them. (Isa. 41:5-7) Meanwhile, Jehovah calmed the hearts of the Jewish exiles by saying: "You, O Israel, [unlike your neighbors] are my servant . . . Do not be anxious, for I am your God." (Isa. 41:8-10) Note that Jehovah said: "I *am* your God." With those words, Jehovah reassured his loyal worshippers that he had not forgotten them and that they were still his people. He told them: "I will carry you . . . and rescue you." Those reassuring words no doubt strengthened the Jewish exiles.—Isa. 46:3, 4. *w19.01* 4 ¶8

Wednesday, June 10

*A voice came out of the heavens:
"You are my Son, the beloved;
I have approved you."
—Mark 1:11.*

Mark 1:9-11 records the first of three occasions when Jehovah spoke from heaven. Jehovah said: "You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you." How it must have touched Jesus' heart to hear his Father's voice expressing love and reassurance to him! Jehovah's words confirmed three important facts about Jesus. First, Jesus is his Son. Second, Jehovah loves his Son. And third, Jehovah has approved his Son. By saying "You are my Son," Jehovah indicated that his beloved Son, Jesus, had entered into a new relationship with Him. While Jesus was in heaven, he was a spirit son of God. However, at his baptism, he was anointed by holy spirit. At that time, God indicated that Jesus as His anointed Son now had the hope of returning to heaven to become God's appointed King and High Priest. (Luke 1:31-33; Heb. 1:8, 9; 2:17) So at Jesus' baptism, his Father had good reason to say: "You are my Son."—Luke 3:22. *w19.03* 8 ¶3-4

Thursday, June 11

There is no wisdom . . . in opposition to Jehovah.—Prov. 21:30.

Bad advice has its roots very early in human history when Satan entered the scene. A presumptuous, self-appointed adviser, he told Eve that she and her husband would be happier if they chose their own course in life. (Gen. 3:1-6) Satan's motives were selfish. He wanted Adam and Eve—and their future offspring—to submit to and worship *him* rather than worship Jehovah. But it was Jehovah who had given them everything they had—each other, their beautiful garden home, and their perfect bodies with the potential of living forever. Sadly, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, cutting themselves off from him. The results, as you know, were tragic. Like flowers cut from a plant, they slowly began to wither and die. Their children also suffered from the curse of sin. (Rom. 5:12) Even so, most people still choose not to submit to God. They want to live life their own way. (Eph. 2:1-3) The results clearly show the truthfulness of today's text. *w18.12 20 ¶3-4*

Friday, June 12

We . . . speak, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, as we explain spiritual matters with spiritual words.—1 Cor. 2:13.

The apostle Paul was an intelligent and learned man, knowing at least two languages. (Acts 5:34; 21:37, 39; 22:2, 3) Yet, when it came to matters of principle, he rejected worldly wisdom. Instead, he based his reasoning on the Scriptures. (Acts 17:2; 1 Cor. 2:6, 7) As a re-

sult, Paul enjoyed a successful ministry and anticipated an eternal reward. (2 Tim. 4:8) Certainly, God's thinking is superior to that of today's world. Living by his thoughts will bring us the greatest happiness and success. But Jehovah will not force his thinking on us. "The faithful and discreet slave" does not exercise control over the thoughts of individuals, and neither do the elders. (Matt. 24:45; 2 Cor. 1:24) Rather, each Christian has the personal responsibility to bring his or her thinking into harmony with God's. *w18.11 20-21 ¶12-13*

Saturday, June 13

Grief and sighing will flee away.
—Isa. 35:10.

God foretold through Isaiah that after His people returned to their homeland, they would not have to struggle against harsh, dangerous elements; nor would they need to fear attacks from animals or beast-like men. Young and old would be safe. (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:5-10; 51:3) Isaiah also said that the *whole earth*—not just the nation of Israel—would "be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah further emphasized that the returnees would not be threatened by animals or humans. Their land would produce abundant fruit, made possible by an ample supply of water, even as the garden of Eden was well-watered. (Gen. 2:10-14; Jer. 31:12) Would that be the only fulfillment? There is no evidence that those returning from exile were miraculously cured. For example, the blind did not regain their sight. So God was indicating that literal healings would yet occur. *w18.12 5 ¶11-12*

Sunday, June 14

Go on walking in the truth.

—3 John 3.

Walking in the truth is an ongoing process, a path that we hope to follow throughout eternity. How can we strengthen our determination to go on walking in the truth? Continue to study the precious truths of God's Word and meditate on them. Yes, buy truth by regularly setting aside time to feed on the precious truths of God's Word. You will thus deepen your appreciation for the truth and strengthen your resolve never to sell it. In addition to buying truth, Proverbs 23:23 says that we should also buy "wisdom and discipline and understanding." Knowledge alone is not enough. We must put the truth to work in our lives. With understanding, we discern the harmony of all of Jehovah's sayings. Wisdom moves us to act on what we know. At times, the truth disciplines us, showing us where we need to make changes. May we always be responsive to such guidance. Its value is far more than silver.—Prov. 8:10. *w18.11 9 ¶3; 11 ¶13-14*

Monday, June 15

Buy truth and never sell it.

—Prov. 23:23.

What is your most precious possession? Would you be willing to exchange it for something of lesser value? For Jehovah's dedicated worshippers, the answers to these questions are simple. Our most precious possession is our relationship with Jehovah, and we would not trade it for anything. We also treasure Bible truth, which made cultivating that bond with our heavenly Father possible. (Col. 1:9, 10) Just think of all

that our Grand Instructor teaches us in his Word, the Bible! He reveals the truth about his meaningful name and his appealing qualities. He informs us about the outstanding provision of the ransom, which he lovingly provided for us by means of his Son, Jesus. Jehovah also informs us about the Messianic Kingdom and the hope of the earthly Paradise. He teaches us how we should conduct ourselves. We treasure these truths because they enable us to draw close to our Creator. They give meaning to our life. *w18.11 3 ¶1-2*

Tuesday, June 16

Do not lie to one another.

—Col. 3:9.

Deceitful people cannot keep anything secret from Jehovah, for "all things are naked and openly exposed" to him. (Heb. 4:13) As an example, Ananias and Sapphira schemed in their hearts to deceive the apostles. They sold some property but brought only part of the proceeds of the sale to the apostles. The couple wanted to make themselves look good in the congregation, appearing to be more generous with their donation than they really were. Yet, Jehovah could see what they had done, and he punished them accordingly. (Acts 5:1-10) How does Jehovah feel about lying? Satan as well as all unrepentant, malicious liars who imitate him are heading for "the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:10; 21:8; Ps. 5:6) We know that Jehovah "is not a mere man who tells lies." In fact, "it is impossible for God to lie." (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18) "Jehovah hates . . . a lying tongue." (Prov. 6:16, 17) To have his approval, we must live by his standard of truthfulness. *w18.10 8 ¶10-13*

Wednesday, June 17

Ponder over these things.

—1 Tim. 4:15.

Suppose your employer asked you to contribute funds for an upcoming celebration connected with false religion. What would you do? Rather than wait for these situations to arise, why not give thought *now* to Jehovah's thinking on such matters? Then, should any of these situations occur, you will find it easier to do and say the right thing. Giving advance thought to the need to remain loyal can also prove helpful in the event of a medical emergency. While we are firmly resolved to avoid the transfusion of whole blood or any of its four major components, some procedures involving blood require making a personal decision based on Bible principles that indicate Jehovah's thinking. (Acts 15:28, 29) Surely the best time to weigh such matters is not in a hospital, possibly when we are in pain and under pressure to make a quick decision. Now would be the time to do research, complete a legal medical document indicating your wishes, and speak with your doctor. *w18.11 24 ¶5; 26 ¶15-16*

Thursday, June 18

The one listening to me will dwell in security.—Prov. 1:33.

Jehovah is a loving shepherd who tenderly embraces his people, protecting them from their enemies. How reassuring these truths are to us as we face the end of the present system of things! Jehovah will continue to care for his people during the fast-approaching great tribulation. (Rev. 7:9, 10) Hence, whether young or old, sound in body or

disabled, God's people will not panic or cower in fear during the tribulation. In fact, they will do the very opposite! They will bear in mind these words of Jesus Christ: "Stand up straight and lift up your heads, because your deliverance is getting near." (Luke 21:28) They will maintain that confidence even in the face of the attack by Gog—a coalition of powerful nations. (Ezek. 38:2, 14-16) Why will God's people remain confident? They know that Jehovah does not change. He will always prove to be a caring and considerate Savior. —Isa. 26:20. *w18.09 26 ¶15-16*

Friday, June 19

*You became precious in my eyes,
. . . and I have loved you.*

—Isa. 43:4.

How encouraging it must have been for faithful Israelites to hear Jehovah's words above. As one of Jehovah's servants, you too can be sure that Jehovah loves you most tenderly. God's Word promises concerning those pursuing pure worship: "As a mighty One, he will save. He will exult over you with great joy." (Zeph. 3:16, 17) No matter what trials his people may face, Jehovah promises to sustain and comfort them. "You will nurse and be carried on the hip, and you will be bounced on the knees. As a mother comforts her son, so I will keep comforting you." (Isa. 66:12, 13) What a heartwarming scene—a loving mother carrying a baby on her hip or bouncing him on her knees! In this way Jehovah touchingly illustrates the intensity and tenderness of his love for true worshippers. Never doubt that you are personally very precious and dear to Jehovah. —Jer. 31:3. *w18.09 13 ¶6-7*

Saturday, June 20

Who volunteers to come forward today with a gift in hand for Jehovah?—1 Chron. 29:5.

On various occasions in the history of ancient Israel, volunteers were needed. (Ex. 36:2; Neh. 11:2) Today, you also have many opportunities to volunteer your time, resources, and skills to help your brothers and sisters. And you will feel great joy and receive many blessings from making yourself available. Those who volunteer for theocratic projects often make new friends. Consider the example of Margie, a sister who has worked on Kingdom Hall construction projects for 18 years. Over the years, she has taken several younger sisters under her wing to give them training. She has found the experience to be an excellent way of encouraging one another spiritually. (Rom. 1:12) During trying periods of her life, Margie has received encouragement from those whose friendships she forged on construction projects. Have you ever volunteered for such a construction project? *w18.08 25 ¶9, 11*

Sunday, June 21

Never let anyone look down on your youth. Instead, become an example to the faithful ones in speaking, in conduct, in love, in faith, in chasteness.—1 Tim. 4:12.

At the time that Paul wrote these words, Timothy may have been in his early 30's. Yet, Paul had assigned him to care for weighty responsibilities. Regardless of the underlying reason for this counsel, the point is clear. We must not judge younger brothers simply based on

their age. We do well to remember that even our Lord Jesus carried out his entire earthly ministry while he was in his early 30's. We may be part of a culture that tends to look down on younger men. If so, elders in the congregation may hesitate to recommend qualified young brothers to serve as ministerial servants or elders. All elders do well to remember that the Scriptures do not give a minimum age for a man to be recommended as a ministerial servant or an elder.—1 Tim. 3:1-10, 12, 13; Titus 1:5-9. *w18.08 11-12 ¶15-16*

Monday, June 22

[Turn] away from . . . the falsely called "knowledge."—1 Tim. 6:20.

To make good decisions, we need solid facts. Therefore, we need to be highly selective and to choose carefully what information we will read. (Phil. 4:8, 9) We should not waste our time viewing questionable Internet news sites or reading unsubstantiated reports circulated via e-mail. It is especially important to avoid websites promoted by apostates. Their whole purpose is to tear down God's people and to distort the truth. Poor quality information will lead to poor decisions. Never underestimate the powerful effect that misleading information can have on your mind and heart. Consider what happened in Moses' time when 10 of the 12 spies who were sent to explore the Promised Land brought back a bad report. (Num. 13:25-33) Their exaggerated and outrageous account completely disheartened Jehovah's people. (Num. 14:1-4, 6-10) Instead of getting the facts and showing confidence in Jehovah, they chose to believe the bad report. *w18.08 4 ¶4-5*

Tuesday, June 23

Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits.—1 Cor. 15:33.

Most people have some good qualities, and many outside the congregation do not engage in blatant misconduct. If that is true of your acquaintances, can you assume that they are good associations? Ask yourself what effect their companionship will have on your relationship with Jehovah. Will they improve it? What is in their heart? For example, are their conversations almost exclusively about fashion, money, gadgets, entertainment, or other material pursuits? Does their speech often include disparaging comments about others or obscene jesting? Jesus aptly warned: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt. 12:34) If you realize that your associates pose a threat to your good standing with Jehovah, act decisively by limiting and if necessary ending such friendships.—Prov. 13:20. *w18.07* 19 ¶11

Wednesday, June 24

Moses was by far the meekest of all the men.—Num. 12:3.

When Moses was 80 years old, Jehovah assigned him to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt. (Ex. 3:10) Several times, Moses tried to excuse himself. But Jehovah remained patient and even empowered Moses to perform miracles. (Ex. 4:2-9, 21) He could have frightened Moses into speedy submission. Instead, Jehovah was patient and kind, making an effort to reassure his modest and humble servant. Did this considerate approach

work? Absolutely! Moses became an outstanding leader who tried to deal with others in the same mild and considerate way that Jehovah dealt with him. If you have a measure of authority, how important it is that you imitate Jehovah by being considerate, kind, and patient when dealing with those under your care! (Col. 3:19-21; 1 Pet. 5:1-3) When you strive to imitate Jehovah and the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, you will be both approachable and refreshing to others.—Matt. 11:28, 29. *w18.09* 24-25 ¶7-10

Thursday, June 25

How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!—Ps. 133:1.

Why not be resolved to have a positive influence, promoting unity among your brothers and sisters? If you are already doing so, that is commendable. Could you "widen out," that is, do it to a greater extent and more consistently? (2 Cor. 6:11-13, ftn.) What about increasing your efforts to let the light of Bible truth shine in your neighborhood? Your kind words and deeds may well attract a neighbor to the truth. Ask yourself: 'How do my neighbors view me? Do I keep my home and property tidy, thus reflecting well on the neighborhood? Do I take the initiative to be helpful to others?' When you are in conversation with other Witnesses, why not draw them out on how their kindness and good conduct have affected relatives, neighbors, workmates, or schoolmates? It is quite likely that you will hear positive experiences.—Eph. 5:9. *w18.06* 24 ¶13-14

Friday, June 26

The hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he has offered a sacred service to God.

—John 16:2.

That warning was true of those who murdered the disciple Stephen, and it has been true of others like them. (Acts 6:8, 12; 7:54-60) How ironic that in committing such evil crimes as murder, religious fanatics violate the very laws of the One whom they claim to worship! (Ex. 20:13) Clearly, their consciences are treacherous guides! How can we prevent our conscience from becoming ineffective? The laws and principles contained in God's Word are "beneficial for teaching, for re-proving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16) Therefore, by diligently studying the Bible, meditating on what it says, and applying it in our lives, we can train our conscience to be more sensitive to God's thinking, and it can thus serve as a reliable guide. *w18.06* 16-17 ¶3-4

Saturday, June 27

Accept . . . the sword of the spirit, that is, God's word.—Eph. 6:17.

The sword used by Roman infantrymen at the time Paul wrote his letter was about 20 inches (50 cm) long and was designed for hand-to-hand combat. One reason that Roman soldiers were so effective is that they practiced with their weapons every day. Paul likens God's Word to a sword that Jehovah has given us. But we must learn to use it skillfully when defending our beliefs—or when adjusting our own thinking. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5; 2 Tim. 2:

15) There is no need to feel intimidated by Satan and the demons. They are formidable but not unbeatable. And they are mortal. Soon, during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, they will be confined to a state of complete inactivity, after which they will be destroyed. (Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10) We know our enemy, his tactics, and his intentions. With Jehovah's help, we can stand firm against him! *w18.05* 30 ¶15; 31 ¶19-21

Sunday, June 28

The serpent said to the woman:

"You certainly will not die."

—Gen. 3:4.

Adam no doubt knew that serpents cannot talk. So he may have surmised that a spirit creature had spoken with Eve through the serpent. (Gen. 3:1-6) Adam and Eve knew virtually nothing about this spirit. Even so, Adam made a conscious choice to turn his back on his loving heavenly Father and join this stranger in resisting God's will. (1 Tim. 2:14) Immediately, Jehovah began to reveal information about this enemy who had corrupted Adam and Eve, promising that this wicked one would eventually be destroyed. But Jehovah also warned that for a time, the spirit creature who spoke through the serpent would have the power to oppose those who love God. (Gen. 3:15) In his wisdom, Jehovah has never told us the personal name of the angelic son who rebelled against him. And God chose not to reveal even the descriptive name of that enemy until some 2,500 years after the initial rebellion.—Job 1:6. *w18.05* 22 ¶1-2

Monday, June 29

These are the ones who . . . bear fruit with endurance.

—Luke 8:15.

If you have ever felt discouraged when preaching in less responsive territories, you will relate to the apostle Paul. During his approximately 30-year-long ministry, he helped numerous individuals to become disciples of Christ. (Acts 14: 21; 2 Cor. 3:2, 3) Still, he did not succeed in moving many Jews to become true worshippers. On the contrary, most rebuffed Paul, and some even persecuted him. (Acts 14:19; 17:1, 4, 5, 13) How did that adverse reaction from the Jews affect Paul? He freely admitted: "I am telling the truth in Christ . . . I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart." (Rom. 9:1-3) Why did Paul experience such feelings? His heart was in the preaching work. He preached to the Jews out of deep concern for them. So it pained Paul to see them reject God's mercy. Like Paul, we preach to people out of heartfelt concern.—Matt. 22: 39; 1 Cor. 11:1. *w18.05* 13 ¶4-5

Tuesday, June 30

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a good word cheers it up.—Prov. 12:25.

Paul showed that even one who has the responsibility of encouraging others needs to be built up himself. To Christians living in Rome, he wrote: "I am longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you for you to be made firm; or, rather, that we may have an interchange of encouragement by one another's faith, both yours and

mine." (Rom. 1:11, 12) Yes, Paul, who gave outstanding encouragement to others, at times needed to be built up himself. (Rom. 15:30-32) Those who live a life of self-sacrifice should be commended. Brothers and sisters who remain single because they want to obey the admonition to marry "only in the Lord" make up another group that merits encouragement. (1 Cor. 7:39) Also, Christians who remain faithful through persecution or illness need to hear encouragement.—2 Thess. 1:3-5. *w18.04* 21 ¶3-5

Wednesday, July 1

Keep perceiving what the will of Jehovah is.—Eph. 5:17.

We are living in "critical times" that are "hard to deal with," and life is going to become even more difficult before a new day dawns and true peace is restored to this earth. (2 Tim. 3:1) So we do well to ask ourselves, "Where am I looking for help and direction?" Centuries ago, a psalmist acknowledged the need for us to raise our eyes to Jehovah for help in times of need. (Ps. 123: 1-4) He compared our looking to Jehovah with the way a servant looks to his master. What did the psalmist mean by that? Well, not only does a servant look to his master for food and protection but the servant needs constantly to watch his master to discern his wishes and then to carry them out. In a similar way, we daily need to search God's Word to ascertain what Jehovah's will is for us personally and then to follow that direction. Only then can we be sure that Jehovah will show us favor in our time of need. *w18.07* 12 ¶1-2

Thursday, July 2

If the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.—John 8:36.

Jesus was talking about liberation from the greatest bondage and oppression that humankind has ever experienced—being “a slave of sin.” (John 8:34) Not only can sin lead us to doing what is bad but it can also prevent us from doing what we know is right or from living up to what we know we are capable of. In that sense we are slaves of sin, and the outcome is frustration, pain, suffering, and finally death. (Rom. 6:23) It is only when the shackles of sin are thrown off that we can hope to have the true freedom that our first human parents once enjoyed. Jesus’ statement “if you remain in my word” implies that there are certain requirements or boundaries for being set free by him. (John 8:31) As dedicated Christians, we have disowned ourselves and have chosen to live within the bounds of Christ’s teachings as his disciples. (Matt. 16:24) Just as Jesus promised, we will be truly free when the benefits of his ransom sacrifice are fully applied to us. *w18.04 7 ¶14-16*

Friday, July 3

You alone truly know the human heart.—2 Chron. 6:30.

Jehovah shows consideration for the feelings of his people—even when their thinking is not always sound. Consider the case of Jonah. God sent this prophet to proclaim a message of judgment against the Ninevites. When they repented, God chose to spare them. However, Jonah was not happy about this outcome. He “became hot with anger” because his prophecy of doom did not come true. But Jehovah was pa-

tient with Jonah and helped him to adjust his thinking. (Jonah 3:10-4:11) In time, Jonah got the point, and he was even used by Jehovah to record this account for our benefit. (Rom. 15:4) Jehovah’s dealings with his people assure us that he has empathy for his servants. He is aware of the pain and suffering of each one of us. He understands our intimate thoughts, our deepest emotions, and our limitations. And “he will not let [us] be tempted beyond what [we] can bear.” (1 Cor. 10:13) How comforting that assurance is! *w19.03 16 ¶6-7*

Saturday, July 4

All things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of the one to whom we must give an account.—Heb. 4:13.

Under the Mosaic Law, appointed older men were responsible for handling not only spiritual matters but also civil and criminal cases. Consider a few examples. If an Israelite killed someone, he was not arbitrarily executed. The elders of his city would investigate the circumstances before deciding if the death penalty was appropriate. (Deut. 19:2-7, 11-13) The elders also judged numerous aspects of daily life—from resolving public controversies over property to settling private marital disputes. (Ex. 21:35; Deut. 22:13-19) When the elders were fair and the Israelites obeyed the Law, everyone benefited, and the nation brought honor to Jehovah. (Lev. 20:7, 8; Isa. 48:17, 18) From this we see that every aspect of our life is important to Jehovah. He wants us to be just and loving when dealing with others. And he takes notice of what we say and do, even in the privacy of our home. *w19.02 23 ¶16-18*

Sunday, July 5

He let himself be afflicted, but he would not open his mouth.

—Isa. 53:7.

When we are under stress, it is difficult to be meek. Our words may become harsh and our tone cold. If you have ever felt stressed, consider the example of Jesus. During the final months of his life on earth, Jesus was under intense stress. He knew that he would be executed and that he would suffer terribly. (John 3:14, 15; Gal. 3:13) Some months before his death, he said that he was distressed. (Luke 12:50) And just days before his death, Jesus said: "I am troubled." We can sense his humility and his submissiveness to God as he poured out his feelings in prayer. (John 12:27, 28) When the time came, Jesus courageously handed himself over to God's enemies, who executed him in the most agonizing and humiliating way possible. Despite the stress, despite the suffering, Jesus meekly did God's will. Without a doubt, we can say that Jesus is the most outstanding example of someone showing meekness under stress!—Isa. 53:10. *w19.02 11 ¶14-15*

Monday, July 6

Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works.

—Heb. 10:24.

To attend meetings regularly, we may need to demonstrate courage in the face of difficult circumstances. Some of our brothers and sisters attend meetings despite being burdened by grief, discouragement, or health problems. Others courageously attend meetings despite strong opposition from family members or governmental authori-

ties. Think for a moment about how our example affects our brothers who are imprisoned for their faith. (Heb. 13:3) When they hear that we keep serving Jehovah in spite of our trials, they are strengthened to maintain their faith, courage, and integrity. When Paul was in prison in Rome, he rejoiced whenever he heard that his brothers were serving God faithfully. (Phil. 1:3-5, 12-14) Shortly before or just after his release, Paul wrote his letter to the Hebrews. In that letter he urged those faithful Christians to never forsake meeting together.—Heb. 10:25. *w19.01 28 ¶19*

Tuesday, July 7

The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.

—1 John 5:19.

Satan wants us to become like him—a rebel who ignores Jehovah's standards and is motivated by selfishness. He surrounds us with people who are already corrupted by him and hopes that they will "spoil" or "corrupt" the way we think and act. (1 Cor. 15:33; ftn.) Satan also tries to infect our heart by getting us to trust human wisdom rather than Jehovah's thinking. (Col. 2:8) Consider just one idea promoted by Satan—that getting rich should be a primary goal in life. Those who think this way might become wealthy, or they might not. Either way, they are in danger. Why? Because they may become so focused on making money that they will sacrifice their health, their family relationships, and even their friendship with God just to reach their goal. (1 Tim. 6:10) We can be grateful that our wise heavenly Father helps us to have a balanced view of money.—Eccl. 7:12; Luke 12:15. *w19.01 15 ¶6; 17 ¶9*

Wednesday, July 8

Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.—Matt. 25:21.

Even before Jehovah's Son came to earth and set a perfect example of how to impart encouragement, faithful servants of Jehovah were conscious of the need to be encouraging. When threatened by the Assyrians, Hezekiah assembled the military chiefs and the people of Judah to encourage them. "And the people were strengthened by [his] words." (2 Chron. 32:6-8) Although in need of consolation himself, Job gave his three "troublesome comforters" a lesson in giving encouragement. He told them that if he had been in their place, he 'would have strengthened them with the words of his mouth, and the consolation of his lips would have brought them relief.' (Job 16:1-5) Finally, Job received encouragement from Elihu and from Jehovah himself.—Job 33: 24, 25; 36:1, 11; 42:7, 10. *w18.04* 16 ¶6; 17 ¶8-9

Thursday, July 9

I will fortify you, yes, I will help you.—Isa. 41:10.

Isaiah had already described how Jehovah would fortify, or strengthen, his people, saying: "Jehovah will come with power, and *his arm* will rule for him." (Isa. 40:10) The Bible often uses the word "arm" symbolically to signify power. So the statement that Jehovah's "arm will rule" reminds us that Jehovah is a powerful King. He used his unbeatable strength to support and defend his servants in the past, and he contin-

ues to strengthen and protect those who trust in him today. (Deut. 1: 30, 31; Isa. 43:10, ftn.) Especially when enemies persecute us, Jehovah keeps his promise: "I will fortify you." In some parts of the world today, our enemies are trying hard to stop our preaching work or ban our organization. Even so, we are not overly anxious about such attacks. Jehovah has given us a guarantee that fills us with strength and confidence. He promises us: "No weapon formed against you will have any success."—Isa. 54:17. *w19.01* 5-6 ¶12-13

Friday, July 10

Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.—Matt. 5:3.

Unlike the animals, you have a spiritual need, which only your Creator can satisfy. (Matt. 4:4) When you listen appreciatively to him, you gain insight, wisdom, and happiness. God satisfies your spiritual need by means of his Word and the abundance of spiritual food that he provides through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matt. 24:45) And how varied and rich that food is! (Isa. 65:13, 14) The spiritual food that God provides will give you wisdom and thinking ability, which can protect you in many ways. (Prov. 2: 10-14) For example, these qualities open your eyes to false teachings, such as the view that there is no Creator. They protect you against the lie that money and possessions are the key to happiness. And they help you to recognize and resist wrong desires and self-destructive behavior. So continue to search for godly wisdom and thinking ability, viewing them as treasures! *w18.12* 20 ¶6-7

Saturday, July 11

The days of my people will be like the days of a tree.—Isa. 65:22.

Will the time come when our days “will be like the days of a tree”? Some trees live thousands of years. Humans would have to be healthy in order to have lifespans of such length. If they could live in the conditions that Isaiah foretold, it would be a dream come true, a paradise! And that prophecy will be fulfilled! Reflect on how the promises point to a future paradise: People of the whole earth will be blessed by God. No one will face danger from animals or beastlike humans. The blind, deaf, and lame will be cured. People will be able to build their own homes and enjoy growing wholesome food. They will live longer than trees. Yes, we find indications in the Bible that such a future is ahead. Still, some might claim that we are reading more into those prophecies than is justified. What solid reason do you have to look forward to a real paradise on earth? The greatest man who ever lived provided a solid reason.—Luke 23:43. *w18.12 5 ¶13-15*

Sunday, July 12

Be transformed by making your mind over.—Rom. 12:2.

The mind is flexible and can keep changing. To a large extent, any such changes will be determined by what we allow into our mind and what we choose to dwell on. By dwelling or meditating on Jehovah’s way of thinking, we can prove to ourselves that his viewpoints are right. It will then be our natural desire to bring our thoughts into alignment with his. Note, however, that in order to make our mind

over to Jehovah’s way of thinking, we need to “stop being molded by this system.” We must stop taking into our minds ideas or viewpoints that are in opposition to God’s. The importance of this preliminary step can be illustrated with food. A person might seek to improve his health by eating food that is nutritious. But of what value would that be if he is also ingesting regular doses of contaminated food? Similarly, feeding on Jehovah’s thoughts will be of limited value if we are corrupting our mind with worldly ideas. *w18.11 21 ¶14-15*

Monday, July 13

Stand firm . . . with the belt of truth fastened around your waist.—Eph. 6:14.

We must be firmly resolved to live in harmony with the truth day by day. Wear the belt of truth around your waist. In Bible times, the belt of a soldier supported and protected his waist and his internal organs. For his belt to provide protection, however, it had to be tight. A loose belt gave little support. How does our spiritual belt of truth protect us? If we keep it wrapped tightly around us like a belt, the truth will guard us from faulty reasoning and will help us to make sound decisions. When we are tempted or under trial, Bible truth will strengthen our resolve to do what is right. Just as a soldier would never have thought of going into battle without his belt, we must be determined never to loosen or remove our belt of truth. Rather, we do all we can to keep it tight around our body by living in harmony with the truth. *w18.11 12 ¶15*

Tuesday, July 14

Buy truth and never sell it.

—Prov. 23:23.

We do not find the truth in God's Word without effort. We must be willing to make whatever sacrifices are needed to obtain it. As the wise writer of Proverbs notes, once we "buy," or acquire, "truth," we must be careful not to "sell," or lose, it. Even something that is free may come at a cost. The Hebrew word translated "buy" at Proverbs 23:23 can also mean "acquire." Both words imply making an effort or exchanging something for an item of value. We might illustrate the idea of buying truth this way. Let us say that a market advertises "Free Bananas." Will those bananas miraculously appear on our table? No. We have to make the effort to go to the market to pick them up. Are the bananas free? Yes, but we must expend the effort and take the time to go to the market. Similarly, we do not need money to buy truth. However, we must make an effort to obtain it. *w18.11 4 ¶4-5*

Wednesday, July 15

His face shone as the sun, and his outer garments became brilliant.

—Matt. 17:2.

Jesus had invited Peter, James, and John to accompany him up into a high mountain. While there, they saw a remarkable vision. Jesus' face shone brightly and his clothes glistened. Two figures, representing Moses and Elijah, began talking to Jesus about his coming death and resurrection. (Luke 9:29-32) Next, a bright cloud covered them, and they heard a voice from the

cloud—God's voice! The vision gave a preview of Jesus' future glory and power as King of God's Kingdom. No doubt, Christ was encouraged and fortified for the sufferings and painful death he would endure. The vision also built up the disciples' faith and strengthened them for the tests of integrity and years of hard work that lay ahead. Some 30 years later, the apostle Peter referred to the vision of the transfiguration, showing that the vision was still vivid in his mind.—2 Pet. 1:16-18. *w19.03 10 ¶7-8*

Thursday, July 16

We recommend ourselves as God's ministers, . . . by truthful speech.

—2 Cor. 6:4, 7.

What is one way that true Christians distinguish themselves from members of false religions? We "speak the truth." (Zech. 8:16, 17) We will tell the truth in ways big and small—to strangers, coworkers, friends, and loved ones. What if you are a young person who wants to fit in with your peers? Make sure that you never lead a double life, appearing to be chaste when around family and the congregation but acting entirely different when around worldly youths and on social media. That is living a lie, playing false to your parents, to fellow worshippers, and to God. (Ps. 26:4, 5) Jehovah knows when we are only 'honoring him with our lips, but our heart is far removed from him.' (Mark 7:6) How much better it is to do as the proverb says: "Let your heart not envy sinners, but be in the fear of Jehovah all day long."—Prov. 23:17. *w18.10 9 ¶14-15*

Friday, July 17

God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in union with God and God remains in union with him.—1 John 4:16.

God's people are a spiritual family—one marked by love. (1 John 4:21) That love is usually reflected, not in rare heroic acts, but in countless smaller ways, such as by thoughtful words and kind deeds. When we treat others kindly and considerately, we “become imitators of God, as beloved children.” (Eph. 5:1) Jesus perfectly imitated his Father. “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down,” said Jesus, “and I will refresh you . . . , for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart.” (Matt. 11:28, 29) When we imitate Christ's example by “[showing] consideration to the lowly one,” we receive our heavenly Father's favor and find great happiness. (Ps. 41:1) So, let us manifest our love by continuing to show consideration for others in the family, in the congregation, and in the field ministry. *w18.09 28 ¶1-2*

Saturday, July 18

We are God's fellow workers.
—1 Cor. 3:9.

When disasters strike, God's people have opportunities to work with God by helping their brothers in practical ways. For example, they give financial support to those affected. (John 13:34, 35; Acts 11:27-30) Another practical way is by assisting with cleaning or reconstruction. Gabriela, a sister from Poland whose home was virtually destroyed by a flood, cheered up when brothers from nearby congre-

gations came to her aid. “I don't want to talk about what I lost—those are just material things,” she relates. “Rather, I want to tell you how much I gained. This experience reassured me that being a part of the Christian congregation is a unique privilege as well as a source of joy and happiness.” Many who receive help after a disaster say that they feel richer from the experience. And those who work with Jehovah to provide such help enjoy great satisfaction themselves.—Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7. *w18.08 26 ¶12*

Sunday, July 19

Safeguard your heart.
—Prov. 4:23.

If we are to succeed in safeguarding our heart, we must be able to identify dangers and react quickly to protect ourselves. The word translated “safeguard” reminds us of the work done by a watchman. In King Solomon's day, watchmen stood guard on the walls of a city and sounded an alarm if they saw danger approaching. That mental picture helps us understand what we must do to stop Satan from corrupting our thinking. In ancient times, watchmen worked closely with city gatekeepers. (2 Sam. 18:24-26) Together, they helped protect the city by making sure that the gates were closed whenever an enemy came near. (Neh. 7:1-3) Our Bible-trained conscience can act as our watchman and warn us when Satan tries to invade our heart—in other words, when he tries to influence our thoughts, feelings, motives, or desires. Whenever our conscience sounds the alarm, we need to listen and shut the gate, so to speak. *w19.01 17 ¶10-11*

Monday, July 20

Let them serve as ministers, as they are free from accusation.

—1 Tim. 3:10.

Younger men must be evaluated, not by personal or cultural viewpoints, but by the measuring stick of God's Word. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Unscriptural cultural views can hold back qualified brothers. In one country, a well-qualified ministerial servant was entrusted with weighty responsibilities. Although the elders in his congregation agreed that the young brother met the Scriptural qualifications of an elder to a reasonable degree, he was not recommended for appointment. A few older elders insisted that the brother looked too young to be viewed as an elder. Sadly, the brother was held back from appointment simply because of the way he looked. Reports indicate that this way of thinking affects many in various parts of the world. How important it is that we rely on the Scriptures rather than on our own viewpoints! That is the only way to obey Jesus and stop judging by the outward appearance.—John 7:24. *w18.08 12 ¶16-17*

Tuesday, July 21

When anyone replies to a matter before he hears the facts, it is foolish and humiliating.—Prov. 18:13.

There is danger in quickly forwarding e-mails and text messages. In some lands, our work is under restriction or outright ban. Our opposers in such lands may purposely circulate reports designed to instill fear or to cause us to distrust one another. Consider what happened in the former Soviet Union. The se-

cret police, known as the KGB, spread rumors that various prominent brothers had betrayed Jehovah's people. Many put confidence in such false reports, and as a result, they separated themselves from Jehovah's organization. How sad! Thankfully, many later returned, but some never did. Their faith was shipwrecked. (1 Tim. 1:19) How can we avoid such a disastrous outcome? Refuse to circulate negative or unsubstantiated reports. Do not be naive, or gullible. Be sure you have the facts. *w18.08 4 ¶8*

Wednesday, July 22

Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise.—Luke 23:43.

In the earliest available Greek manuscripts, punctuation was not consistently used. Thus, the question arises: Was Jesus saying, "I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise"? Or was he saying, "I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise"? Recall that Jesus had earlier told his followers: "The Son of man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:22, 23; Mark 10:34; Acts 10:39, 40) So Jesus did not go to any Paradise on the day he and that criminal died. Jesus was "in the Grave [or "Hades"]" for days, until God resurrected him. (Acts 2:31, 32; ftn.) That dying criminal did not know that Jesus had made a covenant with his faithful apostles to be with him in the heavenly Kingdom. (Luke 22: 29) Furthermore, that criminal had not even been baptized. (John 3: 3-6, 12) Thus, what Jesus promised must be an *earthly* paradise that was to be fulfilled later. *w18.12 6 ¶17-18, 20-21*

Thursday, July 23

Make for us a god who will go ahead of us, because we do not know what has happened to this Moses.—Ex. 32:1.

Soon the Israelites were worshipping a golden calf! Despite this obvious act of disobedience, the Israelites somehow fooled themselves into thinking that they were still on Jehovah's side. Why, Aaron even called their calf worship "a festival to Jehovah"! How did Jehovah react? He felt betrayed. Jehovah told Moses that the people had "corrupted themselves" and had "deviated from the way [He] commanded them to go." In his "burning anger," Jehovah even considered wiping out the newly formed nation of Israel. (Ex. 32:5-10) However, Jehovah decided not to eliminate the Israelites. (Ex. 32:14) Although initially involved in setting up the idol, Aaron repented and joined the rest of the Levites who declared themselves to be on Jehovah's side. While thousands lost their lives because of their idolatry, those who were on Jehovah's side were promised a blessing.—Ex. 32:26-29. *w18.07* 20 ¶13-16

Friday, July 24

Beware of the scribes . . . who love greetings in the marketplaces . . . and the most prominent places at evening meals.—Luke 20:46.

What is the greatest form of recognition that we can strive for? It is not the kind of attention that people seek in the academic, business, and entertainment fields of this world. Rather, it is the kind that Paul described for us in these words: "Now that you have come to know God

or, rather, have *come to be known by God*, how is it that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly elementary things and want to slave for them over again?" (Gal. 4:9) What a wonderful privilege it is to "come to be known by God," the Supreme Ruler of the universe! He is willing to have an intimate relationship with us. As one scholar stated, we "become objects of his favourable attention." When Jehovah acknowledges us as his friends, we achieve the very reason for our existence.—Eccl. 12:13, 14. *w18.07* 8 ¶3-4

Saturday, July 25

I ponder over your reminders.

—Ps. 119:99.

In order to benefit from God's laws, we must grow to love and respect them. (Amos 5:15) But how do we actually do that? A key is to learn to view things the way Jehovah views them. To illustrate: Imagine that you are having difficulty sleeping well. Your doctor prescribes a program involving diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes. After trying the program, you find that it works! You probably would greatly appreciate your doctor for helping you to improve the quality of your life. In like manner, our Creator has given us laws that can protect us from the damaging effects of sin and thus improve our life. Think about how we benefit from following the Bible's laws about lying, scheming, stealing, sexual immorality, violence, and spiritism. (Prov. 6:16-19; Rev. 21:8) When we experience the rich rewards that come from doing things Jehovah's way, our heart naturally grows in love and appreciation for both Jehovah and his laws. *w18.06* 17 ¶5-6

Sunday, July 26

Are you the King of the Jews?

—*John 18:33.*

Perhaps the governor feared that Jesus could cause political unrest, a principal concern throughout Pilate's rule. Jesus answered: "My Kingdom is no part of this world." (John 18:36) He would not get involved in politics, for his Kingdom was to be a heavenly one. He told Pilate that his work on earth was to "bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37) When we understand our assignment as clearly as Jesus understood his, we will avoid even lending tacit, or unspoken, support for political independence movements. This may not be easy. "People in our area are becoming more and more radical," notes one traveling overseer. "A nationalistic spirit has taken over, and many take for granted that political independence will improve their lives. Thankfully, the brothers have safeguarded their Christian unity by concentrating on preaching the good news of the Kingdom. They look to God to solve injustice and the other problems we face." *w18.06* 4-5 ¶6-7

Monday, July 27

Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you.—*Jas. 4:7.*

Only three books of the Hebrew Scriptures, 1 Chronicles, Job, and Zechariah, mention Satan, which means "Resister." Why was little said about our enemy prior to the arrival of the Messiah? Apparently, Jehovah did not want to give Satan undue prominence by devoting large portions of the Hebrew Scriptures to discussing him and his activity. Jehovah's primary purpose for inspiring that section of the Scriptures

was to identify the Messiah and lead God's people to him. (Luke 24:44; Gal. 3:24) When that was accomplished and the Messiah arrived, Jehovah used him and his disciples to reveal much of what we know about Satan and the angels who joined him. That is fitting, since it is Jesus and his anointed co-rulers whom Jehovah will use to crush Satan and his followers. (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 17:14; 20:10) Remember, the Devil's power is limited. We are backed by Jehovah, Jesus, and the faithful angels. With their help, we can resist our enemy. *w18.05* 22-23 ¶2-4

Tuesday, July 28

He takes away every branch in me not bearing fruit.—*John 15:2.*

Jehovah views us as his servants *only if we bear fruit.* (Matt. 13:23; 21:43) Hence, in the illustration found at John 15:1-5, the fruitage that each Christian *must* bear cannot refer to new disciples whom we may be privileged to make. (Matt. 28:19) Otherwise, faithful Witnesses who do not succeed in making disciples because of preaching in an unresponsive territory would be like the barren branches in Jesus' illustration. However, such a conclusion is unthinkable! Why? Because we cannot force people to become disciples. It would go against Jehovah's loving ways to disqualify his servants for failing to do something that is beyond their reach. Whatever Jehovah asks of us is always reachable. (Deut. 30:11-14) What, then, is the fruit we must bear? Clearly, the fruit must refer to an activity that each of us is able to carry out. What activity? The preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom.—Matt. 24:14. *w18.05* 14 ¶8-9

Wednesday, July 29

You are from your father the Devil, . . . a liar and the father of the lie.—John 8:44.

Whether called pastors, priests, rabbis, swamis, or by some other title, religious leaders abound in the world today. Like their first-century counterparts, they are “suppressing the truth” from God’s Word and have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie.” (Rom. 1:18, 25) They promote such false teachings as “once saved, always saved,” the immortality of the human soul, reincarnation, and the foolish idea that God would condone homosexual lifestyles and same-sex marriages. Politicians have used lies to mislead mankind. One of the biggest lies is yet to be heard when men proclaim that they have achieved “peace and security!” But “then sudden destruction is to be instantly on them.” May we not be taken in by their attempt to minimize how precarious this system of things really is! In truth, we “know very well that Jehovah’s day is coming exactly as a thief in the night.”—1 Thess. 5:1-4. *w18.10 7-8 ¶6-8*

Thursday, July 30

You must assist those who are weak and must keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, when he himself said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35.

Jesus Christ, through his anointed brothers and supportive “princes” of the other sheep, provides encouragement and guidance to despondent and discouraged ones in this time of need. That is as it should be, for these elders are not “mas-

ters” over the faith of others but “are fellow workers” for the joy of their brothers. (Isa. 32:1, 2; 2 Cor. 1:24) The apostle Paul set an example to be imitated. He wrote to the persecuted Christians in Thessalonica: “Having tender affection for you, we were determined to impart to you, not only the good news of God but also our very selves, because you became so beloved to us.” (1 Thess. 2:8) Showing that just a word of encouragement does not always suffice, Paul told the elders from Ephesus the words of today’s text. *w18.04 21-22 ¶6-8*

Friday, July 31

Jehovah is the Spirit, and where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.—2 Cor. 3:17.

To enjoy and benefit from that freedom, we must ‘turn to Jehovah,’ that is, come into a personal relationship with him. (2 Cor. 3:16) The Israelites in the wilderness did not view Jehovah’s dealings with them in a spiritual way. It was as if their hearts and minds were veiled and hardened, focused only on using their newfound freedom from Egypt in a physical, or fleshly, way. (Heb. 3:8-10) The freedom that is associated with the spirit of Jehovah, however, is more than liberation from physical slavery. Far beyond what human efforts can hope to achieve, the spirit of Jehovah brings liberation from enslavement to sin and death, as well as from slavery to false worship and its practices. (Rom. 6:23; 8:2) What a glorious freedom that is! A person can enjoy the benefits of such freedom even when imprisoned or enslaved.—Gen. 39:20-23. *w18.04 9 ¶3-5*

Saturday, August 1

God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.—Rom. 5:8.

At meetings we are regularly reminded of what Jehovah and Jesus have done for us. Filled with gratitude, we try to imitate Jesus by how we live each day. (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) In addition, our heart stirs us to praise Jehovah for providing the ransom. One way we can praise him is by making heartfelt comments at our meetings. We can show the depth of our love for Jehovah and his Son by being willing to make sacrifices for them. Often, we must make sacrifices of various kinds to attend our meetings. Many congregations hold one meeting at the end of a workday when we are most likely tired. And another meeting is held on the weekend when other people are resting. Does Jehovah notice that we attend our meetings even though we are tired? Certainly he does! In fact, the greater our struggle, the more Jehovah appreciates the love we show for him.—Mark 12:41-44. *w19.01 29 ¶12-13*

Sunday, August 2

When the Lord caught sight of her, he was moved with pity.

—*Luke 7:13.*

Jesus himself experienced some of the challenges people faced. For example, Jesus apparently grew up in a poor family. From working with his adoptive father, Joseph, Jesus learned how to do hard physical work. (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) It seems that Joseph died sometime before the end of Jesus' ministry. So Jesus likely felt the pain of losing a loved one in death. And Jesus

knew what it was like to be in a family with differing religious views. (John 7:5) Those circumstances and others would have helped Jesus to understand the challenges and feelings of ordinary people. Jesus' concern was especially evident when he performed miracles. Jesus did not perform miracles out of a mere sense of duty. He was "moved with pity" for those who were suffering. (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 1:40-42) Jesus sympathized with people and wanted to help them.—Mark 7:32-35; Luke 7:12-15. *w19.03 16 ¶10-11*

Monday, August 3

Continue putting up with one another.—Col. 3:13.

It was the final night of Jesus' earthly life. Imagine the stress Jesus felt. Would he remain perfectly faithful until death? The lives of billions of people hung in the balance. (Rom. 5:18, 19) Even more important, his Father's reputation was involved. (Job 2:4) Then, during his last meal with his closest friends, the apostles, their conversation degenerated into "a heated dispute" over "which one of them was considered to be the greatest." Remarkably, Jesus did not become irritated. Instead, he responded with mildness. Kindly, but firmly, Jesus explained—again—the attitude they should have. And he then commended his friends for loyally sticking with him. (Luke 22:24-28; John 13:1-5, 12-15) We can imitate Jesus and remain mild-tempered even when we are under stress if we remember that we all say and do things that irritate others. (Prov. 12:18; Jas. 3:2, 5) And try to mention the good that you see in others.—Eph. 4:29. *w19.02 11-12 ¶16-17*

Tuesday, August 4

Jehovah . . . has firmly established his throne for justice.—Ps. 9:7.

The Mosaic Law limited the possibility that a person would be falsely accused of a crime. A defendant had the right to know who was accusing him. (Deut. 19:16-19; 25:1) And before he could be convicted, at least two witnesses had to give evidence. (Deut. 17:6; 19:15) What about an Israelite who committed a crime that was seen by only one witness? He could not assume that he would get away with his wrongdoing. Jehovah saw what he did. Yes, Jehovah sets the perfect example; nothing he does is unfair. He rewards those who loyally uphold his standards, but he punishes those who abuse their power. (2 Sam. 22:21-23; Ezek. 9:9, 10) Some may act wickedly and seem to escape punishment, but when Jehovah determines that the time is right, he brings them to justice. (Prov. 28:13) And if they do not repent, they soon learn that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”—Heb. 10:30, 31. *w19.02 23-24 ¶20-21*

Wednesday, August 5

There has never again arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah knew face-to-face.—Deut. 34:10.

Moses certainly looked to Jehovah for direction and guidance. Indeed, “he continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.” (Heb. 11:24-27) Less than two months after the Israelites left Egypt, a serious problem arose—even before they arrived at Mount Sinai. The people started to complain about a lack of wa-

ter. They began to murmur against Moses, and the situation became so serious that Moses cried out to Jehovah: “What should I do with this people? A little longer and they will stone me!” (Ex. 17:4) Jehovah responded by giving Moses clear instructions. He was to take his rod and strike the rock in Horeb, and then water would come gushing out. We read: “Moses did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel.” The Israelites drank their fill, and the problem was solved.—Ex. 17:5, 6. *w18.07 13 ¶4-5*

Thursday, August 6

*Love builds up.
—1 Cor. 8:1.*

One means by which Jehovah builds us up in love is the Christian congregation. Individually, we can reciprocate his love by loving and building up our spiritual brothers and sisters not only spiritually but also emotionally. (1 John 4:19-21) The apostle Paul urged Christians: “Keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.” (1 Thess. 5:11) Yes, all in the congregation—not just elders—can imitate Jehovah and Jesus in comforting and building up the brothers and sisters. (Rom. 15:1, 2) Some in the congregation who have emotional disorders may need professional help and medication. (Luke 5:31) Elders and others in the congregation modestly recognize that they are not trained mental-health-care professionals. However, they and others in the congregation have a vital role to play—to “speak consolingly to those who are depressed, support the weak, be patient toward all.”—1 Thess. 5:14. *w18.09 14 ¶10-11*

Friday, August 7

Do not be anxious, for I am your God.—Isa. 41:10.

We deepen our trust in Jehovah by getting to know him better. And the only way we can really know God well is by reading the Bible carefully and then meditating on what we read. The Bible contains a reliable record of how Jehovah protected his people in the past. That record gives us confidence that he will care for us now. Consider an example of the beautiful word picture Isaiah uses to illustrate how Jehovah protects us. He refers to Jehovah as a shepherd and to God's servants as lambs. Isaiah says of Jehovah: "With his arm he will gather together the lambs, and in his bosom he will carry them." (Isa. 40:11) When we sense Jehovah's strong arms wrapped around us, we feel protected and calm. To help you remain calm despite the problems you may face, meditate on the reassuring words mentioned in today's text. They will strengthen you as you face the challenges that lie ahead. *w19.01 7 ¶17-18*

Saturday, August 8

To do your will, O my God, is my delight.—Ps. 40:8.

Do you have one or more spiritual goals that you are working toward? Perhaps you are trying to read portions of the Bible each day. Or you may be trying to improve your speaking and teaching abilities. Whatever the case, when you see positive results—or others see them and commend you—how do you feel? No doubt you feel a sense of achievement and joy. And so you should, in no small part be-

cause you are putting God's will ahead of your own, in imitation of Jesus. (Prov. 27:11) By focusing on spiritual pursuits, you are also doing a work that is truly satisfying because it is not in the least futile. The apostle Paul wrote: "Be steadfast, immovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that *your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord.*" (1 Cor. 15:58) By comparison, a life marked by secular ambitions and pursuits—even if these seem very successful—is ultimately a life of futility.—Luke 9:25. *w18.12 22 ¶12-13*

Sunday, August 9

The righteous will possess the earth.—Ps. 37:29.

David was referring to a time when people on earth would live according to God's righteous ways. (2 Pet. 3:13) The prophecy at Isaiah 65:22 says: "The days of my people will be like the days of a tree." This implies that people will live for thousands of years. According to Revelation 21:1-4, God will turn his attention to mankind, and one of the promised blessings is that "death will be no more" for people serving God in his righteous new world. Adam and Eve lost Paradise back in Eden, but it was not lost forever. As God promised, people on earth are yet to be blessed. Under inspiration, David said that the meek and righteous will inherit the earth and live on it forever. (Ps. 37:11) The prophecies in the book of Isaiah should whet our appetite for the delightful conditions that will prevail. (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:5-10; 65:21-23) When? When Jesus' promise to the Jewish criminal comes to pass. (Luke 23:43) You can be in that Paradise. *w18.12 7 ¶22-23*

Monday, August 10

Above all the things that you guard, safeguard your heart.

—Prov. 4:23.

Can we avoid all contact with the world's thinking? No, we cannot literally get out of the world. Some exposure to its ideas is inescapable. (1 Cor. 5:9, 10) The preaching work itself will bring us in contact with erroneous beliefs. However, where contact with ungodly views is unavoidable, we certainly need not entertain them or accept them. Like Jesus, we should be quick to reject thoughts that serve Satan's purpose. Furthermore, we can protect ourselves from unnecessary exposure to the world's thinking. For example, we should exercise caution when choosing our close friends. The Bible warns that if we keep close company with people who do not worship Jehovah, their thinking will rub off on us. (Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:12, 32, 33) Also, by rejecting entertainment that promotes the theory of evolution, violence, or immorality, we avoid poisoning our thinking with ideas that are "against the knowledge of God."—2 Cor. 10:5. *w18.11 21 ¶16-17*

Tuesday, August 11

I will walk in your truth.

—Ps. 86:11.

How can we strengthen our determination to go on walking in the truth? One way is to have as full a share as possible in teaching Bible truth to others. In this way you will keep a firm grip on our spiritual sword, which is "God's word." (Eph. 6:17) All of us can strive to improve our skills as teachers, "handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Tim. 2:15) As we use the Bible to

help others to buy truth and reject falsehoods, we embed God's sayings in our own mind and heart. In this way, we strengthen our determination to go on walking in the truth. The truth is a precious gift from Jehovah. By means of this gift, we have our most prized possession, our intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. What he has taught us until now is only the beginning! God has promised us an eternity to add to the truth we have already bought. Therefore, cherish the truth like a fine pearl. Continue to "buy truth and never sell it."—Prov. 23:23. *w18.11 8 ¶2; 12 ¶15-17*

Wednesday, August 12

Noah [was] a preacher of righteousness.—2 Pet. 2:5.

Noah's preaching work prior to the Flood evidently included a warning of coming destruction. Note what Jesus stated: "For as they were in those days before the Flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and *they took no note* until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be." (Matt. 24:38, 39) Despite the people's indifference, Noah faithfully proclaimed the warning message that he had been given. Today, we preach the Kingdom message to give people an opportunity to learn about God's will for mankind. Like Jehovah, we dearly wish that people would respond to the message and "keep living." (Ezek. 18:23) At the same time, when we preach from house to house and in public areas, we warn as many people as possible that God's Kingdom will come and bring an end to this ungodly world.—Ezek. 3:18, 19; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 14:6, 7. *w18.05 19 ¶8-9*

Thursday, August 13

The one who testifies faithfully will tell the truth.—Prov. 12:17.

What should you do if the authorities restrict the Kingdom activity in your land and you are called in for questioning about your brothers? Must you tell them everything you know? What did Jesus do when he was interrogated by the Roman governor? In line with the Scriptural principle that there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak,” Jesus at times said nothing at all! (Eccl. 3:1, 7; Matt. 27:11-14) In such a setting, discretion is the better course, so that we do not put our brothers at risk. (Prov. 10:19; 11:12) What will you do if a close friend or relative has committed a serious sin and you know about the matter? “Tell the truth.” You have a responsibility to tell the elders the whole truth, and you must not distort it. They have a right to know the facts so that they can determine the best way to help the wrongdoer restore his or her relationship with Jehovah.—Jas. 5:14, 15. *w18.10 10 ¶17-18*

Friday, August 14

*Keep encouraging one another and building one another up.
—1 Thess. 5:11.*

How can we build up others in love? One way is to be a good listener. (Jas. 1:19) To listen with empathy is an act of love. You may ask tactful and sympathetic questions with the aim of understanding the feelings of a sufferer. You will then be able to show empathy and to build up your fellow servant. Let your facial expressions reflect your sincere, loving con-

cern. If the other Christian feels the need to explain things in greater detail, be patient and resist any urge to interrupt. By listening patiently, you will more likely understand the feelings involved. That can help your suffering brother or sister to have confidence in you and thus be more inclined to listen to what you say as you strive to be upbuilding. When you show that you truly care, your loving concern can be very comforting. *w18.09 14 ¶10; 15 ¶13*

Saturday, August 15

Buy truth.—Prov. 23:23.

Time is a price everyone who buys truth must pay. It takes time to listen to the Kingdom message, read the Bible and Bible literature, have a personal Bible study, and prepare for and attend congregation meetings. We must ‘buy out,’ or take, that time from some other less important activity. (Eph. 5:15, 16, ftn.) How much time will it take for us to gain an accurate knowledge of basic Bible teachings? That depends on our circumstances. There is no limit to what we can learn about Jehovah’s wisdom, ways, and works. (Rom. 11:33) The first issue of the *Watch Tower* likened the truth to “a modest little flower” and stated: “Be not content with *one* flower of truth. Had one been sufficient there would have been no more. Gather ever, seek for more.” Even with an eternity of time, we can always learn more about Jehovah. Today, the important thing is that we use our time wisely so as to buy as much truth as our circumstances allow. *w18.11 4 ¶7*

Sunday, August 16

Husbands, continue loving your wives.—Eph. 5:25.

Husbands are exhorted to dwell with their wives “according to knowledge”—an expression that could also be rendered “showing them consideration; understanding them.” (1 Pet. 3:7; ftn.) Understanding and consideration go hand in hand. For instance, an understanding husband knows that his wife, as his complement, is different from him in many respects, but she is by no means inferior. (Gen. 2:18) He thus shows thoughtful regard for her feelings, treating her with dignity and honor. A thoughtful husband also takes his wife’s feelings into account when he interacts with other women. Never does he flirt with them or show an improper interest in them; nor does he show such interest when using social media or the Internet. (Job 31:1) Yes, he remains loyal to his wife, not just because of his love for her but also because of his love for God and his hatred for what is bad.—Ps. 19:14; 97:10. *w18.09 29 ¶3-4*

Monday, August 17

The one who conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one who is great.—Luke 9:48.

Why is it a challenge to apply what we learn from God’s Word? One reason is that it takes humility to do what is right, and our ability to remain humble is under assault. In these “last days,” we are surrounded by people who are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty,” and “without self-control.” (2 Tim. 3:1-3) When selfish behavior is reported and

even celebrated, a servant of God might despise such conduct but envy the results. (Ps. 37:1; 73:3) One might even wonder: ‘Is there any point in my putting others’ interests ahead of my own? If I conduct myself “as a lesser one,” might people lose respect for me?’ Allowing the world’s selfish spirit to influence us could harm the loving relationships we enjoy in the congregation and our identity as Christians. But we are rewarded when we study the good examples set out in the Bible and imitate them. *w18.09 3 ¶1*

Tuesday, August 18

There is . . . happiness in giving.—Acts 20:35.

Even though Jehovah was completely alone before he began to create, he was not thinking only of himself. On the contrary, he gave the gift of life to intelligent creatures, both spirit and human. “The happy God,” Jehovah, loves to give good things. (1 Tim. 1:11; Jas. 1:17) And since he also wants us to be happy, he teaches us to be generous. (Rom. 1:20) God made man in his image. (Gen. 1:27) That is, we were created to reflect his personality. In order to attain happiness and fulfillment, then, we need to follow Jehovah’s example by being interested in others and by being generous givers. (Phil. 2:3, 4; Jas. 1:5) Why? Quite simply because Jehovah lovingly designed humans that way. Despite our imperfection, we can succeed in imitating Jehovah’s generosity. Jehovah wants his human creation to imitate him, so it makes him happy when we are generous.—Eph. 5:1. *w18.08 18 ¶1-2; 19 ¶4*

Wednesday, August 19

My sheep listen to my voice.

—John 10:27.

Christ's followers show that they listen to Jesus by not only paying attention to his words but also acting on them. They are not distracted by the "anxieties of life." (Luke 21: 34) Rather, they make obeying Jesus' commands a priority in life, even in the face of challenging circumstances. Through it all, our brothers remain faithful to Jehovah, cost what it may. Another way we can show that we are listening to Jesus is by cooperating with those whom he has appointed to take the lead among us. (Heb. 13:7, 17) God's organization has made many adjustments in recent years, including the use of new tools and methods in our ministry, the format of our midweek meeting, and the way we build, renovate, and maintain our Kingdom Halls. How we appreciate the loving and carefully thought-out guidance! We can be sure that Jehovah will bless our efforts to follow the organization's timely direction. *w19.03 10-11 ¶11-12*

Thursday, August 20

We should no longer be . . . carried here and there . . . by means of the trickery of men.—Eph. 4:14.

A story that is only 10 percent true is 100 percent misleading. Consider what happened to the Israelites dwelling on the western side of the Jordan River in the days of Joshua. (Josh. 22:9-34) They received a report that the Israelites living on the eastern side had constructed a large, impressive altar. That portion of the report was true. Based on this incomplete informa-

tion, those on the western side concluded that their brothers had rebelled against Jehovah. (Josh. 22: 9-12) Thankfully, before attacking, they sent a delegation of trustworthy men to get all the facts. What did the men learn? The altar was built, not for sacrifices, but as a memorial, so that in the future all would know that they too were faithful servants of Jehovah. How thankful those Israelites must have been that they did not massacre their brothers based on incomplete information but took the time to get the facts! *w18.08 5 ¶9-10*

Friday, August 21

Let the one who thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall.

—1 Cor. 10:12.

As Paul pointed out, even true worshippers could become involved in wrong practices. Those who give in to temptation may think that they still have a good standing with Jehovah. But merely wanting to be Jehovah's friend or claiming to be loyal to him does not always mean that one is actually approved by Jehovah. (1 Cor. 10:1-5) Just as the Israelites became anxious over Moses' delay in coming down from Sinai, Christians today may feel anxious over the seeming delay of Jehovah's day of judgment and the coming of the new world. The fulfillment of these promises may seem too far off in the future or too good to be true. Left unchecked, such thinking can lead us to put fleshly pursuits ahead of Jehovah's will. In time, we could drift away from Jehovah and eventually engage in practices that we would never have considered being involved in when we were in good spiritual health. *w18.07 21 ¶17-18*

Saturday, August 22

I will also do this thing that you request, because you have found favor in my eyes and I know you by name.—Ex. 33:17.

We can receive wonderful blessings when Jehovah comes to know us personally. But how can we put ourselves in a position to be known by Jehovah? We do that when we come to love him and dedicate our life to him. (1 Cor. 8:3) However, we need to maintain our treasured relationship with our heavenly Father. Like the Galatian Christians to whom Paul wrote, we too need to avoid slaving for “the weak and beggarly elementary things” of this world, including seeking its acclaim. (Gal. 4:9) Those first-century Christians had progressed to the point of being known by God. However, Paul said that the very same brothers were “turning back again” to empty things. Paul was, in effect, saying: “After you have come so far, why would you return to the foolish, valueless things you left behind?” *w18.07 8 ¶5-6*

Sunday, August 23

A wise person listens and takes in more instruction.—Prov. 1:5.

Thankfully, we do not need to suffer the consequences of breaking God’s laws to learn valuable lessons. We can learn from the mistakes of others whose transgressions are recorded in God’s Word. Indeed, we receive the very best instruction from God, such as when we read and meditate on real-life Bible accounts. For example, think of the pain that King David experienced after he disobeyed Jehovah’s command and committed

adultery with Bath-sheba. (2 Sam. 12:7-14) While reading and meditating on this account, we might ask ourselves: ‘How could King David have avoided the heartache he suffered because of his adulterous act with Bath-sheba? If I faced a similar temptation, would I have the strength to turn away? Would I flee like Joseph, or would I give in like David?’ (Gen. 39:11-15) By reflecting on the bad consequences of sin, we can strengthen our heart to “hate what is bad.”—Amos 5:15. *w18.06 17 ¶5, 7*

Monday, August 24

Pay back . . . Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.—Matt. 22:21.

Injustice often inflames political passions. Taxation was a hot political issue in Jesus’ time. Subjects of Rome, including those who listened to Jesus, were required to pay many taxes, such as on goods, land, and houses. And the corruption of the tax collectors increased the sense of being under a heavy burden. Tax collectors might purchase a position of authority at a public auction and then profit from what was collected. Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector in Jericho, had become rich by extorting money from the people. (Luke 19:2, 8) His course was probably typical of that of many. Jesus’ enemies tried to trap Jesus by getting him to take sides on a taxation issue. The tax in question was the “head tax,” a tax of one denarius levied on Roman subjects. (Matt. 22:16-18) The Jews especially resented this tax. It represented their subjection to Rome. *w18.06 5-6 ¶8-10*

Tuesday, August 25

Whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap.—Gal. 6:7.

The costs of siding with Satan *always* outweigh any seeming benefits that he may offer. (Job 21:7-17; Gal. 6:8) What advantage do we gain from knowing the extent of Satan's influence? It helps us keep a balanced view of secular authorities and motivates us in our witnessing work. We understand that Jehovah wants us to respect governmental authorities. (1 Pet. 2:17) And he expects us to obey the laws of human governments as long as those laws do not conflict with his standards. (Rom. 13:1-4) But we realize that we must remain neutral, never favoring one political party or human leader over another. (John 17:15, 16; 18:36) Because we see what Satan is trying to do to Jehovah's name and reputation, we feel more compelled to teach others the truth about our God. We proudly bear and use his name, knowing that loving him is far more rewarding than loving money or things.—Isa. 43:10; 1 Tim. 6:6-10. *w18.05 24 ¶18-9*

Wednesday, August 26

A wife should not separate from her husband.—1 Cor. 7:10.

In the event of marital problems, is separation a justifiable solution? The Scriptures do not outline various grounds for separation. Paul wrote: "If a woman has an unbelieving husband and he is agreeable to staying with her, let her not leave her husband." (1 Cor. 7:12, 13) That applies in our day too. Admittedly, there have been instances where an "unbelieving husband" seems to prove that he is not "agreeable to

staying with her." He might be extremely physically abusive, even to the point that she feels that her health or life is in danger. He might refuse to support her and the family or severely endanger her spirituality. In such cases, some Christians have personally decided that, despite what he might say, the mate is not "agreeable to staying" together and that a separation is necessary. But other Christians in comparably difficult situations have not; they have endured and tried to work at improving matters. *w18.12 13 ¶14, 16; 14 ¶17*

Thursday, August 27

These are the ones who . . . bear fruit with endurance.—Luke 8:15.

In the illustration of the sower found at Luke 8:5-8, 11-15, the seed is "the word of God," or the Kingdom message. The soil represents man's figurative heart. The seed that fell on the fine soil took root, sprouted, and "produced 100 times more fruit." Just as the fine soil in Jesus' illustration retained the seed, we accepted the message and held on to it. As a result, the seedlike Kingdom message took root and grew, as it were, into a wheat stalk that, in time, was ready to bear fruit. And just as a wheat stalk produces as fruit, not new stalks, but new seed, we are producing as fruit, not new disciples, but new Kingdom seed. How do we produce new Kingdom seed? Each time we in one way or another proclaim the Kingdom message, we duplicate and scatter, so to speak, the seed that was planted in our heart. (Luke 6:45; 8:1) Hence, this illustration teaches us that as long as we keep on proclaiming the Kingdom message, we "bear fruit with endurance." *w18.05 14 ¶10-11*

Friday, August 28

All those for whom I have affection, I reprove and discipline.

—Rev. 3:19.

Paul was willing not only to encourage his brothers but also to “spend and be completely spent for” them. (2 Cor. 12:15) Similarly, elders should not only encourage and console their brothers with words but also build them up by showing sincere personal interest. (1 Cor. 14:3) Building one another up may involve giving counsel, but here again, elders should follow the example given in the Bible about how to give counsel in an encouraging way. An outstanding example in this respect was given by Jesus himself after his death and resurrection. He had some firm counsel to give to certain congregations in Asia Minor, but notice how he went about it. Before giving them counsel, he gave warm commendation to the congregations in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. (Rev. 2:1-5, 12, 13, 18, 19) Elders would do well to imitate Christ’s example when they need to give counsel. *w18.04 22 ¶8-9*

Saturday, August 29

Fathers, . . . go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah.—Eph. 6:4.

Parents, you no doubt do all you can to protect your children from literal diseases. You keep your home clean, and you throw out anything that might cause you or your children to get sick. In the same way, you need to protect your children from movies, TV shows, electronic games, and websites that are likely to infect them with Satan’s thinking. Jehovah has given you the au-

thority to care for the spiritual health of your children. (Prov. 1:8) So do not be afraid to set household rules that are based on Bible standards. Tell your young children what they can and cannot watch, and help them to understand the reasons for your decisions. (Matt. 5:37) As your children get older, train them to discern for themselves what is right and what is wrong according to Jehovah’s standards. (Heb. 5:14) And remember, your children will learn even more from what you do.—Deut. 6:6, 7; Rom. 2:21. *w19.01 16 ¶8*

Sunday, August 30

Old men and young together. Let them praise the name of Jehovah.

—Ps. 148:12, 13.

If you are a Christian youth, why not make it your aim to take an interest in older ones? You might respectfully ask them to relate an experience from their years of service. You will find this very upbuilding, and both you and they will be even more motivated to let the light of truth shine. And all of us can make it a point to welcome those who attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall. If you are assigned to handle a meeting for field service, you can do much to help older ones to have a share in the ministry. Do they have suitable territory? In some cases, you may choose to assign them to work with a younger companion who can provide physical support. You can also show understanding to those whose health and circumstances limit what they can do. Yes, your consideration and discernment can help young and old, experienced and less experienced, to preach the good news with zeal.—Lev. 19:32. *w18.06 23-24 ¶10-12*

Monday, August 31

[Use] your freedom, not as a cover for doing wrong, but as slaves of God.—1 Pet. 2:16.

We should never take for granted that Jehovah liberated us from the bondage of sin and of death. By means of the ransom, we can serve our God with a clean conscience and find real delight in doing so. (Ps. 40:8) In addition to expressing gratitude, however, we should be mindful of never misusing our precious freedom. The apostle Peter warned against using our freedom as an excuse for catering to our fleshly desires. Does that warning not remind you of what befell the Israelites in the wilderness? And the danger is still with us, perhaps even more so. Satan and his world offer ever more alluring choices in dress and grooming, food and drink, recreation and entertainment, and a host of other things. Clever advertisers often feature attractive people deceptively promoting as must-haves many things we really do not need. How easy it is to fall prey to these ploys and to misuse our freedom! *w18.04 10 ¶7-8*

Tuesday, September 1

Though you never saw him, you love him.—1 Pet. 1:8.

Jesus showed fellow feeling for Martha and Mary. When he saw their grief over the death of their brother, Lazarus, “Jesus gave way to tears.” (John 11:32-35) He did not weep just because he had lost the company of a close friend. After all, he knew that he was going to resurrect Lazarus. Rather, Jesus wept because he understood and was touched by the heartache of his dear friends. We

benefit greatly from learning about Jesus’ fellow feeling. Of course, we are not perfect as he was. Yet, we love him for the way he treated others. We are encouraged to know that he is now ruling as King of God’s Kingdom. He will soon eliminate all suffering. He is in the best position to help humanity recover from the wounds inflicted by Satan’s rulership, for Jesus too was once human. Indeed, we are blessed to have a Ruler who can “sympathize with our weaknesses.”—Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16. *w19.03 17 ¶12-13*

Wednesday, September 2

*No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him.
—John 6:44.*

We can play a part in helping others learn about God, but we do not play the most important part. (1 Cor. 3:6, 7) Jehovah is the one who draws people. In the end, each individual will respond to the good news based on his or her heart condition. (Matt. 13:4-8) Remember that most people did not accept Jesus’ message—and he was the greatest Teacher who ever lived! Really, then, we should not become discouraged if many of the people we try to help do not respond favorably. We will see benefits when we show fellow feeling in our ministry. We will enjoy our preaching work more. We will experience the greater happiness that comes from giving. And we make it easier for those who are “rightly disposed for everlasting life” to accept the good news. (Acts 13:48) So “as long as we have the opportunity, let us work what is good toward all.” (Gal. 6:10) Then we will have the joy of bringing glory to our heavenly Father.—Matt. 5:16. *w19.03 25 ¶18-19*

Thursday, September 3

*In the midst of the congregation
I will praise you.—Ps. 22:22.*

King David wrote: “Jehovah is great and most worthy of praise.” (Ps. 145:3) He loved Jehovah, and that love moved him to praise God “in the midst of the congregation.” (1 Chron. 29:10-13; Ps. 40:5) Today, one way we praise Jehovah is by commenting during Christian meetings. All of us appreciate hearing a variety of comments at our meetings. We enjoy the simple, sincere words of a young child. We are inspired by the excitement in the voice of someone who is commenting about a truth that he or she has just discovered. And we admire those who “mustered up courage” to give a comment, even though they are shy or are only beginning to learn our language. (1 Thess. 2:2; ftm.) How can we show appreciation for their effort? We can thank them for their encouraging comment after the meeting. Another way is by giving a comment ourselves. Then not only do we receive encouragement at our meetings but we also give it. —Rom. 1:11, 12. *w19.01 8 ¶1-2; 9 ¶6*

Friday, September 4

*Show yourselves thankful.
—Col. 3:15.*

The ten men were desperate. They had leprosy, and the future looked bleak. But one day, they saw Jesus, the Great Teacher, from a distance. They had heard that Jesus healed all sorts of sicknesses. So they cried out: “Jesus, Instructor, have mercy on us!” The ten men were completely cured. No doubt all of them were grateful for Jesus’ kindness. One of them, however, did more than feel gratitude—he expressed his appre-

ciation to Jesus. That healed man, a Samaritan, felt compelled to glorify God “with a loud voice.” (Luke 17:12-19) Like the Samaritan, we want to express our gratitude to those who are kind. Jehovah sets the example for us in expressing appreciation. One way he does this is by rewarding those who please him. (2 Sam. 22:21; Ps. 13:6; Matt. 10:40, 41) And the Scriptures encourage us to “become imitators of God, as beloved children.” (Eph. 5:1) So a key reason why we should express appreciation is that we want to follow Jehovah’s example. *w19.02 14 ¶1-2; 15 ¶4*

Saturday, September 5

*I will not renounce my integrity!
—Job 27:5.*

A young girl at school respectfully refuses to join in a holiday celebration that does not please God. A shy young man preaching from door to door knocks on the door of a fellow student who has made fun of Jehovah’s Witnesses before. A man working hard to provide for his family is asked by his boss to do something dishonest or illegal. Though he could lose his job, the man explains that he must be honest and obey the law because God requires that of his servants. (Rom. 13:1-4; Heb. 13:18) What quality do you see in those three individuals? You may notice several, such as courage and honesty. But one quality stands out as especially precious—integrity. Each of the three shows loyalty to Jehovah. Each one refuses to compromise on God’s standards. Integrity moves those individuals to act as they do. Jehovah would surely feel proud of each one of them for showing that quality. We likewise want to make our Father in heaven proud. *w19.02 2 ¶1-2*

Sunday, September 6

The Law has a shadow of the good things to come.—Heb. 10:1.

The Law specifically protected those who could not protect themselves, such as orphans, widows, and foreign residents. The judges in Israel were told: “You must not pervert the judgment of the foreign resident or of the fatherless child, and you must not seize the garment of a widow as security for a loan.” (Deut. 24:17) Jehovah showed tender personal interest in the most vulnerable in the community. And he held those who mistreated them to account. (Ex. 22:22-24) Jehovah wants those he places in positions of responsibility to take a loving interest in all whom they oversee. He hates sex crimes and wants to ensure that all, especially the most vulnerable, receive protection and justice. (Lev. 18:6-30) When we are convinced that Jehovah is treating us justly, our love for him grows. And when we love God and love his righteous standards, we feel impelled to love others and treat them justly. *w19.02 24-25 ¶122-26*

Monday, September 7

Reject ungodliness and worldly desires.—Titus 2:12.

Consider an example of how we can protect ourselves from being influenced by Satan’s thinking. Jehovah has taught us that “sexual immorality and every sort of uncleanness [should] not even be mentioned among [us].” (Eph. 5:3) But what will we do if peers at work or at school start talking about sexually immoral topics? The watchman, our conscience, might sound an alarm. (Rom. 2:15) But will we lis-

ten to it? We might be tempted, instead, to listen to our peers or to look at pictures they might be sharing. But this is the time to close the city gates, so to speak, by changing the conversation or by walking away. It takes courage to resist pressure from our peers to think about or to do wrong things. We can be sure that Jehovah sees the effort we make, and he will give us the strength and wisdom we need to resist satanic thinking.—2 Chron. 16:9; Isa. 40:29; Jas. 1:5. *w19.01 17-18 ¶12-13*

Tuesday, September 8

When I reflected on all the works that my own hands had done . . . , I saw that everything was futile . . . There was nothing of real value.—Eccl. 2:11.

Fabulously rich and powerful, Solomon embarked on an experiment to “try out pleasure and see what good [would come].” (Eccl. 2:1-10) He built houses, designed gardens and parks, and pursued whatever he desired. How did he feel afterward? Contented? Fulfilled? Satisfied? We need not guess. Solomon himself told us in today’s text. What a powerful lesson! Will you wisely take it to heart? Jehovah wants to spare you the pain of learning life’s lessons the hard way. Granted, you need faith in order to obey God and put his will first in your life. That faith is invaluable, and it *never* disappoints. Yes, Jehovah will *never* forget “the love you showed for his name.” (Heb. 6:10) So work hard to build a strong faith, and thus see for yourself that your heavenly Father has your best interests at heart.—Ps. 32:8. *w18.12 22 ¶14-15*

Wednesday, September 9

God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.—Rom. 5:8.

A spiritual person has faith in God and has God's mind on matters. He looks to God for guidance and is determined to obey him. (1 Cor. 2:12, 13) David is a good example. He sang: "Jehovah is my portion, my allotted share, and my cup." (Ps. 16:5) That "portion" included David's approved relationship with God, in whom he took refuge. (Ps. 16:1) The result? "My whole being is joyful," he wrote. Yes, nothing gave David more joy than intimacy with God. (Ps. 16:9, 11) The joy that David experienced does not come to those who center their lives on pleasures and riches. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10) Developing faith in Jehovah and serving him will give your life meaning and provide you with satisfaction. How can you grow in faith? You must spend time with him, as it were, by reading his Word, observing his creation, and thinking about his qualities, including his love for you.—Rom. 1:20. *w18.12 25 ¶7-8*

Thursday, September 10

Let marriage be honorable among all.—Heb. 13:4.

Paul was not making a mere casual observation. Rather, that text was directing, yes urging, Christians personally to esteem marriage, to view it as precious. Is that your view of marriage in general and particularly of your own marriage if you have a mate? In honoring marriage, you are in the best of company. Jesus honored marriage. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about di-

vorce, he referred to what God had said regarding the first marriage: "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother, and the two will be one flesh." Jesus added: "What God has yoked together, let no man put apart." (Mark 10:2-12; Gen. 2:24) Jesus thus agreed that marriage is of divine origin and stressed its permanence. God did not tell Adam and Eve that marriage could be ended by divorce. The standard set in that Edenic marriage was monogamy, "the two" being joined together in a lasting union. *w18.12 10-11 ¶2-4*

Friday, September 11

Be transformed by making your mind over.—Rom. 12:2.

When we first came to a knowledge of the truth, we learned the importance of obedience to Jehovah's basic requirements. But as we continue to grow spiritually, we learn more about Jehovah's thinking—his likes, his dislikes, and his way of viewing various matters—and this influences our actions and personal choices. While learning to think like Jehovah is a delight, it can also be a challenge. At times, our imperfect reasoning might get in the way. For example, we might have difficulty understanding Jehovah's view of moral cleanness, materialism, the preaching work, the misuse of blood, or something else. What can we do? How can we continue to make progress in making God's thoughts our own? The answer lies in making our mind over by studying God's Word with a view to grasping his thoughts, meditating on them, and bringing our thinking into alignment with God's thinking. *w18.11 23-24 ¶2-4*

Saturday, September 12

How long must I ask for help from violence, but you do not intervene?—Hab. 1:2.

Habakkuk lived during a very difficult and challenging time. He was deeply saddened because he was surrounded by wicked, violent people. When would their wickedness end? Why did Jehovah take so long before acting? All Habakkuk saw was injustice and oppression practiced by his own countrymen. He felt helpless. So in the midst of this dark period, he called on Jehovah to intervene. Habakkuk may have started to imagine that Jehovah was not concerned. It seemed that God would not act soon enough. Can you identify with the feelings of this dear servant of God? Had Habakkuk lost trust in Jehovah? Did he fail to maintain his faith in God's promises? By no means! The mere fact that he entrusted his problems and concerns to Jehovah and not to humans shows that he had not given up in despair. He was obviously troubled because he could not understand God's timing or the reason why Jehovah allowed him to be in such a painful situation. *w18.11 14 ¶4-5*

Sunday, September 13

Stop storing up for yourselves treasures on the earth.—Matt. 6:19.

When the fishermen Peter and Andrew were invited by Jesus to become “fishers of men,” they “abandoned their nets.” (Matt. 4:18-20) Of course, most of those who learn the truth today cannot simply walk away from their jobs. They have Scriptural obligations. (1 Tim. 5:8) However, individuals who learn the truth must often change their attitude toward material things and ad-

just their priorities. Consider the example of Maria. Golf was her life, and her goal was to enjoy a lucrative career as a professional golfer. Then Maria started to study the Bible, and she was pleased with the changes that the truth helped her make in her life. Maria realized that it would be difficult for her to pursue both spiritual and material riches. (Matt. 6:24) She gave up her lifelong goal of becoming a professional golfer. She now serves as a pioneer and enjoys what she describes as “the happiest, most meaningful life possible.” *w18.11 5 ¶9-10*

Monday, September 14

This is the carpenter, the son of Mary.—Mark 6:3.

At 30 years of age, Jesus laid aside his carpenter's tools because he knew that being a minister was the more important occupation. He said that the work of declaring the good news of the Kingdom of God was one reason why God sent him to the earth. (Matt. 20:28; Luke 3:23; 4:43) Jesus made the ministry the primary focus of his life, and he wanted others to join him in that work. (Matt. 9:35-38) We may not be carpenters, but we certainly are ministers of the good news. That occupation is so important that God is involved; we are called “God's fellow workers.” (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:4) We acknowledge that “the very essence of [Jehovah's] word is truth.” (Ps. 119:159, 160) That is why we want to be sure that we are “handling the word of the truth aright” in our ministry. (2 Tim. 2:15) To that end, we keep honing our skills in using the Bible, the principal tool that we use to teach the truth about Jehovah, Jesus, and the Kingdom. *w18.10 11 ¶1-2*

Tuesday, September 15

Assist those who are weak and . . . keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus.—Acts 20:35.

When a husband looks to his head, Jesus Christ, as a role model, he helps his wife to cultivate “deep respect” for him. (Eph. 5:22-25, 33) Her respect, in turn, will move her to be considerate of her husband. When parents show consideration for each other, they set a fine example for their children. Parents, of course, have the primary responsibility to teach their children how to be considerate of others. For example, parents can teach them not to run around in the Kingdom Hall. At a social gathering, parents might tell their children to let older ones go ahead of them when lining up for food. When a child performs a thoughtful deed for us—perhaps opening a door—we should commend the child. Doing so can have a good effect on the young one, impressing on his heart that “there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” *w18.09 29 ¶5-6*

Wednesday, September 16

*Your Leader is one, the Christ.
—Matt. 23:10.*

As shown by his active direction, our enthroned King, Jesus Christ, is definitely looking to the future. Therefore, let us rejoice over the benefits we derive from adjusting to recent changes. You might find it encouraging during your family worship to discuss how you have benefited from changes in the weekly meetings or in the ministry. If we perceive the spirit behind the instructions we receive from Jehovah’s organization and their ben-

eficial effect on us, we will likely follow that guidance with joy. We certainly appreciate that reducing the amount of literature being printed saves money; using new technologies allows us to further the Kingdom work throughout the earth. So use electronic publications and media more extensively if possible. In this way, we will reflect Christ’s concern to use the organization’s resources wisely. When we earnestly uphold Christ’s direction, we strengthen the faith of others and contribute to unity. *w18.10 25-26 ¶17-19*

Thursday, September 17

*Having tender affection for you, we were determined to impart to you, not only the good news of God but also our very selves.
—1 Thess. 2:8.*

When we display godlike tenderness, we can be the answer to a distressed person’s prayers. (2 Cor. 1:3-6) However, do not expect perfection from your spiritual brothers and sisters. Keep a balanced view of them. To expect faultless behavior is unrealistic and will bring disappointment. (Eccl. 7:21, 22) Remember, Jehovah is realistic in what he requires of his servants. If we imitate his example, we will be prepared to put up with the imperfections of others. (Eph. 4:2, 32) Instead of giving them the impression that they are not doing enough, make it a point to commend them for what they are doing. That can encourage them. Sincere commendation can build others up in love and help them to find “cause for rejoicing” in their own sacred service. How much better when we do so rather than express frustrating comparisons with others.—Gal. 6:4. *w18.09 16 ¶16-17*

Friday, September 18

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.—John 4:34.

To Jesus, spiritual food included acting on God's direction. In what sense is this like food? Just as our bodies are contented and nourished when we eat a good meal, our hearts are strengthened and our faith is nourished for everlasting life when we participate in doing God's will. Putting divine instruction into practice is essentially what wisdom means. (Ps. 107:43) The reward for wisdom is worth the effort. "Nothing you desire can compare to it. . . . It is a tree of life to those who take hold of it, and those who keep firm hold of it will be called happy." (Prov. 3:13-18) Jesus said: "If you know these things, happy you are if you do them." (John 13:17) The disciples' happiness would last if they kept doing what Jesus instructed them to do. They did not embrace his teachings and example simply as an immediate response on that one occasion. It became their way of life. *w18.09 4 ¶4-5*

Saturday, September 19

God went on to create the man in his image.—Gen. 1:27.

God gave the first human couple instructions that should have made them think about the welfare of others, even though they were alone in the garden of Eden. Jehovah blessed Adam and Eve and encouraged them to multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. (Gen. 1:28) Just as the Creator was keenly interested in the welfare of his creation, the first human parents should have been interested in the happiness of

their unborn children. Paradise was to be extended earth wide for the benefit of Adam's offspring. That huge project would require the cooperation of his ever-growing family. For perfect men and women, working to extend Paradise would have meant cooperating to the full with Jehovah to achieve his purposes, thereby entering into his rest. (Heb. 4:11) Imagine how fulfilling and rewarding that project would have been! Giving of themselves for the welfare of others would have brought them great blessings and immense satisfaction. *w18.08 18 ¶2; 19-20 ¶8-9*

Sunday, September 20

He slandered your servant to my lord the king.—2 Sam. 19:27.

What if you are a victim of a slanderous accusation? Jesus and John the Baptizer experienced such a challenge. (Matt. 11:18, 19) How did Jesus deal with false information? He did not spend all his time and energy defending himself. Instead he encouraged people to look at the facts—what he did and what he taught. As Jesus said, "wisdom is vindicated by its works." (Matt. 11:19; ftn.) There is a valuable lesson here that we do well to learn. At times, people may say unfair or critical things about us. We may long for justice and wish that we could do something to undo the damage to our reputation. Yet, there is something we can do. If someone spreads a lie about us, we can live in such a way that no one will believe that lie. Indeed, as Jesus' example shows, our personal record of upright Christian conduct can wipe out half-truths and false accusations. *w18.08 6 ¶11-13*

Monday, September 21

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

The Bible accounts about the disobedience of Cain, Solomon, and the Israelites at Mount Sinai have a noteworthy element in common. These individuals had opportunity to “repent . . . and turn around.” (Acts 3:19) Clearly, Jehovah is not quick to give up on those who take a false step. In Aaron’s case, Jehovah extended forgiveness. Today, warnings from Jehovah may come in the form of a Bible account, Bible-based publications, or kind advice from a fellow Christian. When we heed the warnings, we are assured of Jehovah’s mercy. Jehovah’s undeserved kindness has a purpose. (2 Cor. 6:1) It gives us an opportunity “to reject ungodliness and worldly desires.” (Titus 2:11-14) As long as we live “amid this present system of things,” we will face situations that will put our exclusive devotion to Jehovah to the test. May we always be ready to take a firm stand on his side! *w18.07 21 ¶20-21*

Tuesday, September 22

Jehovah knows those who belong to him.—2 Tim. 2:19.

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

how to rescue them out of trial. (Ps. 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:9) Second, *Jehovah may give us recognition in ways we may never expect.* Those who do good deeds purely to be seen by men are told that they will have no reward at all from Jehovah. Why? Their reward has already been paid in full. (Matt. 6:1-5) However, Jesus said that his Father “looks on in secret” at those who do not receive due credit for the good they do to others. He notices those acts and repays each person accordingly. *w18.07 9 ¶8, 10*

Wednesday, September 23

Stop calling defiled the things God has cleansed.—Acts 10:15.

Peter was perplexed as to what the voice was trying to tell him. Just then, the messengers from Cornelius arrived. After receiving direction from the holy spirit, Peter pressed forward and accompanied the messengers to the home of Cornelius. If Peter had judged matters solely on outward appearance, he would never have entered the home of Cornelius. Jews simply did not enter the homes of Gentiles. Why did Peter move forward despite deep-seated prejudices? Peter was profoundly affected by the vision he had seen and by the reassurance he received from the holy spirit. After he listened to what Cornelius related, Peter, no doubt moved by the account, declared under inspiration: “Now I truly understand that God is not partial, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) What a thrilling new understanding for Peter — one with far-reaching implications! *w18.08 9 ¶3-4*

Thursday, September 24

Hate what is bad.

—Amos 5:15.

We may well stay far away from practices that God hates. Yet, there are other activities or aspects of life about which the Scriptures provide no specific command. In such areas, how can we determine what is acceptable and pleasing to God? That is where our Bible-trained conscience comes into play. Jehovah has lovingly given us principles that work in conjunction with our Bible-trained conscience. He himself says: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One guiding you in the way you should walk." (Isa. 48:17, 18) By using our mind and heart to reason on Bible principles, we correct, direct, and mold our conscience. That, in turn, helps us to make wise decisions. A principle is a fundamental truth or doctrine that is used as a basis of reasoning or action. To understand a principle includes understanding the thinking of the Lawgiver and the reasons why he gave certain laws. *w18.06 17 ¶5; 18 ¶8-10*

Friday, September 25

Is it lawful to pay head tax to Caesar or not?—Matt. 22:17.

The party followers of Herod who raised this issue hoped that if Jesus denounced the tax, he might be accused of sedition. If Jesus said that taxation was a necessary burden, he could lose the support of his followers. Jesus was careful to remain neutral on the taxation issue. Of course, Jesus knew that corruption was common among tax collectors. But Jesus did not want to get sidetracked, diverted from the much more important issue. That

was God's Kingdom, which would be the real solution. He thereby set the example for all his followers. They should avoid becoming involved in political issues, no matter how right or just a certain cause might seem. Christians seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. They do that instead of forming strong opinions about, or speaking out against, certain unjust practices. (Matt. 6:33) Many of Jehovah's Witnesses have succeeded in moving away from strong political views that they once held. *w18.06 6 ¶9-11*

Saturday, September 26

The sons of the true God began to notice that the daughters of men were beautiful.—Gen. 6:2.

Perhaps Satan tempted the disloyal angels not only with the opportunity for immoral sex but also with the promise of seizing power over mankind. His purpose may have been to disrupt the arrival of the promised 'offspring of the woman.' (Gen. 3:15) In any case, Jehovah ended all such plots by bringing the Flood—a move that thwarted the efforts of Satan and the rebellious angels at that time. So, never underestimate the lure of immorality or the danger of egotism. For aeons, the angels who joined Satan served in the very presence of God. Yet, many allowed bad desires to take root and grow. Similarly, we may have served for decades in the earthly part of God's organization. Yet, even in this spiritually clean environment, unclean desires can take root. (1 Cor. 10:12) How important it is that we constantly search our heart, reject immoral thoughts, and suppress unhealthy pride!—Gal. 5:26; Col. 3:5. *w18.05 25 ¶11-12*

Sunday, September 27

I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart.—Rom. 9:2.

Paul felt discouraged by the Jews' negative reaction to the Kingdom message. Even so, he did not give up on them. Note what he further said in his letter to the Christians in Rome about his feelings toward those Jews: "The goodwill of my heart and my supplication to God for them are indeed for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to accurate knowledge." (Rom. 10:1, 2) Paul stated why he kept on preaching to the Jews. He was moved by "*the goodwill of [his] heart.*" It was his heart's desire that some Jews would find salvation. (Rom. 11:13, 14) He implored God in prayer to help individual Jews to accept the Kingdom message. Paul added: "*They have a zeal for God.*" He saw a potential for good in people. Zeal, if properly directed, can transform sincere individuals into zealous disciples of Christ, as Paul well knew. *w18.05 13 ¶4; 15-16 ¶13-14*

Monday, September 28

[Speak] what is good for building up as the need may be, to impart what is beneficial to the hearers.—Eph. 4:29.

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

agement. Paul gave this advice: "If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any spiritual fellowship, if any tender affection and compassion, make my joy full by being of the same mind and having the same love, being completely united, having the one thought in mind. Do nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with humility consider others superior to you, as you look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others." —Phil. 2:1-4. *w18.04 22 ¶10; 23 ¶12*

Tuesday, September 29

Be as free people, using your freedom . . . as slaves of God.—1 Pet. 2:16.

The real purpose for which Jehovah, through Jesus, has freed us from the law of sin and of death is for us to live a life of dedication "as slaves of God." The best way to protect ourselves from misusing our freedom and thus becoming enslaved again by worldly ambitions and desires is to be fully absorbed in spiritual pursuits. (Gal. 5:16) Consider, for example, the patriarch Noah and his family. They lived in a violent and immoral world. Yet, they kept free from being entangled in the desires and pursuits of the people around them. How did they manage to do that? They chose to keep busy in all that Jehovah had assigned them to do—build the ark, store up food for themselves and the animals, and sound the warning to others. "Noah did according to all that God had commanded him. He did just so." (Gen. 6:22) The result? Noah and his family survived the end of that world.—Heb. 11:7. *w18.04 10 ¶8; 11 ¶11-12*

Wednesday, September 30

I will give you all this authority and their glory, because it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.—Luke 4:6.

Satan and the demons use not only governments but also false religion and the commercial system to mislead “the *entire* inhabited earth.” (Rev. 12:9) Through false religion, Satan promotes lies about Jehovah. In addition, the Devil seems determined to make as many people as possible forget God’s name. (Jer. 23:26, 27) As a result, sincere individuals who think that they are worshipping God are deceived into worshipping demons. (1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 11:13-15) Satan also promotes lies through the commercial system. For example, this system often teaches people that the best way to be happy is to pursue money and gather many possessions. (Prov. 18:11) Those who believe this lie spend their lives serving “Riches” rather than God. (Matt. 6:24) Eventually, their love of material things can choke any love they had for God. —Matt. 13:22; 1 John 2:15, 16. *w18.05* 23 ¶6-7

Thursday, October 1

Weep with those who weep.
—Rom. 12:15.

We cannot read hearts as Jehovah and Jesus do. Even so, we can try to understand the emotions and needs of others. (2 Cor. 11:29) Unlike the selfish world around us, we strive to “look out not only for [our] own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:4) Congregation elders in particular need to show fellow feeling. They know that they are accountable for the sheep

entrusted to their care. (Heb. 13:17) To help their fellow believers, elders need to be understanding. How can elders demonstrate fellow feeling? A sympathetic elder spends time with his Christian brothers and sisters. He asks questions and then listens attentively and patiently. That is especially important if one of these dear sheep wants to pour out his heart but struggles to find the right words. (Prov. 20:5) By willingly giving of his time, an elder forms strong bonds of trust, friendship, and love with his brothers.—Acts 20:37. *w19.03* 17 ¶14-17

Friday, October 2

Like apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time.—Prov. 25:11.

Appreciation is like a good meal—it is more enjoyable when shared. When we feel appreciated, we are happy. When we express our appreciation, we make others happy. The person who receives our gratitude knows that his efforts to help us, or to give us something we need, were worthwhile. As a result, the bonds of friendship between us and that person are strengthened. Our expressions of gratitude are valuable, as mentioned in today’s text. Imagine how beautiful an apple made of gold and set in silver would look! And just think how valuable it would be! How would you feel if you received such a gift? Well, the words of gratitude you express to others can be just as valuable. And consider this fact: An apple made of gold could last indefinitely. Likewise, your expressions of appreciation may be remembered and treasured by the recipient for the rest of his life. *w19.02* 15 ¶5-6

Saturday, October 3

The man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad.

—Gen. 3:22.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, they sent a clear message: They did not trust Jehovah and his standards. They chose to set their own standards of good and bad. But look at what they lost. They lost their friendship with Jehovah. They also lost the opportunity to live forever, and they passed sin and death on to their children. (Rom. 5: 12) Compare the way Adam and Eve behaved with the way that the Ethiopian eunuch responded when Philip preached to him. The eunuch appreciated so much what Jehovah and Jesus had done for him that he immediately got baptized. (Acts 8:34-38) When we dedicate ourselves to God and, like that eunuch, get baptized, we send a clear message. We show that we appreciate what Jehovah and Jesus have done for us. We also show that we trust Jehovah and recognize that he is the one who should set the standard of good and bad. *w19.03 2 ¶1-2*

Sunday, October 4

I will not renounce my integrity!

—Job 27:5.

When applied to us as servants of God, integrity means wholehearted love for and unbreakable devotion to Jehovah as a Person, so that his will comes first in all our decisions. One basic meaning of the Bible word for “integrity” is this: complete, sound, or whole. For example, the animals sacrificed to Jehovah had to be sound. (Lev. 22:21, 22) God’s people were not allowed to

offer up an animal that was missing a leg, an ear, or an eye; nor could they offer one full of disease. It was important to Jehovah that the animal be complete, sound, or whole. (Mal. 1:6-9) We can understand why Jehovah cares about soundness or completeness. When we purchase something, whether a piece of fruit, a book, or a tool, we do not want one that has gaping holes or parts missing. We want one that is complete, sound, or whole. Jehovah feels similarly when it comes to our love for him, our loyalty. It must be complete, sound, or whole. *w19.02 3 ¶3*

Monday, October 5

How I do love your law! I ponder over it all day long.—Ps. 119:97.

To safeguard our heart, we must not only close it to wrong influences but also open it to positive influences. In ancient walled cities, a gatekeeper closed the gates of the city to stop an enemy invasion, but at other times he opened the gates to allow food and other supplies to be brought in. If the gates were never open, the inhabitants of the city would starve. Similarly, we need to open our heart regularly to the influence of God’s thinking. The Bible contains Jehovah’s thinking, so each time we read it, we allow Jehovah’s thoughts to affect the way we think, feel, and act. How can we get the most from our Bible reading? Prayer is vital to help us “see clearly the wonderful things” in his Word. (Ps. 119:18) We also need to meditate on what we read. When we pray, read, and meditate, God’s Word reaches “deep within [our] heart,” and we come to love Jehovah’s thinking.—Prov. 4:20-22. *w19.01 18 ¶14-15*

Tuesday, October 6

Let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise.—Heb. 13:15.

Jehovah knows that we have different abilities and circumstances, and he deeply appreciates the sacrifices we are able to offer to him. Think of the type of sacrifices that he accepted from the Israelites. Some Israelites were able to offer a lamb or a goat. But a poor Israelite might offer “two turtledoves or two young pigeons.” And if an Israelite could not afford two birds, Jehovah accepted “a tenth of an ephah of fine flour.” (Lev. 5:7, 11) Flour was less expensive, but Jehovah still appreciated that sacrifice, as long as it was “fine flour.” Our kind God feels the same way today. When we give comments, he does not demand that all of us be as eloquent as Apollos or as persuasive as Paul. (Acts 18:24; 26:28) All Jehovah wants is that we give the best comments we can—within our limits. Remember the widow who offered the two small coins. She was precious to Jehovah because she gave the best she could.—Luke 21:1-4. *w19.01 8-9 ¶3-5*

Wednesday, October 7

You will be hated by all people on account of my name.—Matt. 10:22.

As Christ's followers, we expect to be hated. Jesus foretold that his disciples would be severely persecuted during the last days. (Matt. 24:9; John 15:20) Isaiah's prophecy forewarns us that our enemies will do more than hate us; they will use various weapons against us. Those weapons have included subtle deception, blatant lies, and brutal persecution. (Matt. 5:11) Jehovah will not stop our enemies from using

these weapons to wage war against us. (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:17) But we do not need to be afraid. Jehovah said that “no weapon” used against us would “have *any* success.” (Isa. 54:17) Just as a wall protects us from the force of a destructive rainstorm, so Jehovah protects us against “the blast of the tyrants.” (Isa. 25:4, 5) Our enemies will never succeed in causing us any lasting harm. (Isa. 65:17) All enemies of God's people “will be brought to nothing and perish.”—Isa. 41:11, 12. *w19.01 6-7 ¶13-16*

Thursday, October 8

Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.—2 Cor. 3:17.

Young ones, Jehovah loves freedom, and he put that love in your heart. At the same time, however, he wants you to use your freedom responsibly, which is a protection for you. Perhaps you know others who view pornography or who engage in sexual immorality, high-risk sports, or drug and alcohol abuse. To be sure, they may enjoy a few moments of excitement or pleasure. But often that comes at great cost, perhaps in the form of disease, addiction, or even death. (Gal. 6:7, 8) Yes, their “freedom” is a cruel self-deception. (Titus 3:3) By comparison, how many people do you know who became sick *because* they adhered to Bible standards? Clearly, obedience to Jehovah is both healthful and liberating. (Ps. 19:7-11) What is more, when you use your freedom wisely—that is, within the bounds of God's perfect laws and principles—you show God, as well as your parents, that you can be trusted with more freedom.—Rom. 8:21. *w18.12 22-23 ¶16-17*

Friday, October 9

A man will leave his father and his mother and he will stick to his wife, and they will become one flesh.—Gen. 2:24.

Adam's sin brought changes. One was death, which would affect marriage. We can see that from what the apostle Paul wrote when explaining that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. He revealed that death ends a marriage and that the surviving mate can thereafter remarry. (Rom. 7:1-3) The Law that God gave to the nation of Israel provided details about marriage. It allowed for polygamy, a practice that existed even before God gave Israel the Law. However, polygamy was regulated, prohibiting abuses. For example, if an Israelite married a slave and later took a second wife, he could not diminish his first wife's food, clothing, and marital due. God required that he protect and care for her. (Ex. 21:9, 10) We are not under the Law, but we can still see from it Jehovah's interest in marriage. Does that not help you to esteem marriage? *w18.12 10 ¶3; 11 ¶5-6*

Saturday, October 10

You will not believe even if it is told to you.—Hab. 1:5.

After leaving his worries and concerns in Jehovah's hands, Habakkuk may have wondered how Jehovah would react. As an empathetic and understanding Father, Jehovah did not rebuke him for his sincere complaint. God knew that it was a desperate cry of pain and sorrow. In words really aimed at the wayward Jews, Jehovah informed Habakkuk of what would happen in the near future. It could well be that Habakkuk was the first to whom Jehovah

revealed that the end of that violent era was very near. Jehovah showed Habakkuk that He was ready to act. The punishment of that violent and wicked generation was imminent. By the expression "in your days," Jehovah indicated that this judgment would definitely occur during the lifetime of the prophet or that of his contemporaries. Jehovah's reply was not at all what Habakkuk expected. Was this the answer to his impatient cry? What Jehovah told him surely meant that suffering would increase for all of Judah. *w18.11 15 ¶7-8*

Sunday, October 11

*[God's] will is that all sorts of people should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.
—1 Tim. 2:4.*

What is your view of the many sorts of people who have yet to learn the truth? Although the apostle Paul searched in synagogues for those who already knew something about God, he certainly did not restrict his efforts to Jewish people. On Paul's first missionary journey, for instance, the Lycaonian people mistook him and Barnabas for superheroes—as incarnations of their false gods Zeus and Hermes. Were Paul and Barnabas tempted to ride the wave of popularity? Would that seem to be a refreshing break from all the persecution they had experienced in the last two cities they visited? Did they imagine that the publicity could help to advance the good news? Not at all! They immediately protested by ripping their garments and leaping into the crowd, crying out: "Why are you doing these things? We too are humans having the same infirmities as you have." *—Acts 14:8-15. w18.09 4-5 ¶8-9*

Monday, October 12

Do you not know that unrighteous people will not inherit God's Kingdom? . . . And yet that is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean; . . . you have been declared righteous.

—1 Cor. 6:9, 11.

To accept the truth and live by the Bible's moral standards, we must be willing to make changes in our thinking and conduct. Note what Peter wrote regarding these adjustments: "As obedient children, stop being molded by the desires you formerly had in your ignorance, but . . . become holy yourselves in all your conduct." (1 Pet. 1:14, 15) For people in the morally corrupt city of Corinth, buying truth meant making major changes in their lifestyle. Likewise, to be able to buy truth, many today have turned their back on ungodly conduct. Peter further reminded Christians in his day: "The time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have done the will of the nations when you carried on in acts of brazen conduct, unbridled passions, overdrinking, wild parties, drinking bouts, and lawless idolatries."—1 Pet. 4:3. *w18.11* 6 ¶13

Tuesday, October 13

All those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers.—Acts 13:48.

How can we know who are "rightly disposed for everlasting life"? As in the first century, the only way to find those people is to give a witness. Thus, we need to do just as Jesus instructed: "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving." (Matt. 10:11) We do not expect insincere people, haugh-

ty individuals, or those with no spiritual inclination to respond favorably to the good news. We are looking for people who are honest, humble, and hungry for the truth. We can liken this search to what Jesus as a carpenter might have done in looking for just the right wood for making furniture, doors, yokes, or other things. Once he found suitable material, he could get his toolbox, use his skill, and make the item. We must do likewise as we endeavor to make disciples of honesthearted people.—Matt. 28:19, 20. *w18.10* 12 ¶3-4

Wednesday, October 14

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began to preach the Christ to them.—Acts 8:5.

Philip the evangelizer provides a fine example of one who stayed focused on his ministry despite changing circumstances. In Jerusalem, a wave of persecution arose following the martyrdom of Stephen. At the time, Philip was enjoying a new privilege of service. (Acts 6:1-6) But when Christ's followers were scattered, Philip could not just watch and do nothing. He went to preach in Samaria, a city that was largely untouched by the good news at that time. (Matt. 10:5; Acts 8:1) Philip was willing to go wherever God's spirit would lead him, so Jehovah used him to open up new territories. His impartial approach was likely refreshing to the Samaritans, who were used to being treated with disdain by the Jews. Little wonder that crowds listened to him "with one accord"! (Acts 8:6-8) Philip stayed focused on his ministry, and as a result, he and his family were richly blessed by Jehovah.—Acts 21:8, 9. *w18.10* 30 ¶14-16

Thursday, October 15

Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works.

—Heb. 10:24.

One time when Jesus was in the Decapolis region, people “brought him a deaf man with a speech impediment.” (Mark 7:31-35) Instead of healing him in public, Jesus “took him aside” and healed him. Why? The man’s disabilities may have made him feel uncomfortable in a crowd. Perhaps sensing this, Jesus healed him in private. Of course, we cannot perform miraculous cures. But we can—and should—show thoughtful regard for the needs and feelings of our fellow worshippers. Jesus understood how the deaf man felt and treated him thoughtfully. Likewise, we should show consideration for the elderly and the infirm. The Christian congregation is marked, not by mere efficiency, but by love. (John 13:34, 35) That love moves us to go out of our way to help older ones and those with disabilities to attend Christian meetings and to preach the good news. That is so even if what they can do is limited.—Matt. 13:23. *w18.09 29-30 ¶7-8*

Friday, October 16

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

—Rom. 15:2.

Every one of Jehovah’s sheep is extremely precious to him and to Jesus, who provided the ransom sacrifice. (Gal. 2:20) We love our spiritual brothers and sisters dearly. And we want to care for them in a tender and loving way. In order to be a source of refreshment, “let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that build one another up.” (Rom. 14:19) How we all look for-

ward to the time when, in the coming Paradise, we will never have reason to be discouraged! There will be no more sickness, wars, inherited death, persecution, domestic strife, and disappointments. When the Millennium is past, mankind will have reached perfection. Those who pass the final test will then be adopted as earthly sons of Jehovah God and have “the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) May we all keep displaying the love that builds up and helping one another to attain that joyful and rewarding goal. *w18.09 14 ¶10; 16 ¶18*

Saturday, October 17

How I do love your law! I ponder over it all day long.—Ps. 119:97.

Studying God’s Word involves more than superficial reading and merely highlighting the answers to study questions. When we study, we consider what the material tells us about Jehovah, his ways, and his thinking. We try to understand *why* God commands one thing and condemns another. We also give thought to what changes we need to make in our life and in our thinking. Although all these aspects might not be considered in every session of study, we profit by spending time—perhaps half of each study period—meditating appreciatively on what we read. (1 Tim. 4:15) As we meditate regularly on God’s Word, we ‘prove to ourselves’ that Jehovah’s reasoning on matters is perfect. We begin to see things from his point of view, and we come to agree with that viewpoint. Our minds are ‘made over,’ and we develop a new pattern of thinking. (Rom. 12:2) Progressively, we make Jehovah’s thoughts our own. *w18.11 24 ¶5-6*

Sunday, October 18

We are God's fellow workers.

—1 Cor. 3:9.

In the first century C.E., Paul referred to himself and certain close associates as “God’s fellow workers” because of their role in planting and watering the seed of Kingdom truth. (1 Cor. 3:6) Today, we too can be “God’s fellow workers” by generously giving of our time, resources, and energy to the divinely commissioned preaching work. What a tremendous privilege this is! Being generous with our time and energy in the preaching and disciple-making work brings great joy. Many who have had the privilege of conducting progressive Bible studies will tell you that few things are more rewarding. Great happiness comes from seeing appreciative individuals light up when they grasp spiritual truths, grow in faith, make changes, and start sharing the truth with others. Jesus also experienced great happiness when the 70 preachers whom he had sent out to the field “returned with joy” because of the favorable results they had experienced.—Luke 10:17-21. *w18.08* 20 ¶11-12

Monday, October 19

Whoever trusts in his own heart is stupid.—Prov. 28:26.

Leaning too heavily on our own understanding can become a snare. We may begin to feel that we can look at a situation and understand it even though we do not have all the facts. Also, a challenge to evaluating matters accurately may be faced when we have a personality conflict with a brother in the congregation. If we constantly dwell on our differences, we may begin to look at our

brother with a measure of suspicion. Thus, if we hear a negative report about this brother, we may be eager to believe it. What is the lesson? Harboring ill feelings toward our brothers can lead to distorted judgments that are not based on the facts. (1 Tim. 6:4, 5) We can prevent our judgment from becoming clouded by refusing to allow envy and jealousy to take root in our hearts. Instead of giving in to such bad feelings, may we recognize our obligation to love our brothers and freely forgive them from the heart.—Col. 3:12-14. *w18.08* 6 ¶15; 7 ¶18

Tuesday, October 20

To Jehovah . . . belong the heavens . . . and the earth with all that is in it.—Deut. 10:14.

By reason of their very existence, all humans belong to Jehovah. (Ps. 100:3; Rev. 4:11) Yet, throughout human history, God has designated specific groups of people as belonging to him in a special way. For example, Psalm 135 refers to faithful worshippers of Jehovah in ancient Israel as “his special property.” (Ps. 135:4) Also, the book of Hosea foretold that some non-Israelites would become Jehovah’s people. (Hos. 2:23) Hosea’s prophecy was fulfilled when Jehovah included non-Jews in his selection of prospective corulers with Christ. (Acts 10:45; Rom. 9:23-26) This “holy nation” is Jehovah’s “special possession” in an outstanding way, its members having been anointed with holy spirit and chosen for life in heaven. (1 Pet. 2:9, 10) What about the majority of faithful Christians today who have an earthly hope? Jehovah also calls them his “people” and his “chosen ones.”—Isa. 65:22. *w18.07* 22 ¶1-2

Wednesday, October 21

Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus . . . He emptied himself and took a slave's form.—Phil. 2:5, 7.

True Christians imitate the Christ, who provided us with the perfect example of how a human can be generous. (Matt. 20:28) Each of us would do well to ask, 'Can I follow Jesus' example even more closely than I am already doing?' (1 Pet. 2:21) We can enjoy Jehovah's favor by imitating his and Christ's perfect examples, by being interested in the welfare of others, and by looking for ways to care for their needs. Indeed, in the parable of the neighborly Samaritan, Jesus made clear that he expected his followers to go out of their way to help others, even those of a different background. (Luke 10:29-37) Do you recall the question that moved Jesus to recount the parable of the neighborly Samaritan? A Jew asked him: "Who really is my neighbor?" Jesus' answer shows that like the Samaritan we must be willing to give generously if we are to enjoy God's favor. *w18.08 19 ¶5-6*

Thursday, October 22

The angel said to her: "Greetings, you highly favored one, Jehovah is with you."—Luke 1:28.

Did Jehovah continue to show Mary due recognition for faithfully caring for and raising his Son? Yes, he did. God had her actions and words recorded in the Bible. Apparently, Mary was not in a position to travel with Jesus during the three and a half years of his ministry. Perhaps as a widow, Mary had to stay in Nazareth. But even though she

missed out on many privileges, she was able to be with Jesus at the time of his death. (John 19:26) Later, though, Mary was in Jerusalem along with the disciples during the days leading up to Pentecost when holy spirit was poured out. (Acts 1:13, 14) She was likely anointed along with the others present. If so, this would mean that she was given the opportunity to be in heaven with Jesus for all eternity. What a beautiful reward for her faithful service! *w18.07 9 ¶11; 10 ¶14*

Friday, October 23

*Do all things for God's glory.
—1 Cor. 10:31.*

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught basic truths to help his disciples recognize the consequences of certain attitudes or actions. For example, he taught that resentment can lead to violence and that lust can lead to adultery. (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28) To help us have a conscience that is properly trained, we should let godly principles guide us and thus bring glory to God. On certain matters, two different Christians with Bible-trained consciences might come to opposite conclusions. Consider the use of alcoholic beverages. The Bible does not condemn the moderate use of alcohol. It does, however, warn against the excessive use of alcohol, as well as drunkenness. (Prov. 20:1; 1 Tim. 3:8) Does this mean that a Christian has no other factors to consider as long as his use of alcohol is moderate? Not at all. While he may be at peace with his own conscience, the Christian must also consider the conscience of others. *w18.06 18 ¶10-11*

Saturday, October 24

Look out for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.—Mark 8:15.

Jesus emphatically warned his disciples to stay clear of the teachings, or leaven, that the Pharisees, Sadducees, and party followers of Herod advocated. (Matt. 16:6, 12) Interestingly, this conversation took place not long after the occasion when the people wanted to make Jesus king. When religion is mixed with politics, violence can easily erupt. Jesus taught his disciples that they must maintain neutrality in these circumstances. That is related to the reason why the chief priests and the Pharisees planned to kill Jesus. They saw him as a political and religious rival who threatened their position. "If we let him go on this way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation," they said. (John 11:48) Thus, High Priest Caiaphas took the lead in plotting Jesus' death.—John 11:49-53; 18:14. *w18.06* 6-7 ¶12-13

Sunday, October 25

Let your love be without hypocrisy.—Rom. 12:9.

An effective bait that Satan uses is curiosity about the occult. Today, he promotes interest in the demons not only through false religion but also through the entertainment industry. Movies, electronic games, and other media make spiritism seem exciting. How can we avoid being caught in this trap? We should not expect God's organization to supply a list of acceptable and unacceptable entertainment. Each

of us needs to train his own conscience to be in harmony with God's standards. (Heb. 5:14) However, we will make wise choices if we apply the apostle Paul's inspired counsel above. We could ask ourselves: 'Will my choice of entertainment make me seem hypocritical? If my Bible students or return visits saw the entertainment I choose, would they think that I practice what I preach?' The more our speech and actions harmonize, the less likely we are to be caught in Satan's snares.—1 John 3:18. *w18.05* 25 ¶13

Monday, October 26

The goodwill of my heart and my supplication to God for them are indeed for their salvation.

—Rom. 10:1.

How can we imitate Paul? First, we strive to maintain a heartfelt desire to find any who might be "rightly disposed for everlasting life." Second, we supplicate Jehovah in prayer to open the heart of sincere ones. (Acts 13:48; 16:14) Silvana, a pioneer for nearly 30 years, says, "Before I go to a house in my territory, I pray to Jehovah, asking him to give me a positive attitude." We also pray to God that angels may direct us to find honesthearted ones. (Matt. 10:11-13; Rev. 14:6) Notes Robert, a pioneer for over 30 years, "To work along with angels who know what is going on in the householders' lives is exciting." Third, we try to see a potential for good in people. Says Carl, an elder, "I look for any small sign that may reveal a person's sincerity, perhaps a smile, a kind look, or an honest question." Yes, like Paul, we can endure in bearing fruit. *w18.05* 15 ¶13; 16 ¶15

Tuesday, October 27

Let us consider one another . . . , encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.—Heb. 10:24, 25.

News of faithfulness on the part of those we have helped in the past can be a real source of encouragement, as it was for the apostle John, who wrote: “No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth.” (3 John 4) Many pioneers can attest to how encouraging it is for them to learn that some of those they helped into the truth years ago are staying faithful and perhaps are even serving as pioneers. Simply reminding a discouraged pioneer of past joys can be a real source of comfort. Many circuit overseers have stated how encouraged they and their wives felt after receiving even a short note of gratitude for their visit to a congregation. The same can be true of elders, missionaries, pioneers, and Bethel family members who receive a word of appreciation for their faithful service. *w18.04 23 ¶14-15*

Wednesday, October 28

[The king] should [not] take many wives for himself, so that his heart [might] not go astray.—Deut. 17:17.

Solomon disobeyed, eventually marrying 700 women. He brought into his household an additional 300 concubines. (1 Ki. 11:3) Many of his wives were non-Israelites, who worshipped false gods. Hence, Solomon also disobeyed God’s law against marrying foreign women. (Deut. 7:3, 4) Solomon’s gradual departure from Jehovah’s requirements led him in time to extreme

wrongdoing. Solomon built an altar to the idol goddess Ashtoreth and at least one other altar to the false god Chemosh. There he joined his wives in pagan worship. He built those altars on, of all places, a mountain located directly in front of Jerusalem, where he had built Jehovah’s temple! (1 Ki. 11:5-8; 2 Ki. 23:13) Perhaps Solomon fooled himself into thinking that Jehovah would overlook his disobedience as long as he also continued to offer sacrifices at the temple. But Jehovah never overlooks wrongdoing. *w18.07 18-19 ¶7-9*

Thursday, October 29

Take up the large shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the wicked one’s burning arrows.—Eph. 6:16.

Some of the “burning arrows” that Satan might fire at you are lies about Jehovah—that He does not care about you and that you are unlovable. Nineteen-year-old Ida struggles with feelings of unworthiness. She says, “I have often felt that Jehovah isn’t close to me and that he doesn’t want to be my Friend.” How does she deal with this attack? “The meetings are a giant boost to my faith,” says Ida. “I used to sit there and never comment, thinking that nobody would want to hear what I had to say. Now, though, I prepare for the meetings and try to answer two or three times.” Ida’s experience highlights an important truth: The literal shield given to a soldier had fixed dimensions, but the size of our shield of faith can either shrink or grow. It is up to us. (Matt. 14:31; 2 Thess. 1:3) How important it is that we build up our faith! *w18.05 29-30 ¶12-14*

Friday, October 30

What must I do to get saved?

—Acts 16:30.

The jailer had a change of heart and asked for help only *after* the earthquake struck. (Acts 16:25-34) Similarly, some individuals today who have not responded to the Bible's message before may have a change of heart and look for help when their world is suddenly shaken by a seismic event. Perhaps they may have lost their longtime job unexpectedly and are left in shock. Others may be at a loss after being diagnosed with a serious illness, or they may be heartbroken after losing a loved one in death. They may ask questions about the meaning of life that at one time they ignored. Perhaps they even wonder, 'What must I do to get saved?' When we meet them, they may want to listen to our message of hope for the first time in their life. Therefore, by faithfully continuing in our preaching work, we make sure that we will be available to give comfort to people at a time when they may be ready to accept it.—Isa. 61:1. *w18.05* 19-20 ¶10-12

Saturday, October 31

Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news.—Luke 4:18.

Today, the vast majority of people are still blinded by the god of this system of things and are in bondage—religious, economic, and social. (2 Cor. 4:4) It is our privilege to follow Jesus' example of helping people to come to know and worship Jehovah, the God of freedom. (Matt. 28:19, 20) That is not an easy work, and there are many challenges. In

some lands, people are becoming more indifferent, some even hostile. The question that each of us should consider is, 'Can I use my freedom to give greater support to the Kingdom work?' It is most encouraging to see that many have sensed the urgency of our times and have simplified their lives so as to share in the full-time ministry. (1 Cor. 9:19, 23) Some of them serve within their local territories; others move to where the need is greater. What a splendid result of making wise use of the freedom to serve Jehovah!—Ps. 110:3. *w18.04* 11-12 ¶13-14

Sunday, November 1

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.—John 6:58.

When we serve Jehovah, we have the prospect of eventually gaining all that Adam and Eve lost, including the opportunity to live forever. Adam and Eve chose not to serve Jehovah because they failed to develop a strong love for him. Even so, Jehovah allowed them to live long enough to have children and to set their own standards for raising those children. The results of Adam and Eve's decision to be independent of Jehovah soon made it clear how foolish they had been. Their oldest son murdered his innocent brother, and in time violence and selfishness dominated the human family. (Gen. 4:8; 6:11-13) All the while, Jehovah had a means to save all of Adam and Eve's children who want to serve him. (John 6:38-40, 57) As you learn more about how patient and loving Jehovah is, your love for him will likely grow. You will want to reject the course that Adam and Eve chose and dedicate yourself to Jehovah. *w19.03* 2 ¶3; 4 ¶9

Monday, November 2

All of you have . . . fellow feeling.—1 Pet. 3:8.

To develop fellow feeling, try to understand what family members and fellow believers are going through. Take an interest in the teenagers in the congregation as well as in the sick, the elderly, and those who have lost loved ones in death. Ask how they are doing. Really listen as they express themselves. Help them sense that you truly understand what they are dealing with. Offer to help in whatever way you can. When we do this, we show genuine love in action. (1 John 3:18) We need to be flexible when trying to help others. Why? Because people react to hardship in different ways. Some are eager to talk, while others are more reserved. So we want to offer help, but we should avoid asking questions that are too personal. (1 Thess. 4:11) Even when others do open up, we may find that we do not always share their point of view. Yet, we need to recognize that this is how they feel. We want to be quick to listen and slow to speak.—Matt. 7:1; Jas. 1:19. *w19.03 19 ¶18-19*

Tuesday, November 3

*I became very frightened.
—Neh. 2:2.*

Do you have fears when speaking publicly about the truth? Remember Nehemiah. He served in the court of a powerful king. Nehemiah was gloomy because he had heard that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were in ruins. (Neh. 1:1-4) Imagine the knot he might have had in his stomach when the king asked him to explain why he was looking so unhappy! Nehemiah quickly prayed and then gave his answer. In re-

sponse, the king did much to help God's people. (Neh. 2:1-8) Think, too, of Jonah. When Jehovah asked him to speak to the inhabitants of Nineveh, Jonah was so scared that he ran in the opposite direction. (Jonah 1:1-3) But with Jehovah's help, Jonah carried out his assignment. And the words he spoke did much good for those in Nineveh. (Jonah 3:5-10) From Nehemiah we learn the importance of praying before we answer. And from Jonah we learn that Jehovah can help us to serve him despite our greatest fears. *w19.01 11 ¶12*

Wednesday, November 4

No one has left house or [family] for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get 100 times more now . . . and in the coming system of things, everlasting life.—Mark 10:29, 30.

When we choose to live according to Bible truth, our ties with friends and relatives may change. Why? Jesus prayed regarding his followers: "Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17; ftn.) "Sanctify them" can also mean "set them apart." When we accept the truth, we are set apart from the world because we no longer fit into its mold. People view us differently because our values have changed. We live by the standards of Bible truth. Though we do not want to cause division, some friends and close family members may distance themselves from us or even oppose our newfound faith. This does not surprise us. Jesus acknowledged: "Indeed, a man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Matt. 10:36) He also gave assurance that the rewards for buying truth far exceed any price we may pay. *w18.11 6 ¶11*

Thursday, November 5

All the congregations of the nations give thanks.—Rom. 16:4.

The apostle Paul appreciated his brothers and sisters and showed it in the way he talked about them. He always thanked God for them in his private prayers. He also expressed his appreciation when writing to them. In the first 15 verses of Romans 16, Paul mentions 27 fellow Christians by name. Paul specifically recalled that Prisca and Aquila “risked their own necks” for him, and he described Phoebe as “a defender of many,” including Paul. He commended those beloved, hard-working brothers and sisters. (Rom. 16:1-15) Paul was aware that his brothers and sisters were imperfect, but he chose to focus on their good qualities. Imagine how encouraged those brothers and sisters must have been to hear Paul’s comments read aloud to the congregation! As a result, their bond of friendship with Paul no doubt grew stronger. Do you regularly express appreciation for the good things that members of your congregation say and do? *w19.02 16 ¶8-9*

Friday, November 6

I will not renounce my integrity!
—Job 27:5.

Must we be perfect in order to have integrity? After all, we may feel that we are less than sound, or even very flawed. We need not fear, for Jehovah does not focus on our flaws. His Word tells us: “If errors were what you watch, O Jah, then who, O Jehovah, could stand?” (Ps. 130:3) He knows that we are imperfect, sinful humans, and he forgives us generously. (Ps. 86:5) Also, Jehovah knows our limitations, and he does

not expect more of us than we can do. (Ps. 103:12-14) For servants of Jehovah, the key to integrity is love. Our love for God, our loyal devotion to him as our heavenly Father, must remain complete, sound, or whole. If our love remains like that even when we are tested, then we have integrity. (1 Chron. 28:9; Matt. 22:37) We know that Jehovah has righteous standards, and our minds are focused on what pleases our heavenly Father. Our love for him moves us to put him first in the decisions we make and thus display our integrity. *w19.02 3 ¶4-5*

Saturday, November 7

Safeguard your heart.
—Prov. 4:23.

Each time we see the benefits of doing what is right, our faith grows stronger. (Jas. 1:2, 3) We feel good because we have made Jehovah proud to call us one of his children, and our desire to please him becomes stronger. (Prov. 27:11) Each test becomes an opportunity to show that we are not halfhearted about serving our caring Father. (Ps. 119:113) Instead, we prove that we love Jehovah with a complete heart, one that is fully resolved to obey his commandments and to do his will. (1 Ki. 8:61) Will we make mistakes? Yes; we are imperfect. If we do stumble, remember King Hezekiah’s example. He made mistakes. But he repented and kept on serving Jehovah “with a complete heart.” (Isa. 38:3-6; 2 Chron. 29:1, 2; 32:25, 26) Let us, then, reject Satan’s attempts to infect us with his thinking. Let us pray that we develop “an obedient heart” and remain faithful to Jehovah.—1 Ki. 3:9; Ps. 139:23, 24. *w19.01 18-19 ¶17-18*

Sunday, November 8

Let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that make public declaration to his name.—Heb. 13:15.

We benefit ourselves when we comment at meetings. (Isa. 48:17) How so? First, if we plan to give a comment, we are especially motivated to prepare well for the meeting. When we prepare well, we gain a deeper understanding of God's Word. And the deeper our understanding, the better we can apply the things we learn. Second, we will likely enjoy the meeting more because we are involved in the discussion. Third, because it takes effort to comment, we often remember the points we spoke about long after the meeting ends. Also, we please Jehovah when we express our faith. We can be sure that Jehovah listens to us and deeply appreciates the effort we make to comment at meetings. (Mal. 3:16) He shows his appreciation by blessing us when we try hard to please him. (Mal. 3:10) Clearly, we have good reasons to comment at meetings. *w19.01 8 ¶3; 9-10 ¶7-9*

Monday, November 9

Abhor what is wicked; cling to what is good.—Rom. 12:9.

Jehovah takes a very wise approach to his servants. Instead of giving us endless laws, he patiently teaches us to follow the law of love. He wants us to live by godly principles and to hate what is bad. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is a fine example of that teaching, for it addresses the root causes of wrongdoing. (Matt. 5:27, 28) As King of God's Kingdom, Christ will continue to educate us in the new world

so that our attitude toward righteousness and lawlessness will perfectly mirror his. (Heb. 1:9) He will also elevate us to physical and mental perfection. Imagine, you will no longer feel the tug of sin or experience the horrible effects of sin. Then, at last, you will enjoy "the glorious freedom" that Jehovah promised you. (Rom. 8:21) Of course, our freedom will never be absolute. Our freedom will have its fullest expression only when it is guided by godlike love.—1 John 4:7, 8. *w18.12 23 ¶19-20*

Tuesday, November 10

He must write out a certificate of divorce for her . . . and dismiss her from his house.—Deut. 24:1.

An Israelite man could divorce his wife if "he found something indecent about her." The Law did not describe what was meant by "indecent." It must have been something shameful or serious, not some petty offense. (Deut. 23:14) Sadly, by Jesus' day many Jews divorced "on every sort of grounds." (Matt. 19:3) We would surely not want to adopt their attitude. The prophet Malachi revealed God's view of divorce. That was at a time when it was common for a man treacherously to divorce 'the wife of his youth,' maybe to marry a younger, pagan woman. Regarding God's view, Malachi wrote: "I hate divorce." (Mal. 2:14-16) That was in line with what God's Word says about the first marriage: "[A man] will stick to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) Jesus upheld his Father's view of marriage, saying: "What God has yoked together, let no man put apart."—Matt. 19:6. *w18.12 11 ¶7-8*

Wednesday, November 11

The harvest is great, but the workers are few.—Matt. 9:37.

The circumstances of some brothers and sisters allow them to make themselves available farther afield. Their attitude is similar to that of the prophet Isaiah. In response to Jehovah's question, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he replied: "Here I am! Send me!" (Isa. 6:8) Do you have the desire and circumstances to respond in a similar way to theocratic needs? Concerning the preaching and disciple-making work, Jesus said: "Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matt. 9:38) Can you serve in a field where the need is greater, perhaps as a pioneer? Or can you help someone else to do so? Many brothers and sisters have felt that the best way to show love for God and neighbor is to pioneer in areas or in territories in which there is a greater need for harvest workers. Can you think of other ways to expand or increase your service? Great joy comes from doing so. *w18.08 27 ¶14-15*

Thursday, November 12

Let your way of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things.—Heb. 13:5.

The Gospels give us clear indications of Jehovah's thinking with regard to material things. God hand-picked the human parents who would raise his Son—a couple who were of modest material means. (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24) When Jesus was born, Mary "laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the lodging place." (Luke 2:7) Had Jehovah wanted to,

he could in any number of ways have provided better accommodations for the birth of his Son. What mattered to Him, though, was the spiritual environment in which Jesus would be cared for and raised. From this Bible account, we can appreciate Jehovah's view of material things. Some parents insist on the best for their children materially, even at the expense of their children's spiritual health. Clearly, though, Jehovah considers spiritual matters to be of supreme importance. Have you adopted Jehovah's view? What do your actions reveal? *w18.11 24 ¶7-8*

Friday, November 13

Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!—Ps. 144:15.

Being the Source of happiness, God wants us to be happy, and he gives us many reasons to rejoice. (Deut. 12:7; Eccl. 3:12, 13) In today's world, though, being happy may be a challenge. Why? Stressful events—such as when a loved one dies or is disfellowshipped or when faced with a divorce or the loss of a job—can rob us of happiness. Domestic strife and a breakdown in peaceful communication can erode our sense of well-being. Ridicule by workmates or classmates, religious persecution, or imprisonment can undermine our happiness. So can deteriorating health, chronic illness, or depression. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ, "the happy and only Potentate," delighted in bringing comfort and happiness to people. (1 Tim. 6:15; Matt. 11:28-30) In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identified a number of qualities that can contribute to our happiness despite distressing trials in Satan's world. *w18.09 17-18 ¶1-3*

Saturday, November 14

Do not cut yourselves or shave your foreheads bald for a dead person.—Deut. 14:1.

Giving up unscriptural customs and practices can be one of the most difficult prices to pay for truth. (Prov. 23:23) Although some may find it easy to accept the Scriptural basis for abandoning these practices, others may hesitate to pay the price because of pressure from family members, workmates, and close friends. The situation may become emotionally charged, especially if a custom involves rites in honor of dead relatives. The courageous example of others can help us to make the necessary changes. What did newly converted Christians in Ephesus who had been practicing magical arts do in order to put away those unscriptural practices and buy truth? The Bible explains: “[They] brought their books together and burned them up before everybody. And they calculated their value and found them worth 50,000 pieces of silver.” (Acts 19:19, 20) The faithful Christians made this costly sacrifice and gained priceless blessings. *w18.11 7 ¶15-16*

Sunday, November 15

When they finished circumcising the entire nation, they remained where they were in the camp until they recovered.—Josh. 5:8.

Soon after Israel crossed the Jordan, Joshua met a man carrying a drawn sword. He was none other than the “chief of Jehovah’s army,” who was ready to defend God’s people. (Josh. 5:13-15; ftn.) Joshua received clear instructions from the angelic Leader on how to take the city of Jericho. At first, some of

the instructions may not have appeared to be a good strategy. For instance, Jehovah commanded that all the men be circumcised, which would leave them indisposed for several days. (Gen. 34:24, 25; Josh. 5:2) Likely, those defenseless Israelite soldiers wondered how they would protect their family if enemy warriors raided their camp. But suddenly, the news broke that Jericho was “tightly shut up because of the Israelites.” (Josh. 6:1) Would their trust in God’s direction not have been strengthened by such an unexpected turn of events? *w18.10 23 ¶15-7*

Monday, November 16

Why are you doing these things? We too are humans having the same infirmities as you have.
—Acts 14:15.

How might we imitate Paul’s exemplary humility? First, we must resist any temptation to expect or accept adulation for what we accomplish in Jehovah’s strength. Each of us does well to ask himself: ‘How do I view the people to whom I preach? Might I unwittingly harbor toward certain people a bias that is common in my community?’ Commendably, Jehovah’s Witnesses around the world have been analyzing their territories to determine whether there are yet more who might respond to the good news. At times, this may require learning the languages and customs of those whom society in general has marginalized. In no way should Witnesses who reach out to such ones view themselves as superior. Rather, they seek to understand each individual in order to reach his heart with the Kingdom message. *w18.09 5 ¶9, 11*

Tuesday, November 17

*Judas the Galilean rose up . . . ,
and he drew followers after
himself.—Acts 5:37.*

The Romans had Judas executed. Apart from Judas and the other extremists, ordinary Jews were keenly awaiting the arrival of a political Messiah. That is, they expected that when the Messiah appeared, he would bring glory to their nation and freedom from the yoke of Rome. (Luke 2:38; 3:15) Many believed that the Messiah would establish a kingdom on earth in Israel. When that occurred, millions of Jews scattered abroad would return to their homeland. Recall that John the Baptist once asked Jesus: “Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?” (Matt. 11:2, 3) John may have wanted to know whether someone else would fulfill all the hopes of the Jews. The two disciples who met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus also had unfulfilled hopes about the Messiah. (Luke 24:21) Soon thereafter, Jesus’ apostles asked him: “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”—Acts 1:6. *w18.06 4 ¶3-4*

Wednesday, November 18

*The naive person believes every
word.—Prov. 14:15.*

We need to be especially cautious when we come across reports regarding Jehovah’s people. Never forget that Satan is the accuser of God’s faithful servants. (Rev. 12:10) Therefore, Jesus warned that opposers would “lyingly say every sort of wicked thing” against us. (Matt. 5:11) If we take that warning seriously, we will not be shocked when we hear outrageous state-

ments about Jehovah’s people. Do you enjoy sending e-mails and text messages to your friends and acquaintances? If so, when you see a newly published story in the news media or hear an experience, you might feel like a news reporter who wants to be the first to break an exciting story. However, before you send that text message or e-mail, ask yourself: ‘Am I certain that the information I am about to spread is true? Do I really have the facts?’ If you are not certain, you could unwittingly circulate false information among our brotherhood. If in doubt, hit the delete key, not the send button. *w18.08 3 ¶3; 4 ¶6-7*

Thursday, November 19

*Practice giving, and people will
give to you.—Luke 6:38.*

Jesus wants us to find happiness by being generous. Many people react favorably to generosity. Of course, not all respond positively, but when they do, their gratitude can start a chain reaction. So practice giving whether people seem to appreciate it or not. You never know how much good you can do with just one act of generosity. Truly generous people do not give in order to get something in return. Jesus had this in mind when he taught: “When you spread a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; and you will be happy, because they have nothing with which to repay you.” (Luke 14:13, 14) “The generous person will be blessed,” said one inspired writer. Another said: “Happy is anyone who shows consideration to the lowly one.” (Prov. 22:9; Ps. 41:1) Indeed, we should give because we derive pleasure from helping others. *w18.08 21-22 ¶15-16*

Friday, November 20

Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.

—Prov. 3:5, 6.

Obtaining the facts and evaluating them accurately present a challenge today because of the abundance of low-quality information, reports filled with half-truths, and our own imperfection. What will help us with this challenging task? We must know and apply Bible principles. One such principle is that it is foolish and humiliating to reply to a matter before hearing the facts. (Prov. 18:13) Another Bible principle reminds us not to accept every word without question. (Prov. 14:15) And finally, no matter how much experience we have in Christian living, we must be careful not to lean on our own understanding. Bible principles will safeguard us if we are certain to use facts from reliable sources to draw good conclusions and to make wise decisions. *w18.08 7 ¶19*

Saturday, November 21

Should we not . . . submit ourselves to the Father of our spiritual life?—Heb. 12:9.

By water baptism, we formally and publicly acknowledge Jehovah's ownership of us and our willingness to subject ourselves to him. Jesus did something similar when at his baptism he, in effect, said to Jehovah: "To do your will, O my God, is my desire." (Ps. 40:7, 8, *ftn.*) How did Jehovah respond to Jesus' baptism? The Bible account says: "After being baptized, Jesus

immediately came up from the water; and look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw God's spirit descending like a dove and coming upon him. Look! Also, a voice from the heavens said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matt. 3:16, 17) Although Jesus already belonged to his heavenly Father, Jehovah was delighted to see his Son's willingness to do His will exclusively. Jehovah is likewise pleased to accept our dedication, and he will honor us with his blessing.—Ps. 149:4. *w18.07 23 ¶4-5*

Sunday, November 22

Must we bring out water for you from this crag?—Num. 20:10.

By using the word "we," Moses was likely referring to himself and Aaron. Those words indicated a gross lack of respect for Jehovah as the true Source of that miracle. This possibility seems to be confirmed by what we read at Psalm 106:32, 33: "They provoked Him at the waters of Meribah, and it went badly for Moses because of them. They embittered his spirit, and he *spoke rashly with his lips.*" (Num. 27:14) Whatever the case, Moses' actions detracted from the honor due Jehovah. Speaking to Moses and Aaron, Jehovah said: "You both rebelled against my order." (Num. 20:24) A serious sin indeed! Previously, Jehovah had denied a whole generation of Israelites entrance into the land of Canaan because of their rebelliousness. (Num. 14:26-30, 34) So it was both appropriate and consistent for Jehovah to make the same judgment with regard to Moses because of his rebellious act. He was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. *w18.07 14 ¶9, 12; 15 ¶13*

Monday, November 23

It is best not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles.

—Rom. 14:21.

Would you be willing to forgo things that are within your right if you could thus avoid stumbling a brother whose conscience differs from yours? No doubt you would. Before they came to a knowledge of the truth, some of our brothers abused alcohol, but now they are determined to abstain from it. Surely, none of us would want to contribute to a brother's falling back into a course that would cause him great harm! (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Therefore, it would be unloving for a host to pressure a brother to drink alcohol if he has declined to do so. While likely in his late teens or early 20's, the young man Timothy submitted to painful circumcision in order to avoid stumbling Jews to whom he was going to preach. His attitude was similar to that of the apostle Paul. (Acts 16:3; 1 Cor. 9:19-23) Like Timothy, are you willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of others? *w18.06* 18-19 ¶12-13

Tuesday, November 24

I will change the language of the peoples to a pure language.

—Zeph. 3:9.

Jehovah draws those whom he allows to become members of his spiritual family, gently attracting honesthearted ones to true worship. (John 6:44) When you first meet someone who is not in the truth, what do you know about that person? Other than his name and physical appearance, probably very little. That is not the case when you first

meet someone who knows and loves Jehovah. Even if that person is from a different background, country, tribe, or culture, you already know much about him—and he about you! For example, you quickly recognize each other's "language"—the "pure language" of truth. As a result, you each know what the other believes about God, moral standards, and the hope for the future, to name just a few. Moreover, those are the most important things to know about a person, the things that build confidence and trust. They also form the basis for wholesome and enduring friendships. *w18.12* 21 ¶9-10

Wednesday, November 25

Unless you get circumcised . . . , you cannot be saved.—Acts 15:1.

Under Christ's direction, the governing body made it clear that non-Jewish Christians did not need to be circumcised. (Acts 15:19, 20) But years after this decision, many Jewish believers continued to circumcise their children. We may wonder, though, 'Why did Jesus allow this issue to remain unsettled for such a long time when his death had abolished the Mosaic Law?' (Col. 2:13, 14) For some, it takes time to adjust to a clarification in understanding. Jewish Christians needed sufficient time to adjust their viewpoint. (John 16:12) Some found it hard to accept that circumcision was no longer a sign of a special relationship with God. (Gen. 17:9-12) Others, out of fear of persecution, were reluctant to stand out in Jewish communities. (Gal. 6:12) In time, though, Christ provided further guidance through inspired letters written by Paul.—Rom. 2:28, 29; Gal. 3:23-25. *w18.10* 24-25 ¶10-12

Thursday, November 26

Caiaphas . . . had advised the Jews that it was to their benefit for one man to die in behalf of the people.—John 18:14.

Caiaphas sent soldiers to arrest Jesus under the cover of night. Jesus was aware of this shameful strategy, so during his final meal with the apostles, he asked them to get some swords. Two would be sufficient to teach them a vital lesson. (Luke 22:36-38) Later that night, Peter used a sword to attack a member of the mob. No doubt, he was incensed at the injustice of Jesus' nighttime arrest. (John 18:10) But Jesus told Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take up the sword will perish by the sword." (Matt. 26:52, 53) This powerful lesson was in harmony with what Jesus prayed about earlier that night—they must be no part of the world. (John 17:16) Fighting injustice was something to be left to God. Consequently, we maintain our peace and unity. And as Jehovah observes our divided world, it must warm his heart to see the unity that exists among his people.—Zeph. 3:17. *w18.06 7 ¶13-14, 16*

Friday, November 27

The dragon became enraged at the woman and went off to wage war with the remaining ones of her offspring.—Rev. 12:17.

In addition to offering bait, Satan tries to bully us into compromising our loyalty to Jehovah. For example, he can maneuver governments into banning our preaching work. Or he can prompt our associates at work or in school to mock us because of our desire to live by the Bible's moral

standards. (1 Pet. 4:4) He might also influence well-meaning family members to discourage us from attending meetings. (Matt. 10:36) How can we cope? First, we must expect this kind of direct assault—Satan is at war with us. (Rev. 2:10) Then, we need to see the bigger issue behind such incidents—Satan claims that we serve Jehovah only when it is convenient. He says that if we are pressured, we will turn our back on God. (Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5) Finally, we have to rely on Jehovah for strength to face the issue. Remember, he will never abandon us.—Heb. 13:5. *w18.05 26 ¶14*

Saturday, November 28

You do not know which will have success.—Eccl. 11:6.

Even if it appears that the Kingdom message we preach is not reaching the hearts of people, we should not underestimate the impact of our sowing work. Granted, many people do not listen to us, but they do observe us. They notice our neat attire, polite behavior, and warm smile. In time, our conduct may help some to see that their negative views about us may not be correct after all. Sergio and Olinda, pioneers, relate: "Because of illness, we did not go to the square for a while. When we returned, passersby asked, 'What happened? We missed you.'" Indeed, as long as we "do not let [our] hand rest" from sowing Kingdom seed, we have a valuable share in giving "a witness to all the nations." (Matt. 24:14) Above all, we have the deep joy that comes from knowing that we have Jehovah's approval, for he loves all those who "bear fruit with endurance"!—Luke 8:15. *w18.05 16 ¶16-18*

Sunday, November 29

Praised be the God . . . who encourages us in all our trials.

—2 Cor. 1:3, 4, *ftn.*

Ever since humankind fell into sin and imperfection, Jehovah has proved that he is a God who gives encouragement. Immediately after the rebellion in Eden, he gave Adam's future descendants reason to take courage. The prophetic promise written at Genesis 3:15 would give humankind hope that eventually "the original serpent," Satan the Devil, and all his evil works would be destroyed. (Rev. 12:9; 1 John 3:8) Jehovah's servant Noah lived in an ungodly world where the only people who worshipped Jehovah were members of his family. With violence and sexual perversion rampant all around him, Noah could have become discouraged. (Gen. 6:4, 5, 9, 11; Jude 6) But Jehovah told Noah that He was going to put an end to that wicked world and instructed him about what he must do to ensure his family's safety. (Gen. 6:13-18) Jehovah proved to be for Noah a God of encouragement. *w18.04 15 ¶1-2*

Monday, November 30

Keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.

—1 Thess. 5:11.

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

We all can be encouraging to a brother or a sister who is in need of comfort. King Solomon wrote: "A word spoken at the right time—how good it is! A cheerful glance makes the heart rejoice; a good report invigorates the bones." (Prov. 15:23, 30, *ftn.*) Paul shows that even singing a Kingdom song together can be a source of encouragement. (Acts 16:25; Col. 3:16) Mutual encouragement will become more and more important as we see Jehovah's day "drawing near."—Heb. 10:25. *w18.04 23 ¶16; 24 ¶18-19*

Tuesday, December 1

He was moved with pity for them.—Mark 6:34.

One of the most heartwarming aspects of Jesus' personality is his ability to understand the challenges that we imperfect humans face. While on earth, Jesus was able to "rejoice with those who rejoice" and "weep with those who weep." (Rom. 12:15) For example, when his 70 disciples returned with joy after completing a successful preaching assignment, Jesus "became overjoyed in the holy spirit." (Luke 10:17-21) On the other hand, when he saw the effect that the death of Lazarus had on those who loved him, Jesus "groaned within himself and became troubled." (John 11:33) What enabled this perfect man to be so merciful and compassionate in his dealings with sinful humans? First of all, Jesus loved people. He was "especially fond of the sons of men." (Prov. 8:31) That love for people moved him to become thoroughly acquainted with the way humans think. The apostle John explains: "He knew what was in man."—John 2:25. *w19.03 20 ¶1-2*

Wednesday, December 2

Strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your very face.—Job 1:11.

Satan attacked Job's belongings, robbing him of his wealth, his servants, and his reputation in the community. He attacked Job's family, robbing him of his ten beloved children. Then he attacked Job's body, robbing him of his health by afflicting him with painful boils that covered him from head to foot. Job's wife was distraught and overwhelmed with grief; she urged him to give up, to curse God and die. Job himself wished for death, but still he kept his integrity. Then Satan tried a different method of attack. He used three men who were companions of Job. The men visited Job for days, but they offered no comfort. Instead they heartlessly lectured and scolded him. They claimed that God was behind his troubles and cared nothing about his integrity. They even suggested that Job was a wicked man who deserved the terrible things that were happening to him!—Job 1:13-22; 2:7-11; 15:4, 5; 22:3-6; 25:4-6. *w19.02 4 ¶7-8*

Thursday, December 3

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.—Ps. 111:10.

Some kinds of fear are good for us. For example, we need to have a healthy fear of displeasing Jehovah. If Adam and Eve had developed that type of fear, they would not have rebelled against Jehovah. But they did rebel. After they did so, their eyes were opened in that they became fully aware that they were sinners. They could only pass sin and death on to their children. Because they could see, or understand, their con-

dition, they became ashamed of their nakedness and covered themselves. (Gen. 3:7, 21) While we need to have a healthy fear of Jehovah, we do not need to have a morbid fear of death. Jehovah has made a way for us to gain everlasting life. If we commit a sin but are genuinely repentant, Jehovah will overlook our mistakes. He will forgive us in line with our faith in the ransom sacrifice of his Son. A primary way we show faith is by dedicating our life to God and getting baptized.—1 Pet. 3:21. *w19.03 5-6 ¶12-13*

Friday, December 4

There was not a man left of them except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

—Num. 26:65.

The Israelites had many reasons for showing appreciation. They were freed from slavery after Jehovah brought the Ten Plagues on Egypt. Then God saved them from disaster by destroying the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea. The Israelites were so grateful that they sang a victory song of praises to Jehovah. But did they remain grateful? When the Israelites encountered new challenges, they soon forgot about all the good things Jehovah had done for them. They then revealed their lack of appreciation. (Ps. 106:7) How? "The entire assembly of the Israelites began to murmur against Moses and Aaron"—in reality, murmuring against Jehovah. (Ex. 16:2, 8) He was disappointed with the ungrateful attitude his people showed. He later foretold that this entire generation of Israelites would perish in the wilderness, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.—Num. 14:22-24. *w19.02 17 ¶12-13*

Saturday, December 5

I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart.—Matt. 11:29.

Jesus did not draw undue attention to himself by requiring an elaborate observance of his death. Instead, he told his disciples that once a year they should remember him by means of a simple meal. (John 13:15; 1 Cor. 11:23-25) The simple but appropriate meal shows that Jesus was not a proud person. We can be happy that humility is one of the outstanding qualities of our heavenly King. (Phil. 2:5-8) How can we imitate Jesus' humility? By putting the interests of others ahead of our own. (Phil. 2:3, 4) Think back to the final night of Jesus' earthly life. Jesus knew that he would soon experience a painful death; yet, he was deeply concerned about his faithful apostles, who would soon be grieving for him. So he spent the last night instructing, encouraging, and reassuring them. (John 14:25-31) Jesus humbly showed more concern for the welfare of others than for himself. What an excellent example he set for us! *w19.01 21 ¶5-6*

Sunday, December 6

Please take pleasure in my voluntary offerings of praise, O Jehovah.—Ps. 119:108.

Do you get a knot in your stomach each time you even think of raising your hand to comment? If so, you are not alone. The truth is that most of us feel some fear when we comment. Actually, those fears can be a good sign. They indicate that you are humble and view others as superior to you. Jehovah loves that quality. (Ps. 138:6; Phil. 2:3) But Jehovah also wants you to praise him and to

encourage your brothers and sisters at the meetings. (1 Thess. 5:11) He loves you and will give you the courage you need. Consider some Scriptural reminders. The Bible says that all of us make mistakes in what we say and how we say it. (Jas. 3:2) Jehovah does not expect us to be perfect, and neither do our brothers and sisters. (Ps. 103:12-14) They are our spiritual family, and they love us. (Mark 10:29, 30; John 13:35) They understand that our comments at times do not come out exactly right. *w19.01 8 ¶3; 10-11 ¶10-11*

Monday, December 7

Remember . . . your Grand Creator in the days of your youth.—Eccl. 12:1.

In today's world, that is not always easy. However, it is by no means impossible. Jehovah wants you to enjoy a truly successful and satisfying life. With God's help, you can succeed, not just in your youth but throughout your life. To illustrate, consider a lesson we can learn from the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land. When the Israelites neared the Promised Land, God did not command them to sharpen their fighting skills or train for war. (Deut. 28:1, 2) Rather, he told them that they needed to obey his commandments and trust in him. (Josh. 1:7-9) From a human viewpoint, that advice would make no sense! But it was the very best advice, for Jehovah gave his people victory after victory over the Canaanites. (Josh. 24:11-13) Yes, obedience to God calls for faith, but that faith *always* leads to success. This truth does not change with the passing of time. It is just as valid today. *w18.12 25 ¶3-4*

Tuesday, December 8

Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.—John 6:68.

Some today have been stumbled by an adjusted understanding of a Bible passage. Others have taken sides with apostates and other opposers who misrepresent our beliefs. As a result, some have deliberately begun “drawing away” from Jehovah and the congregation. (Heb. 3:12-14) How much better it would have been if they had maintained their faith and kept their confidence in Jesus, as the apostle Peter did! Others have left the truth gradually, perhaps without even noticing what was happening. A person who gradually leaves the truth is like a boat that slowly slips away from the riverbank. The Bible describes such a slow change as ‘drifting away.’ (Heb. 2:1) Unlike one who intentionally draws away from the truth, one who drifts away does not do so deliberately. However, such a person strains his relationship with Jehovah and is in danger of losing it. *w18.11 9 ¶5-6*

Wednesday, December 9

Your people will offer themselves willingly.—Ps. 110:3.

Do you desire to receive further training so as to be better equipped to carry out your sacred service? If so, you may qualify to attend the School for Kingdom Evangelizers. This school gives training to spiritually-minded men and women who are in full-time service, so that they can expand theocratic interests in the field. Those who apply to attend this school need to be willing to accept any assignment when

they graduate. Would you be willing to take advantage of this opportunity to reach out for greater privileges of service? (1 Cor. 9:23) As Jehovah’s people, we are moved to be generous—which is a manifestation of goodness, kindness, and love—and to care about others each day. When we do that, we gain joy, peace, and happiness. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Whatever your circumstances in life, you can find joy by imitating Jehovah’s generous personality and by being one of his precious fellow workers! —Prov. 3:9, 10. *w18.08 27 ¶16-18*

Thursday, December 10

What God has yoked together, let no man put apart.—Matt. 19:6.

Someone might ask, ‘Is there ever a basis for a Christian to divorce and remarry?’ Well, Jesus stated his view on divorce: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if ever a woman after divorcing her husband marries another, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18) Clearly, Jesus thus honored marriage and wanted others to do so. A man divorcing his faithful wife (or a woman, her faithful husband) on some pretext and marrying another was committing adultery. This is true because merely divorcing one’s mate does not end the marriage. In God’s eyes, the two would still be “one flesh.” Moreover, Jesus said that a man’s divorcing his innocent wife would make her subject to adultery. How so? Back then, a divorced woman might feel compelled to remarry in order to gain financial support. Such a remarriage would amount to adultery. *w18.12 11 ¶8-9*

Friday, December 11

At my guardpost I will keep standing.—Hab. 2:1.

Habakkuk's conversation with Jehovah gave him a calm heart. So he resolved to keep waiting confidently on Jehovah to act. This was not just a spur-of-the-moment reaction, for he repeated his resolve when he later said that he would "quietly wait for the day of distress." (Hab. 3:16) What does Habakkuk's resolve teach us? First, we must never stop praying to Jehovah, no matter what trials befall us. Second, we need to listen to what Jehovah tells us through his Word and organization. Third, we should patiently wait on Jehovah, fully trusting that he will relieve our pains in his own time. If we continue to talk intimately with Jehovah and listen to him with a waiting attitude, as Habakkuk did, we too will gain a calm heart, which will help us to endure. Our hope will strengthen our patience, which in turn will help us to rejoice despite all the adversities we may face. Hope gives us confidence that our heavenly Father will act.—Rom. 12:12. *w18.11 15-16 ¶11-12*

Saturday, December 12

Women should adorn themselves in appropriate dress, with modesty and soundness of mind.

—1 Tim. 2:9.

What is God's view of stumbling others? Jesus said: "Whoever stumbles one of these little ones who have faith, it would be better for him if a millstone that is turned by a donkey were put around his neck and he were pitched into the sea." (Mark 9:42) Those words express strong feelings! Since Jesus perfectly reflected his Father's person-

ality, we can be sure that Jehovah feels just as strongly about anyone whose callous actions stumble one of Jesus' followers. (John 14:9) Do we share the view of Jehovah and Jesus? Have we made it our own? What do our actions reveal? For instance, suppose we are attracted to a certain style of dress or grooming that is likely to upset some in the congregation or that may well arouse passion in the minds of others. Will our loving concern for fellow believers override our personal preferences in style? *w18.11 25 ¶9-10*

Sunday, December 13

Satan answered Jehovah: "Is it for nothing that Job has feared God? . . . Stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your very face."—Job 1:9, 11.

What makes integrity so vital that each of us needs it? You need integrity because Satan has challenged Jehovah, and he has challenged you. That rebellious angel smeared Jehovah's good name by implying that God is a bad, selfish, and dishonest Ruler. Sadly, Adam and Eve sided with Satan, rebelling against Jehovah. (Gen. 3:1-6) Life in Eden had given them countless opportunities to strengthen their love for Jehovah. But at the time of Satan's challenge, their love was not complete, sound, or whole. Another question arose: Would any humans remain loyal to Jehovah God out of love for him? In other words, are humans capable of showing integrity? That question came to the fore in the case of Job. (Job 1:8-11) Like us, the man was imperfect. He made mistakes. However, Jehovah loved Job for his integrity. *w19.02 3-4 ¶6-7*

Monday, December 14

He . . . sold all the things he had and bought it.—Matt. 13:46.

To show how precious the truth of God's Kingdom is to those who find it, Jesus told about a traveling merchant who was searching for fine pearls. He found one of such high value that he "promptly sold" everything he had to buy it. (Matt. 13:45, 46) Similarly, the truth we found—the truth of God's Kingdom and all the other precious truths we learned from God's Word—is of such high value to us that we willingly and promptly made the sacrifices needed to obtain it. As long as we value the truth, we will "never sell it." (Prov. 23:23) Sadly, though, some of God's people have lost sight of the value of the truth they obtained—and have even sold it. May that never happen to us! To show that we deeply treasure the truth and that we would never sell it, we must heed the Bible's admonition to "go on walking in the truth." (3 John 2-4) To walk in the truth involves living it—giving it priority in our lives and conducting ourselves in harmony with it. *w18.11 9 ¶3*

Tuesday, December 15

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after the people had marched around them for seven days.—Heb. 11:30.

The Israelites were commanded not to attack Jericho but to march around the city once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. Some soldiers may have thought, 'What a waste of time and energy!' But Israel's invisible Leader knew exactly what he was doing. Not only did his strategy strength-

en the faith of the Israelites but it also spared them direct confrontation with Jericho's mighty warriors. (Josh. 6:2-5) What can we learn from this account? We may not at times fully comprehend the reasons for new initiatives put forth by the organization. For example, we may at first have questioned the use of electronic devices for personal study, in the ministry, and at the meetings. Now we likely realize the benefits of using them if possible. When we see the positive results of such advancements despite any doubts we might have had, we grow in faith and unity. *w18.10 23 ¶8-9*

Wednesday, December 16

Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?—Acts 1:6.

Expectations about the Messiah, such as those held by Jesus' disciples, doubtless led the people of Galilee to want Jesus to become their king. We can imagine that they were thinking that Jesus would be an ideal leader. He was an outstanding speaker; he could cure the sick; he could even supply food for the hungry. After Jesus fed about 5,000 men, he sensed the mood among the people. "Jesus, knowing that they were about to come and seize him to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain all alone." (John 6:10-15) The following day on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the enthusiasm may have died down some. Jesus then explained to the crowd the true nature of his work. He had come to bring spiritual, not material, benefits to the nation. "Work, not for the food that perishes, but for the food that remains for everlasting life," he told them.—John 6:25-27. *w18.06 4 ¶4-5*

Thursday, December 17

*No crushed reed will he break,
and no smoldering wick will
he extinguish.—Isa. 42:3.*

Jesus understood the feelings of those who were figuratively like a bruised reed or the wick of an oil lamp about to go out. As a result, he was considerate, kind, and patient. (Mark 10:14) Of course, we do not have Jesus' insight and teaching ability! But we can—and should—be considerate of the people in our territory. That includes how we speak to them, when we do so, and for how long. Today, countless millions have been “skinned and thrown about” by corrupt and heartless commercial, political, and religious leaders. (Matt. 9:36) As a result, many people are cynical and without hope. How important, then, that we be kind and compassionate in our choice of words and also in our tone of voice! Indeed, many are drawn to our message not only because of our Bible knowledge or sound reasoning but also because of our genuine interest in them and our thoughtful manner. *w18.09 31-32 ¶13-14*

Friday, December 18

*Happy are those conscious of their
spiritual need.—Matt. 5:3.*

How do we show that we are conscious of that need? We do so by taking in spiritual food, cherishing spiritual values, and giving priority to worshipping the happy God. If we take those steps, our happiness will grow. We will strengthen our faith in the coming fulfillment of God's promises. (Titus 2:13) Building a strong relationship with Jehovah is a vital part of finding lasting happiness. The apostle Paul was in-

spired to write: “Always rejoice in the Lord [Jehovah]. Again I will say, Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4) To enjoy such a precious relationship, we need to acquire divine wisdom. (Prov. 3:13, 18) However, to be lastingly happy, it is vital that we not only read God's Word but apply it. Confirming the importance of putting into practice what we learn, Jesus said: “If you know these things, happy you are if you do them.” (John 13:17; Jas. 1:25) This is the key to satisfying your spiritual need and being lastingly happy. *w18.09 18 ¶4-6*

Saturday, December 19

*[Epaphras] is always exerting him-
self in your behalf in his prayers.
—Col. 4:12.*

Epaphras knew the brothers well, and he cared for them deeply. His situation as Paul's “fellow captive” did not blind him to the spiritual needs of others. (Philem. 23) And he did something about it. Is that not a mark of unselfish concern? Praying for our fellow servants of Jehovah has real force, especially when we remember them individually, such as by name. (2 Cor. 1:11; Jas. 5:16) Think of those whom you can pray for by name. Like Epaphras, many of our brothers and sisters are praying for those in their congregation and for families who are carrying a heavy load of responsibility or who are facing serious decisions or temptations. In addition, we do well to remember those who have lost loved ones in death, those who have survived recent disasters and wars, and those who are enduring economic crises. Clearly, there are many brothers and sisters who need our prayers and who can benefit from them. *w18.09 5-6 ¶12-13*

Sunday, December 20

There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.

—Acts 20:35.

Paul was referring not only to sharing material things but also to giving encouragement, guidance, and assistance to those in need of these. (Acts 20:31-35) By word and example, the apostle taught us to give of ourselves—our time, our energy, our attention, our love. Researchers in the field of social sciences have also observed that giving makes people happy. According to one article, “people report a significant happiness boost after doing kind deeds for others.” Helping others, researchers say, is important to developing “a greater sense of purpose and meaning” in life “because it fulfills basic human needs.” Hence, experts often recommend that people volunteer for public service to enhance their own health and happiness. This comes as no surprise to those who accept the Bible as the Word of mankind’s loving Designer, Jehovah.—2 Tim. 3: 16, 17. *w18.08 22 ¶17-18*

Monday, December 21

Stop judging by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.—John 7:24.

Through his prophecy about our Lord Jesus Christ, Isaiah warms and reassures our hearts. Isaiah foretold that Jesus would “not judge by what appears to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to what his ears hear.” He would “judge the lowly with fairness.” (Isa. 11:3, 4) Why is this encouraging? Because we live in a world filled with bias and prejudice. We all long for the per-

fect Judge, who will never judge us by our outward appearance! Each day we make judgments about people. Yet, as imperfect humans, we are not able to judge matters perfectly as Jesus does. We tend to be influenced by what appears to our eyes. Nonetheless, when Jesus was on earth, he commanded us, not to judge by “the outward appearance,” but to judge “with righteous judgment.” Clearly, Jesus wants us to be like him and not judge others by their outward appearance. *w18.08 8 ¶1-2*

Tuesday, December 22

[You] will hear a word behind you saying, “This is the way. Walk in it.”—Isa. 30:21.

True, we do not hear God speak to us from heaven. He has, however, provided his written Word, the Bible, in which he gives us instruction. Additionally, Jehovah’s spirit moves “the faithful steward” to keep giving His servants their food supply. (Luke 12:42) What an abundance of spiritual food we receive in the form of printed and online material, videos, and audio publications! May God’s own words, as recorded in the Bible, give us confidence that Jehovah has everything under control and that he will reverse any damage brought on us by Satan and his wicked world. And may we be determined to listen intently to Jehovah’s voice. If we do, we will successfully endure whatever problems we now face and any challenges that are yet to come. The Bible reminds us: “You need endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise.”—Heb. 10:36. *w19.03 13 ¶17-18*

Wednesday, December 23

Jehovah said to Joshua . . . : “Moses my servant is dead. Now get up, cross the Jordan, you and all this people.”—Josh. 1:1, 2.

Because Moses had been Israel's leader for so long, Joshua may have wondered how God's people would respond to his leadership. (Deut. 34: 8, 10-12) One Bible reference work, referring to Joshua 1:1, 2, notes: “In both ancient and modern times a transition of leadership is one of the most precarious times in the security of a state.” Joshua must have had legitimate fears, but within a few days, he took decisive action. (Josh. 1:9-11) His trust in God was not misplaced. As the Bible record shows, Jehovah actually guided Joshua and His people, Israel, by means of an angelic representative. It is reasonable to think that this angel was the Word, God's firstborn Son. (Ex. 23:20-23; John 1:1) With Jehovah's help, Israel successfully navigated the transition from Moses' leadership to that of Joshua. *w18.10 22-23 ¶1-4*

Thursday, December 24

A book of remembrance was written before him for those fearing Jehovah.—Mal. 3:16.

Jehovah recognizes those who willingly serve him, and he writes their names in his “book of remembrance.” Having our name inscribed in Jehovah's “book of remembrance” as his people comes with certain obligations. Malachi specifically stated that we must ‘fear Jehovah and meditate on his name.’ Giving our worshipful devotion to anyone or anything else

would result in our name being removed from Jehovah's figurative book of life. (Ex. 32:33; Ps. 69:28) Hence, our dedication to Jehovah involves much more than a solemn promise to do his will and to submit to water baptism. These actions are brief, and they quickly become part of the past. Our stand on Jehovah's side as his people requires an ongoing demonstration of our obedience to him both in the present and in the future—for as long as we live. —1 Pet. 4:1, 2. *w18.07 23-24 ¶7-9*

Friday, December 25

Now that we have moved beyond the primary doctrine about the Christ, let us press on to maturity.—Heb. 6:1.

This does not happen automatically. We need to “press on,” or keep working at it. Growing to maturity involves advancing to an increased level of knowledge and insight. That is why we have repeatedly been encouraged to read a portion of the Bible daily. (Ps. 1: 1-3) Have you made that a personal goal? Doing such reading can give you greater insight into Jehovah's laws and principles and a deeper understanding of God's Word. The foremost law for Christians is the law of love. Jesus told his disciples: “By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.” (John 13:35) Jesus' half brother James called love “the royal law.” (Jas. 2:8) Paul said: “Love is the law's fulfillment.” (Rom. 13:10) This emphasis on love is not surprising, since the Bible tells us that “God is love.”—1 John 4:8. *w18.06 19 ¶14-15*

Saturday, December 26

They embittered his spirit, and he spoke rashly with his lips.

—Ps. 106:33.

Although the Israelites provoked Jehovah, it was Moses who became embittered. His lack of self-control led him to speak without considering the consequences. Moses allowed the actions of others to distract him from keeping his eyes fixed on Jehovah. Moses handled the first incident correctly. (Ex. 7:6) Yet, it is possible that after dealing for decades with the rebellious Israelites, he had become tired and frustrated. Was Moses thinking mainly of his own feelings instead of how he could glorify Jehovah? If such a faithful prophet as Moses could be distracted and stumbled, the same thing could easily happen to us. Like Moses, we are about to enter a symbolic land, the new world that Jehovah has promised us. (2 Pet. 3:13) None of us want to miss out on that special privilege. To fulfill our goal, though, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jehovah, always seeking to do his will. —1 John 2:17. *w18.07 15 ¶14-16*

Sunday, December 27

You have conquered the wicked one.—1 John 2:14.

Satan cannot force people to act against their own will. (Jas. 1:14) Out of ignorance, many work in harmony with Satan's purpose. But after they learn the truth, each one makes a choice as to whom he or she will serve. (Acts 3:17; 17:30) If we are resolved to do God's will, there is nothing Satan can do to break our integrity. (Job 2:3; 27:5) Satan and the demons have other limitations. For example, nowhere do the Scrip-

tures indicate that they can read the mind or heart of an individual. Only Jehovah and Jesus are spoken of as having that ability. (1 Sam. 16:7; Mark 2:8) If we do our best to speak and act in harmony with God's will, we can be confident that Jehovah will not allow the Devil to do us any lasting harm. (Ps. 34:7) We need to know our enemy, but we do not need to be terrified by him. With Jehovah's backing, even imperfect humans can conquer Satan. If we oppose him, he will flee from us.—Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9. *w18.05 26 ¶15-17*

Monday, December 28

Commit to Jehovah whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

—Prov. 16:3.

Suppose you plan to travel to a distant town for an important event. Getting there requires a long journey by bus. At the bus station, there are many buses. You need to board the bus that is going to your chosen destination! Boarding a bus going anywhere else would mean that you would head in the wrong direction. Adolescents today face a similar situation: a long journey, not by bus, but in life. At times they may feel overwhelmed by the opportunities and decisions that confront them. Youths, you can make it easier for yourselves if you have a good idea where you want to go in life. Will you focus your life on your desire to please Jehovah? That means including him in all aspects of life—education, employment, family responsibilities, and so on. And it means reaching out for spiritual goals. Young people who keep focused on serving Jehovah can be sure of his blessing in making a success of life. *w18.04 25 ¶1-3*

Tuesday, December 29

Oh no, my daughter! You have broken my heart, for you have become the one I have banished.

—Judg. 11:35.

Jephthah kept his vow and sent his virgin daughter to Shiloh to serve at the tabernacle for the rest of her life. (Judg. 11:30-35) However hard this was on Jephthah, it may have been harder still on his daughter, who willingly complied with her father's decision. (Judg. 11:36, 37) She thus relinquished the right to marry, to have children, and to preserve the family name and inheritance. If anyone, then, needed comfort and encouragement, she did. The Bible account states: "It became a custom in Israel: From year to year, the young women of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year." (Judg. 11:39, 40) Do not unmarried Christians who use their singleness to give greater attention to "the things of the Lord" also deserve commendation and encouragement?—1 Cor. 7:32-35. *w18.04 17 ¶10-11*

Wednesday, December 30

Angels . . . did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place.—Jude 6.

A significant number of angels joined Satan's rebellion. Prior to the Flood, Satan lured at least some of them into having immoral relations with the daughters of men. The Bible reveals this truth by symbolically portraying the dragon as dragging a third of the stars of heaven with him in his fall. (Gen. 6:

1-4; Rev. 12:3, 4) When those angels abandoned God's family, they put themselves under Satan's control. These rebels, however, are not just a mob of troublemakers. Satan has set up an imitation of God's Kingdom, with himself as king. In the invisible realm, Satan has organized the demons into governments, given them authority, and made them world rulers. (Eph. 6:12) By means of his spirit organization, Satan exerts authority over all human governments. *w18.05 23 ¶5-6*

Thursday, December 31

I will praise Jehovah, who has given me advice. Even during the night, my innermost thoughts correct me.—Ps. 16:7.

God's love for us is sometimes expressed through fatherly correction. David welcomed such kindly counsel. He meditated on God's thoughts, making them his own and allowing them to mold him. When you in faith do the same, you too will grow in love for God and in your desire to obey him. You will also gain spiritual maturity and depth. A sister named Christin said, "When I do research and meditate on what I read, I get the feeling that Jehovah had this penned just for me!" It is no exaggeration to say that a spiritual outlook on life also gives you exceptional knowledge and insight by enabling you to see the world and its future through God's eyes. Why does God give you such knowledge and insight? He wants you to set sound priorities in your life, to make wise decisions, and to look forward to the future with confidence!—Isa. 26:3. *w18.12 26 ¶9-10*