

To be READ AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE WATCHTOWER STUDY OF THE WEEK OF APRIL 21 - 27, 2008:

Dear Brothers:

As indicated in the Bible at 1 Corinthians 7:31, "the scene of this world is changing." Each passing day confirms that these words are inspired and true. As the "great tribulation" approaches, Satan demonstrates increasing rage against us. -- Matthew 24:21; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; Revelation 12:17.

The Governing Body understands very well the increasing pressures that confront you, the Lord's beloved sheep. Just like the Governing Body of the first century, we do not want you to bear any more burdens than those that are necessary. (Acts 15:6, 28) Consequently, after engaging in a great amount of meditation and prayer, we have decided to adopt measures to alleviate those burdens by modifying the weekly program of meetings. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Beginning January 1, 2009, **the Congregation Book Study will be combined with the Theocratic Ministry School and Service Meeting.** No longer will it be known as the Congregation Book Study. Instead, it will be called the Congregation Bible Study. Following a song and prayer, the length of the study will be twenty-five minutes, and it will be conducted similar to the way it is now. It will be led by a rotation of qualified elders. Next there will come the Theocratic Ministry School, which will last thirty minutes. Then, after another song, the Service Meeting will begin, and it will last thirty-five minutes. The meeting will conclude with a song and prayer. Combined in this way, these meetings will total an hour and forty five minutes, including the prayers and songs.

Meetings for field service will be according to the current system, and will consist of small groups. Later we will be sending additional information about the Congregation Bible Studies and meetings for field service.

This change in our weekly program offers several benefits. For example, making less trips for congregation meetings will save much time as well as fuel which in numerous countries is more and more expensive. But there is a benefit of even greater significance. It will offer more time for the important responsibility of Bible study on a personal and family level.

In effect, the changes in the weekly program will allow us to strengthen the spirituality of the family, devoting one night to Family Worship. Family heads must assume the responsibility that Jehovah has given to them of leading their households in a significant weekly study of the Bible. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) And single brothers and sisters who do not have family responsibilities should use this time for their personal study of the Bible. It is essential to be "buying out the opportune time" and to strengthen one another as we consider the events that are soon to occur. (Ephesians 5:15, 16) The day of Jehovah is indeed approaching rapidly. (Zephaniah 1:14; 2 Peter 3:12) So it is more urgent than ever that we make use of the time that remains to build up one another upon our "most holy faith." (Jude 20)

Let's make good use of these changes while we keep on following the lead of the Great Shepherd who guides us to grassy pastures where we find peace and refreshment. (Psalm 23:2, 3) We pray Jehovah will keep on protecting you and giving you spiritual strength in these difficult times. With Christian love,

Your brothers,

Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses

P.S. to the presiding overseer:

Once the letter has been read in all the congregations that share the same Kingdom Hall, please place this letter on the announcements board, where it should remain for two weeks and then filed.