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THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE
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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 6-14

These articles will deepen our appreciation for the blessings we receive by being in the Christian congregation. We will also see areas in which we personally can build up and help brothers and sisters in our local congregation.

STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 15-24

These two articles consider how applying Bible principles can help us to remain peaceable despite our imperfections and those of others. They also show how using gracious speech can do much to promote good relations.

STUDY ARTICLE 5 PAGES 25-29

The world has a distorted sense of what brings refreshment, emphasizing activities that please the flesh. God's people find refreshment in spiritual things. This article shows how we can have a deep, long-lasting sense of joy and satisfaction.

FIND SECURITY AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

"I will laud you in the big congregation."—PS. 35:18.

WHILE on vacation, Joe and his wife were snorkeling on a tropical coral reef teeming with fish of all colors and sizes. They swam a little farther out to admire the reef below. When the seabed dropped away into a blue abyss, Joe's wife said, "I think we're going out too far." "Relax," Joe replied. "I know what I'm doing." Joe recalls wondering soon thereafter, 'Where have all the fish gone?' With horror, he saw the reason. Out of the deep blue, a shark was heading straight for him. There he was, completely at its mercy. When the shark was just a few feet away, it veered off and disappeared.

² A Christian can become so enamored with the attractions of Satan's system of things—entertainment, work, possessions—that he does not realize that he is getting deeper into dangerous waters. "My experience made me think about the company we keep," says Joe, who is a Christian elder. "Swim where it's safe and enjoyable—in the congregation!" Do not swim into deep water, where you may find yourself spiritually isolated and in peril. If ever you find yourself there, immediately head back to 'safe water.' Otherwise, you might run the risk of being devoured spiritually.

³ Today, the world is a dangerous place for Christians. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Satan knows that his days are numbered, and he is out to devour the unwary. (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:12, 17) However, we are not without protection. Je-

1-3. (a) What may lead some Christians into a spiritually dangerous situation? (b) Where can God's people find protection?

hovah has provided his people with a safe spiritual refuge—the Christian congregation.

⁴ Secular society offers only a limited amount of security—whether physical or emotional. Many people feel that their physical security is threatened by crime, violence, the high cost of living, and even environmental issues. All face the problems of advancing age and ill health. And others who have jobs, homes, adequate finances, and a reasonable degree of health may wonder how long these will last.

⁵ Emotional security has likewise proved elusive for many. Sad to say, multitudes who had hoped to find peace and fulfillment in marriage and with a family have found that their expectations have gone unfulfilled. Spiritually speaking, many churchgoers have been left bewildered and disoriented, questioning the value of the guidance that they have received. That is especially so in the light of the questionable conduct and unscriptural teachings of their religious leaders. Hence, many people feel that they have little choice but to hope in science or in the goodwill and good sense of fellow humans. It is not surprising, then, that people around us feel extremely insecure or that they simply prefer not to think too deeply about their future.

⁶ What a contrast in outlook there is be-

4, 5. How do many people feel about their future, and why?

6, 7. (a) What accounts for the difference in outlook between those who serve God and those who do not? (b) What will we consider?

Swim where
it is safe; stay in
the congregation!



scriptural reasoning, immoral practices, and the consequences of such. Members of the Christian congregation thus experience a tranquility unknown to others.—Isa. 48:17, 18; Phil. 4:6, 7.

⁷ Some examples may help us to reflect on the security enjoyed by those who serve Jehovah in contrast with those who do not. These examples may move us to examine our own reasoning and practices and to consider whether we might more fully apply God's counsel, which is designed to protect us.—Isa. 30:21.

“My Feet Had Almost Turned Aside”

⁸ From early on in mankind's history, those who chose to serve and obey Jehovah sought to avoid close association with those who did not. Indeed, Jehovah indicated that there would be enmity between his worshippers and those who followed Satan. (Gen. 3:15) Because of their firm stand for divinely inspired principles, God's people have acted differently from those who surround them. (John 17:15, 16; 1 John 2:15-17) Taking such a stand has not always been easy. Indeed, some among Jehovah's servants have on occasion questioned the wisdom of a self-sacrificing course of life.

⁹ One of Jehovah's servants who found himself wondering whether he had made

8. What have Jehovah's servants always had to do?
9. Describe the struggle faced by the writer of Psalm 73.



tween those who are part of the Christian congregation and those who are not! Even though we as Jehovah's people have to face many of the same issues and problems our neighbors face, our reaction is quite different. (Read *Isaiah 65:13, 14; Malachi 3:18*.) Why? Because we find in the Bible a satisfying explanation for the condition in which humanity finds itself, and we are equipped to deal with life's challenges and problems. As a result, we are not overly anxious about the future. Being worshippers of Jehovah affords us protection from unsound and un-

wise decisions was the writer of Psalm 73, likely one of Asaph's descendants. The psalmist asked why it is that the wicked often seem to be successful, happy, and prosperous, while some who strive to serve God suffer trials and hardships.—*Read Psalm 73: 1-13.*

¹⁰ Have you ever found yourself asking questions like the ones the psalmist recorded? If so, there is no need to feel excessively guilty or to think that your faith is crumbling. Actually, a number of Jehovah's servants, including some whom Jehovah used to write the Bible, had similar thoughts. (Job 21:7-13; Ps. 37:1; Jer. 12:1; Hab. 1:1-4, 13) Indeed, all who desire to serve Jehovah *must* come to grips with and accept the answer to this problem: Is serving and obeying God the best thing to do? This reflects the issue that Satan raised in the garden of Eden. It is central to the universal question of divine sovereignty. (Gen. 3:4, 5) So all of us do well to consider the matter that the psalmist raised. Should we envy wicked boasters who seem to be getting along just fine? Should we 'turn aside' from serving Jehovah and imitate them? That, of course, is exactly what Satan would like us to do.

¹¹ What helped the psalmist overcome his doubts? Although he admitted nearly turning aside from righteousness, his viewpoint changed when he entered "the grand sanctuary of God"—that is, when he associated with spiritual people in God's tabernacle or temple and reflected on God's purpose. Then it became clear to the psalmist that he did not want to share the lot of evildoers. He

10. Why are the issues the psalmist raised important for you?

11, 12. (a) How did the psalmist overcome his doubts, and what does this teach us? (b) What has helped you arrive at the same conclusion as the psalmist?

could see that their course and choices in life put them on "slippery ground." All those immorally leaving Jehovah, the psalmist perceived, will inevitably come to their end in "sudden terrors," whereas those serving Jehovah will be supported by him. (*Read Psalm 73:16-19, 27, 28.*) No doubt you have seen the truth of that statement. Living for self without regard for divine law might seem attractive to many, but the bad consequences of such a course are inescapable.—Gal. 6:7-9.

¹² What else do we learn from the experience of the psalmist? He found security and wisdom among God's people. He started reasoning clearly and logically when he went to the place where Jehovah was worshipped. Similarly today, we can find wise counselors and enjoy wholesome spiritual food at congregation meetings. For good reason, then, Jehovah tells his servants to attend Christian meetings. There they will feel encouraged and will be incited to act wisely.—Isa. 32:1, 2; Heb. 10:24, 25.

Choose Your Companions Wisely

¹³ Jacob's daughter Dinah was an example of one who got into serious trouble because of associating with worldly companions. The Genesis account about her tells us that she was in the habit of associating with the young Canaanite women in the area where her family dwelled. The Canaanites did not have the same high moral standards as Jehovah's worshippers. On the contrary, what archaeologists have found indicates that the Canaanites' ways led to their land becoming filled with idolatry, immorality, depraved sex worship, and violence. (Ex. 23: 23; Lev. 18:2-25; Deut. 18:9-12) Recall the

13-15. (a) What experience did Dinah have, illustrating what? (b) Why is association with fellow Christians a protection?

outcome of Dinah's association with these people.

¹⁴ A local man, Shechem, described as "the most honorable of the whole house of his father," saw Dinah "and then took her and lay down with her and violated her." (Gen. 34:1, 2, 19) What a tragedy! Do you suppose Dinah ever imagined that such a thing could happen to her? Perhaps she was simply seeking the friendship of the local youths, whom she considered harmless. However, Dinah was greatly deceived.

¹⁵ What does this account teach us? That we simply cannot socialize with unbelievers and hope to suffer no ill consequences. The Scriptures state that "bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Cor. 15:33) On the other hand, association with people who share your beliefs, your high moral standards, and your love for Jehovah is a safeguard. Such good association will encourage you to act wisely.—Prov. 13:20.

"You Have Been Washed Clean"

¹⁶ The Christian congregation has helped many individuals to cleanse themselves of defiling practices. When the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the congregation in Corinth, he commented on changes that Christians there had made to live in conformity with God's standards. Some had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, and so on. "But you have been washed clean," Paul told them.—*Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.*

¹⁷ People who have no faith lack sound guiding principles. They set their own course or they may simply be adrift in a sea of moral abandon, as was true of some of

16. What did the apostle Paul say about some in the Corinthian congregation?

17. How has living by Bible standards changed the lives of many?

those ancient Corinthians before they became believers. (Eph. 4:14) Accurate knowledge of God's Word and purposes, however, has the power to transform for the better the lives of all who apply the Scriptures. (Col. 3:5-10; Heb. 4:12) Many who today are members of the Christian congregation can tell you that before learning of and adopting Jehovah's righteous standards, they lived without moral restraint. Yet, they were unsatisfied and unhappy. They found peace only when they began associating with God's people and living in accord with Bible principles.

¹⁸ In contrast, some who in the past chose to leave the 'safe water' of the Christian congregation now bitterly regret that decision. One sister, whom we will call Tanya, explains that she was "raised around the truth," but when she was 16, she left the congregation to "pursue worldly enticements." Among the results she experienced were an unwanted pregnancy and an abortion. She now says: "The three years I spent away from the congregation left ugly scars on my emotions that will not go away. Something that continues to haunt me is that I killed my unborn child. . . . I want to tell all the young ones who are wishing they could 'taste' the world even for just a little while: 'Don't!' It may taste good at first, but

18. What experience did one young person have, proving what?

How Would You Answer?

- What do we learn from the experiences of the writer of Psalm 73?
- What does Dinah's experience teach us?
- Why can you find security in the Christian congregation?

it leaves an extremely bitter aftertaste. The world has nothing but misery to offer. I know. I tasted it. Stay in Jehovah's organization! It's the only way of life that brings happiness."

¹⁹ Just think what would become of you if you were to abandon the protective environment of the Christian congregation. Many, recalling their futile course of life before they accepted the truth, simply shudder at the thought. (John 6:68, 69) You can continue to find security and protection from the woes and misery so common in Satan's world by staying in close company with your Christian brothers and sisters. Association

19, 20. What protection does the Christian congregation offer, and how?

with them and regular attendance at congregation meetings will continually remind you of the wisdom of Jehovah's righteous standards and will encourage you to live by them. You have every reason to 'laud Jehovah in the big congregation,' just as the psalmist did.—Ps. 35:18.

²⁰ Of course, for various reasons, all Christians go through times when it seems difficult for them to maintain their Christian integrity. They may just need to be pointed in the right direction. What can you—and indeed the rest of the congregation—do to assist fellow believers at such times? The next article will examine how you can 'keep comforting and building up' your brothers.—1 Thess. 5:11.

KEEP BUILDING UP THE CONGREGATION

"Keep comforting one another and building one another up."—1 THESS. 5:11.

BEING a member of the Christian congregation is a great blessing indeed. You have a good relationship with Jehovah. Your reliance on his Word as a guide shields you from the bad consequences of an unchristian lifestyle. You are surrounded by genuine friends, who want you to do well. Yes, the blessings are many. Most Christians, however, are struggling with problems of one kind or another. Some of them may need help to understand the deeper things of God's Word. Others are sick or depressed,

1. What blessings come with being in the Christian congregation, but what challenges may still remain?

or they may be suffering the consequences of unwise decisions. And we all have to live in an ungodly world.

² None of us like to see fellow Christians suffer or struggle. The apostle Paul likened the congregation to a body and said that "if one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it." (1 Cor. 12:12, 26) In such circumstances, we should strive to support our brothers and sisters. There are a number of Scriptural accounts in which congregation members helped others meet and overcome

2. How should we respond to our brothers' hardships, and why?



*When a fellow Christian
is struggling in a difficult situation,
we can provide support*

challenges. As we now consider those accounts, think how you might offer assistance in ways similar to those described. How can you assist your brothers spiritually and thus build up Jehovah's congregation?

“They Took Him Into Their Company”

³ When Apollos took up residence in Ephesus, he was already a zealous evangelizer. “As he was aglow with the spirit,” says the Acts account, “he went speaking and teaching with correctness the things about Jesus, but being acquainted with only the baptism of John.” Apollos’ being unaware of baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit” likely meant that he had either been witnessed to by disciples of John the Baptizer or by Jesus’ followers prior to Pentecost 33 C.E. Though Apollos was zealous, there were some significant gaps in his knowledge. How did association with

3, 4. In what way did Aquila and Priscilla help Apollos?

fellow believers help him?—Acts 1:4, 5; 18:25; Matt. 28:19.

⁴ The Christian couple Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speaking boldly in the synagogue, took him into their company, and taught him further. (*Read Acts 18:24-26.*) This was the loving thing to do. Of course, Aquila and Priscilla would have approached Apollos in a tactful and helpful manner, not making him feel that he was being criticized. It was simply a matter of his not being aware of the history of the early Christian congregation. And Apollos was no doubt grateful to his new companions for sharing these important details with him. Equipped with this information, Apollos “greatly helped” his brothers in Achaia and gave a powerful witness.—Acts 18:27, 28.

⁵ Many in the Christian congregation today are very grateful to those who helped them to understand the Bible. Numerous enduring friendships have been formed between students and their teachers. In most cases, helping people to understand the truth requires scheduling regular conversations with them over a period of several months. However, Kingdom publishers are willing to make that sacrifice because they recognize that it is a question of life and death. (John 17:3) And what a joy it is to see people grasp the truth, live in accord with it, and use their lives to do Jehovah’s will!

“He Was Well Reported On”

⁶ When the apostles Paul and Silas visited Lystra during the second missionary journey, they found there a young man named Timothy, perhaps in his late teens or

5. What loving assistance do thousands of Kingdom publishers offer, and with what result?

6, 7. (a) Why did Paul choose Timothy as a traveling companion? (b) What progress was Timothy helped to make?

early 20's. "He was well reported on by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium." Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois were dedicated Christians, but his father was an unbeliever. (2 Tim. 1:5) Paul may have become acquainted with this family on his first visit to the area a couple of years earlier. But the apostle now expressed particular interest in Timothy because he seemed to be an exceptional young man. Hence, with the approval of the local body of elders, Timothy became an assistant to Paul in missionary activity.—*Read Acts 16:1-3.*

⁷ Timothy had much to learn from his older companion. But learn he did, to the extent that, in time, Paul could confidently send Timothy to visit congregations and act as his representative. In the 15 years or so that Timothy enjoyed Paul's association, the inexperienced and perhaps shy young man progressed to the point of becoming an excellent overseer.—Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 1:3.

⁸ Many young men and women in the Christian congregation today have great potential. If encouraged and nurtured by spiritually-minded companions, these young people can reach out for and accept greater responsibilities among Jehovah's people. Look around in your congregation! Do you see there any young individuals who could make themselves available, as Timothy did? With your help and encouragement, they might become

8, 9. What can congregation members do to encourage young people? Give an example.



Many young men and women in the Christian congregation today have great potential

pioneers, Bethelites, missionaries, or traveling overseers. What could you do to help them reach out for such goals?

⁹ Martin, who has been a member of the Bethel family for 20 years, recalls with gratitude the interest that a circuit overseer took in him 30 years ago while the two were in the field service together. The overseer spoke with enthusiasm about his own service at Bethel when he was a young man. He encouraged Martin to consider the possibility of making himself available to Jehovah's organization in the same way. Martin feels that this memorable conversation was fundamental to choices he later made. Who knows what good *you* can do for young friends by talking with them about theocratic goals?

“Speak Consolingly to the Depressed Souls”

¹⁰ Epaphroditus made a long and fatiguing journey from Philippi to Rome to visit

10. How did Epaphroditus feel, and why?

the apostle Paul, who was imprisoned for his faith. This traveler acted as envoy of the Philippians. Not only did he carry their gift for the apostle but he also planned to stay with him to do whatever he could to assist Paul in his difficult situation. While in Rome, however, Epaphroditus became sick “nearly to the point of death.” Feeling that he had failed in his mission, Epaphroditus got depressed.—Phil. 2:25-27.

¹¹ Various pressures cause people to suffer from depression today. Statistics from the World Health Organization state that as many as 1 in 5 of the population may suffer from depression at some time in their life. Jehovah’s people are not immune. Problems in providing for one’s family, ill health, discouragement over one’s failings, or other factors may contribute to feelings of downheartedness. What could the Philippians do to help Epaphroditus? Paul wrote: “Give him the customary welcome in the Lord with all joy; and keep holding men of that sort dear, because on account of the Lord’s work he came quite near to death, exposing his soul to danger, that he might fully make up for your not being here to render private service to me.”—Phil. 2:29, 30.

¹² We too should encourage brothers who are discouraged or depressed. Doubtless there are positive things that we can say about their service to Jehovah. Perhaps they have made great changes in their lives in order to become Christians or to serve in the full-time ministry. We appreciate those efforts, and we can assure them that Jehovah does too. If advancing age or ill health prevents some faithful ones from doing all they

11. (a) Why should we not be surprised if some in the congregation are depressed? (b) What did Paul recommend in Epaphroditus’ case?

12. What can be a source of comfort to the depressed?

once could, they nevertheless merit all our respect for their years of service. Whatever the case may be, Jehovah’s recommendation to all of his faithful ones is: “Speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all.”—1 Thess. 5:14.

“Kindly Forgive and Comfort Him”

¹³ The first-century Corinthian congregation faced the situation of a man who unrepentantly practiced fornication. His conduct threatened the purity of the congregation and was a scandal even among nonbelievers. Hence, Paul rightly directed that the man be removed from the congregation.—1 Cor. 5:1, 7, 11-13.

¹⁴ That discipline had a good effect. The congregation was protected from a corrupting influence, and the sinner was brought to his senses and to sincere repentance. On the basis of the man’s works befitting repentance, Paul indicated in his second letter to that congregation that the man should be reinstated. This was not all that was required, however. Paul also directed that the congregation “kindly forgive and comfort [the repentant sinner], that somehow such a man may not be swallowed up by his being overly sad.”—*Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-8.*

¹⁵ What do we learn from this account? It saddens us when individuals have to be disfellowshipped. They may have brought dishonor upon God’s name and discredited the congregation. They may even have sinned against us personally. Yet, when the elders appointed to examine the case determine, in line with Jehovah’s direction, that

13, 14. (a) What serious action did the Corinthian congregation take, and why? (b) What was the effect of the disfellowshipping action?

15. How should we view repentant wrongdoers who are reinstated in the congregation?

a repentant sinner ought to be readmitted to the congregation, it indicates that he has been forgiven by Jehovah. (Matt. 18:17-20) Should we not seek to imitate Him? Indeed, to be harsh and unforgiving would be tantamount to opposing Jehovah. In order to contribute to the peace and unity of God's congregation and to have Jehovah's approval, should we not, rather, 'confirm our love' for sinners who truly repent and are reinstated?—Matt. 6:14, 15; Luke 15:7.

“He Is Useful to Me”

¹⁶ Another Scriptural account shows that we should not harbor negative feelings against those who have disappointed us. John Mark, for example, bitterly disappointed the apostle Paul. How? When Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey, Mark went along to assist them. But at a certain point in their journey and for a reason not specified, John Mark left his companions and returned home. Paul was so disappointed about this decision that in the planning stages for a second journey, he had a disagreement with Barnabas about whether Mark should accompany them again. In view of what had happened on the first journey, Paul did not want Mark to travel with them.—*Read Acts 13:1-5, 13; 15:37, 38.*

¹⁷ Evidently, Mark did not allow himself to become overly discouraged by Paul's rejection, for he continued his missionary activity in a different territory along with Barnabas. (Acts 15:39) That he proved faithful and trustworthy is shown by what Paul wrote about him some years later. Paul, now a prisoner in Rome, summoned Timothy by letter. In the same letter, Paul said: “Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to

16. Why was Paul disappointed in Mark?
17, 18. How do we know that the breach between Paul and Mark was resolved, and what can we learn from this?

me for ministering.” (2 Tim. 4:11) Yes, Mark had grown in Paul's estimation.

¹⁸ There is a lesson to be learned from this. Mark developed the qualities of a good missionary. He did not get stumbled over Paul's initial rejection. Both he and Paul were spiritual men, and there was no lasting ill will between them. On the contrary, Paul later recognized Mark as a valuable assistant. So when brothers overcome difficulties and the problems pass, the right thing to do is to move on and continue to help others make spiritual progress. Being positive builds up the congregation.

The Congregation and You

¹⁹ In these “critical times hard to deal with,” you need the help of your brothers and sisters in the congregation, and they need yours. (2 Tim. 3:1) Individual Christians may not always know what course to take in order to handle successfully the situations they are facing, but Jehovah knows. And he can use different members of the congregation—including you—to help others follow the right course. (Isa. 30:20, 21; 32:1, 2) By all means, then, take to heart the apostle Paul's exhortation! Keep on “comforting one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.” —1 Thess. 5:11.

19. What help can all members of the Christian congregation offer to one another?

How Would You Answer?

- Why is building others up needed in the Christian congregation?
- What kinds of difficulties might you help others to overcome?
- Why do we need the help of others in our congregation?

“KEEP CONQUERING THE EVIL” BY CONTROLLING ANGER

“Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, . . . but keep conquering the evil with the good.”—ROM. 12:19, 21.

A GROUP of 34 of Jehovah’s Witnesses were traveling to a branch office dedication when mechanical trouble delayed their flight along the way. What was supposed to be a one-hour fueling stop turned into a 44-hour ordeal at a remote airport without adequate food, water, or sanitary facilities. Many passengers became angry and threatened the airport staff. But the brothers and sisters remained calm.

² Eventually, the Witnesses arrived at their destination in time for the final part of the dedication program. Although tired, they stayed afterward to enjoy association with the local brothers. Later, they learned that their example of patience and self-control had not gone unnoticed. One of the other passengers told the airline, “If it had not been for the 34 Christians on the flight, there would have been a riot at the airport.”

Living in an Angry World

³ The pressures of life in this present wicked system can make people feel angry. (Eccl. 7:7) Often, this anger leads to hatred and outright violence. Wars rage between and within countries, while family tensions bring conflict right into many homes. Such anger and violence have a long history. Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, killed

1, 2. What good example did some Witness travelers provide?

3, 4. (a) How and for how long has violent anger afflicted humans? (b) Could Cain have controlled his anger? Explain.

his younger brother Abel out of jealous anger. Cain committed this vile deed even though Jehovah had urged him to control his emotions and had promised to bless him if he did.—*Read Genesis 4:6-8.*

⁴ Despite his inherited imperfection, Cain had a choice in the matter. He could have held back his anger. That is why he bore clear responsibility for his violent act. Similarly, our imperfect state makes it harder for us to avoid anger and angry acts. And other powerful negative forces add stress in these “critical times.” (2 Tim. 3:1) For example, economic woes can put pressure on our emotions. Police and family-help organizations link crises in the financial system to an increase in angry outbursts and domestic violence.

⁵ Further, many of the people we come in contact with are “lovers of themselves,” “haughty,” and even “fierce.” It is very easy for bad characteristics like these to rub off on us and anger us. (2 Tim. 3:2-5) In fact, movies and TV programs often portray vengeance as noble and violence as a natural and justifiable solution to problems. Typical story lines lead viewers to look forward to the moment when the villain “gets what he deserves”—usually a violent end at the hands of the story’s hero.

⁶ Such propaganda promotes, not God’s ways, but “the spirit of the world” and of its

5, 6. What worldly attitude toward anger might affect us?



Simeon and Levi returned—but after giving in to anger

angry ruler, Satan. (1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 12:12) That spirit caters to the imperfect flesh and is in total opposition to God's holy spirit and its fruitage. Indeed, a fundamental teaching of Christianity is not to retaliate under provocation. (*Read Matthew 5:39, 44, 45.*) How, then, can we more fully apply Jesus' teachings?

Good Examples and Bad

⁷ The Bible abounds in counsel about controlling anger and also contains practical examples of what may happen when we do and when we do not. Consider what happened when Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi took vengeance on Shechem for having violated their sister Dinah. They "became hurt in their feelings and they grew very angry." (Gen. 34:7) Next, the other sons of Jacob at-

7. What resulted when Simeon and Levi did not control their anger?

tacked Shechem's city, plundered it, and took the women and children captive. They did all of this not only because of Dinah but likely also because it was a question of pride, of losing face. They felt that Shechem had offended them and their father, Jacob. But what did Jacob think of their conduct?

⁸ Dinah's tragic experience must have grieved Jacob deeply; yet, he condemned his sons' vengeful course. Simeon and Levi still tried to justify their actions, saying: "Ought anyone to treat our sister like a prostitute?" (Gen. 34:31) But that was not the end of the matter, for Jehovah was displeased. Many years later, Jacob foretold that because of the violent, angry acts of Simeon and Levi, their descendants would be scattered among the tribes of Isra-

8. What does the account of Simeon and Levi show about the taking of vengeance?

el. (*Read Genesis 49:5-7.*) Yes, their uncontrolled anger brought disfavor both from God and from their father.

⁹ It was quite different with King David. He had numerous opportunities to take revenge, but he did not. (1 Sam. 24:3-7) On one occasion, however, he nearly gave in to anger. A wealthy man named Nabal screamed abuses at David's men, though they had protected Nabal's flocks and shepherds. Perhaps feeling offended, especially for his men, David was about to strike back violently. While David and his men were on their way to attack Nabal and his household, a young man informed Abigail, Nabal's discreet wife, of what had happened and urged her to act. Immediately, she put together a large gift and went to meet David. She humbly apologized for Nabal's insolence and appealed to David's fear of Jehovah. David came to his senses and said: "Blessed be you who have restrained me this day from entering into bloodguilt."—1 Sam. 25:2-35.

The Christian Attitude

¹⁰ What occurred with Simeon and Levi and between David and Abigail shows unmistakably that Jehovah opposes unbridled anger and violence and that he blesses efforts to make peace. "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men," wrote the apostle Paul. "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.' But, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his

head.' Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good."—Rom. 12:18-21.*

¹¹ We can apply that counsel. For example, a sister complained to an elder about her new manager at work. She described her as unfair and unkind. She was angry with the woman and wanted to quit. The elder urged her not to do anything rash. He discerned that the sister's angry reaction to the manager's mistreatment had only aggravated the situation. (Titus 3:1-3) The elder pointed out that even if she eventually found another job, she would still need to change the way she responded to unkindness. He advised her to treat the manager the way she herself would like to be treated, as Jesus taught us to do. (*Read Luke 6:31.*) The sister agreed to try. The result? After some time, the manager's attitude softened, and she even thanked the sister for her work.

¹² It might not surprise us when such problems develop with someone outside the Christian congregation. We know that life in Satan's system is often unfair and that we need to fight against letting evildoers incense us. (Ps. 37:1-11; Eccl. 8:12, 13; 12:13, 14) However, when problems occur with a spiritual brother or sister, the pain can be much deeper. One Witness recalled, "My biggest hurdle when coming into the truth was accepting the fact that Jehovah's people are not perfect." We came out of a cold, uncaring world, hoping that all in

* "Fiery coals" is a reference to an ancient method of smelting ore by heating it from above and below to extract the metals. Our showing kindness to those who are unkind may soften their attitude and bring out their better qualities.

9. When did David narrowly avoid giving in to anger?

10. Christians should display what attitude regarding vengeance?

11. How did one sister learn to deal with anger?

12. Why can differences between Christians be especially painful?



Showing kindness can soften the attitude of others

the congregation would treat one another with Christian kindness. Thus, if a fellow Christian, especially one with privileges in the congregation, is thoughtless or acts in an unchristian way, it can hurt us or make us angry. ‘How can such things occur among Jehovah’s people?’ we might ask. Actually, such things occurred even among anointed Christians in the days of the apostles. (Gal. 2:11-14; 5:15; Jas. 3:14, 15) How should we respond when we are affected?

¹³ “I learned to pray for anyone who hurt me,” said the sister just mentioned. “It always helps.” As we already read, Jesus taught us to pray for those persecuting us. (Matt. 5: 44) How much more should we pray for our spiritual brothers and sisters! Just as a father wants his children to love one another, so Jehovah wants his servants on earth to get along. We look forward to living together

13. Why and how should we work to overcome differences?

peacefully and happily forever, and Jehovah is teaching us to do so now. He wants us to cooperate in doing his great work. Therefore, let us resolve problems or simply “pass over” transgression and move ahead together. (*Read Proverbs 19:11.*) Instead of drawing away from our brothers when problems arise, we ought to help one another remain among God’s people, safe in the embrace of Jehovah’s “everlasting arms.”—Deut. 33:27, *American Standard Version.*

Being Gentle Toward All Brings Good Results

¹⁴ To hinder us from spreading the good news, Satan and the demons are actively trying to disrupt happy families and congregations. They try to sow discord, knowing that internal divisions are destructive. (Matt. 12:25) In combating their evil influence, we do well to follow Paul’s counsel: “A

14. How can we combat Satan’s divisive influences?

slave of the Lord does not need to fight, but needs to be gentle toward all.” (2 Tim. 2:24) Remember that our fight is, “not against blood and flesh, but . . . against the wicked spirit forces.” To succeed in this fight, we need to employ spiritual armor, including “the equipment of the good news of peace.” —Eph. 6:12-18.

¹⁵ From outside the congregation, Jehovah’s enemies launch vicious attacks on his peaceful people. Some of these enemies assault Jehovah’s Witnesses physically. Others slander us in the press or in the courts. Jesus told his followers to expect this. (Matt. 5: 11, 12) How should we react? We must never “return evil for evil,” in word or in deed. —Rom. 12:17; *read 1 Peter 3:16.*

¹⁶ Regardless of what the Devil brings upon us, by “conquering the evil with the good,” we can give a fine witness. For example, a congregation on one Pacific island rented a hall for the Memorial. Learning of this, local church officials told their parishioners to gather in that hall for a church service at the time scheduled for our event. The chief of police, however, ordered the church officials to make the hall available for the Witnesses by that time. Nevertheless, when the hour came, the hall was filled with church members and their service began.

¹⁷ While the police were preparing to clear the hall by force, the church president came to one of our elders and asked: “Do you have something special planned for this evening?” The brother told him about the Memorial, and the man replied: “Oh, I didn’t know!” At that, a policeman exclaimed: “But we told you this morning!” The churchman turned to the elder and

15. How should we respond to attacks from outside the congregation?

16, 17. What trying situation did one congregation face?

with a sly smile said: “What are you going to do now? We have a hall full of people. Are you going to have the police chase us out?” He had cunningly maneuvered matters to make the Witnesses appear to be the persecutors! How would our brothers respond?

¹⁸ The Witnesses offered to let the church hold a half-hour service, after which the brothers would proceed with the Memorial. The church service ran overtime, but after the church members filed out, the Memorial went ahead. The next day, the government convened an official board of inquiry. After considering the facts, the board obliged the church to announce that the cause of the problem had been, not the Witnesses, but the president of the church. The board also thanked Jehovah’s Witnesses for their patient handling of a difficult situation. The Witnesses’ efforts to “be peaceable with all men” had borne good fruit.

¹⁹ Another key to maintaining peaceful relations with others is using gracious speech. The following article will discuss what gracious speech is and how we can cultivate and employ it.

18. How did the brothers respond to provocation, and with what result?

19. What else can promote peaceful relations?

Can You Explain?

- Why are people in the world today so angry?
- What Bible examples show the consequences of controlling or not controlling anger?
- How should we react if a fellow Christian hurts us?
- How should we react to attacks from outside the congregation?

GRACIOUS SPEECH PROMOTES GOOD RELATIONS

“Let your utterance be always with graciousness.”—COL. 4:6.

“WHILE preaching from door to door, I met a man who became so angry that his lips quivered and his whole body shook,” reports one brother. “I calmly tried to reason with him from the Scriptures, but his anger only intensified. His wife and children joined in berating me, and I knew it was time to leave. I assured the family that I had come in peace and wished to go in peace. I showed them Galatians 5:22 and 23, where love, mildness, self-control, and peace are mentioned. Then I left.

² “Later, while calling on homes across the street, I saw the family sitting on their front steps. They called me over. ‘What now?’ I thought. The man had a jug of cool water and offered me a drink. He apologized for his rudeness and commended me for my strong faith. We parted on good terms.”

³ In today’s pressure-filled world, encountering angry people, including in the ministry, is often unavoidable. When we do, it is essential that we display “a mild temper and deep respect.” (1 Pet. 3:15) Had the brother mentioned above allowed the householder’s wrath and unkindness to cause him to become angry, the man’s attitude would not likely have softened as it did; he might have become even angrier. Because the brother controlled himself and spoke graciously, the outcome was good.

1. What good resulted from a brother’s gracious speech?
2. Why must we resist letting others make us angry?

What Makes Speech Gracious?

⁴ Whether we are dealing with those outside or those inside the congregation, even with family members, it is vital to follow the apostle Paul’s counsel: “Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt.” (Col. 4:6) Such tasteful, appropriate speech is essential to good communication and peace.

⁵ Good communication does not mean saying everything you are thinking and feeling at any given moment, especially if you are upset. The Scriptures show that uncontrolled expression of anger is a mark of weakness, not of strength. (*Read Proverbs 25:28; 29:11.*) Moses—“by far the meekest” of all men then alive—once let the rebelliousness of the nation of Israel cause him to lose his temper and fail to give glory to God. Moses very clearly communicated how he felt, but Jehovah was not pleased. After 40 years of leading the Israelites, Moses did not have the privilege of taking them into the Promised Land.—Num. 12:3; 20:10, 12; Ps. 106:32.

⁶ The Scriptures commend the exercising of restraint and discretion, or good judgment, when we speak. “In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly.” (Prov. 10:19; 17:27) Yet, dis-

4. Why is it important to use gracious speech?
5. What does good communication not mean? Illustrate.
6. Being discreet in our speech means what?



Let your own emotions settle, and then find an opportune time to talk

cretion does not mean never expressing oneself. It means speaking “with graciousness,” using the tongue to heal rather than to hurt. —Read *Proverbs 12:18; 18:21*.

“A Time to Keep Quiet and a Time to Speak”

⁷ Just as we need to show graciousness and restraint when speaking with workmates or with strangers in the ministry, we also need to do so in the congregation and at home. Venting anger without concern for the consequences can cause serious damage to our own and others’ spiritual, emotional, and physical health. (Prov. 18:6, 7) Bad feelings—manifestations of our imperfect nature—must be controlled. Abusive speech, ridicule, contempt, and hateful wrath are wrong. (Col. 3:8; Jas. 1:20) They can destroy precious relationships with other people and with Jehovah. Jesus taught: “Everyone who

7. What sort of things should not be expressed, and why?

continues wrathful with his brother will be accountable to the court of justice; but whoever addresses his brother with an unspeakable word of contempt will be accountable to the Supreme Court; whereas whoever says, ‘You despicable fool!’ will be liable to the fiery Gehenna.”—Matt. 5:22.

⁸ There are some matters, though, on which we may conclude that it is best to communicate. If something a brother has said or done disturbs you so much that you cannot simply pass it over, do not let hateful feelings fester in your heart. (Prov. 19:11) If someone angers you, get your own emotions under control and then take the steps needed to resolve the matter. Paul wrote: “Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state.” Because the problem continues to trouble you, address it kindly at an opportune time. (Read *Ephesians 4:26, 27, 31, 32*.) Speak with your brother about the matter, frankly but graciously, in

8. When must we express our feelings, but in what way?

a spirit of reconciliation.—Lev. 19:17; Matt. 18:15.

⁹ Of course, you should take care to select the proper time. There is “a time to keep quiet and a time to speak.” (Eccl. 3:1, 7) Moreover, “the heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer.” (Prov. 15:28) This may well involve waiting to talk problems out. Doing so when one is still very upset could make matters worse; but neither is it wise to wait a long time.

Gracious Acts Promote Good Relationships

¹⁰ Gracious speech and good communication help to establish and sustain peaceful relationships. In fact, doing what we can to improve our relationships with others can improve our communication with them. Reaching out to others with sincere, kind acts—finding opportunities to help, giving a gift from the heart, extending hospitality—can contribute to open communication. It can even “heap fiery coals” on a person and may bring out good qualities, making it easier to talk things out.—Rom. 12:20, 21.

¹¹ The patriarch Jacob understood this. His twin brother, Esau, was so angry with him that Jacob fled for fear Esau would kill him. After many years, Jacob returned. Esau came out to meet him, along with 400 men. Jacob prayed for Jehovah’s help. Then he sent ahead to Esau a large gift of livestock. The gift achieved its purpose. When they met, Esau’s heart had softened, and he ran and embraced Jacob.—Gen. 27:41-44; 32:6, 11, 13-15; 33:4, 10.

9. Why should we get our own emotions under control before approaching others?

10. How can performing gracious acts improve relationships?

11. How did Jacob reach out to Esau, and with what result?

Encourage Others With Gracious Speech

¹² Christians serve God, not other humans. Still, we naturally desire others’ approval. Our gracious words can lighten the load of our brothers and sisters. Harsh criticism, however, can make those loads feel heavier and even cause some to wonder if they have lost Jehovah’s approval. Therefore, let us sincerely communicate encouraging things to others, “whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers.”—Eph. 4:29.

¹³ Elders, in particular, should be “gentle” and treat the flock with tenderness. (1 Thess. 2:7, 8) When elders are called upon to give counsel, their goal is to do so “with mildness,” even when speaking with those “not favorably disposed.” (2 Tim. 2:24, 25) Elders should also be gracious in expressing themselves in written correspondence when it is necessary to correspond with another body of elders or with the branch office. They should be kind and tactful, in line with what we read at Matthew 7:12.

Using Gracious Speech Within the Family

¹⁴ It is easy to underestimate the impact that our words, facial expressions, and body language have on others. Some men, for example, may not be fully aware of how deeply their words affect women. One sister said, “It frightens me when my husband angrily raises his voice at me.” Strong words may exert greater force on a woman than on a man and may stay with her for a long time. (Luke 2:19)

12. Why should we use gracious words with our brothers?

13. Elders ought to keep what in mind (a) when giving counsel? (b) when preparing correspondence?

14. What counsel does Paul give husbands, and why?

This is especially true of words spoken by someone a woman loves and wants to respect. Paul counseled husbands: “Keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them.”—Col. 3:19.

¹⁵ In this respect, an experienced married brother illustrated why a husband should treat his wife gently, as “a weaker vessel.” “When you hold a precious and delicate vase, you must not grasp it too firmly, or it may crack. Even if repaired, the crack may remain visible,” he said. “If a husband uses words that are too strong with his wife, he

15. Illustrate why a husband should treat his wife gently.

A man should always speak gently to his wife



may hurt her. This might cause a lasting crack in their relationship.”—*Read 1 Peter 3:7.*

¹⁶ Men too can be encouraged or discouraged by another’s words, including those of their wives. “A discreet wife,” one in whom her husband can really “put trust,” is considerate of his feelings, just as she wants him to be of hers. (Prov. 19:14; 31:11) Indeed, a wife can have considerable influence within the family, for good or for bad. “The truly wise woman has built up her house, but the foolish one tears it down with her own hands.”—Prov. 14:1.

¹⁷ Parents and children likewise should speak to one another with graciousness. (Matt. 15:4) When talking to younger ones, thoughtfulness will help us to avoid “exasperating” them or ‘provoking them to wrath.’ (Col. 3:21; Eph. 6:4, ftn.) Even if the children must be disciplined, parents and elders should speak to them respectfully. In this way, older ones make it easier for the youths to correct their course and maintain their relationship with God. That is so much better than conveying the impression that we have given up on them, whereupon they may give up on themselves. Younger ones might not remember all the counsel they received, but they will remember how others spoke to them.

16. How can a wife build up her family?

17. (a) How should younger ones address their parents? (b) How should older ones address younger ones, and why?

Speaking Good Things From the Heart

¹⁸ Handling anger calmly is not simply a matter of putting on a serene face. Our goal should be more than merely repressing our strong feelings. Trying to remain calm on the outside while boiling with anger on the inside puts us under strain. It is like stepping on a car's brake pedal and gas pedal both at the same time. That puts the car under extra stress and can cause damage. So do not bottle up anger and let it explode later. Pray for Jehovah's help to rid your heart of hurtful feelings. Let Jehovah's spirit transform your mind and heart to conform to his will.—*Read Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23, 24.*

¹⁹ Take practical steps. If you find yourself in a tense situation and you sense anger building inside you, it may help to leave the scene, thus giving your emotions time to settle. (Prov. 17:14) If the one with whom you are speaking starts to get angry, make an extra effort to speak graciously. Remember: "An answer, when mild, turns away rage, but a word causing pain makes anger to come up." (Prov. 15:1) A cutting or aggressive remark would add fuel to the fire even if it is delivered in a gentle voice. (Prov. 26:21) So when a

18. How can we get rid of hurtful thoughts and feelings?

19. What steps can help us to avoid angry confrontations?

Can You Explain?

- Why is it important to select an appropriate time to discuss problems?
- Why should family members always speak to one another "with graciousness"?
- How can we avoid saying hurtful things?
- What can help us to be forgiving?

situation tries your self-control, be "slow about speaking, slow about wrath." Pray for Jehovah's spirit to help you to say good things, not bad.—Jas. 1:19.

Forgiving From the Heart

²⁰ Sadly, none of us have perfect control of the tongue. (Jas. 3:2) Despite their best efforts, even family members and our dear spiritual brothers and sisters may at times blurt out things that hurt our feelings. Instead of quickly taking offense, patiently analyze why they may have said what they did. (*Read Ecclesiastes 7:8, 9.*) Were they under pressure, fearful, not feeling well, or struggling with some external or internal problem?

²¹ Such factors do not excuse outbursts. But our recognizing the factors may help us to understand why people sometimes say and do things they should not and may move us to be forgiving. All of us have said and done things that hurt others, and we hope that they will graciously forgive us. (Eccl. 7:21, 22) Jesus said that in order for us to receive God's forgiveness, we *must* forgive others. (Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:21, 22, 35) Therefore, we should be quick to apologize and quick to forgive, thus maintaining love—the "perfect bond of union"—within our family and within the congregation.—Col. 3:14.

²² Challenges to our joy and unity are likely to increase as this present angry system draws to its end. Applying the practical principles in God's Word will help us to use our tongue to do good, not bad. We will enjoy more peaceful relations within the congregation and within the family, and our example will provide an excellent witness to others about our "happy God," Jehovah.—1 Tim. 1:11.

20, 21. What can help us to forgive others, and why must we do so?

22. Why is it well worth our effort to use gracious speech?

FIND REFRESHMENT IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

*“Take my yoke upon you . . . ,
and you will find refreshment for your souls.”*

—MATT. 11:29.

WHEN the Law covenant was inaugurated at Mount Sinai, it included the weekly Sabbath arrangement. Through his spokesman Moses, Jehovah commanded the nation of Israel: “Six days you are to do your work; but on the seventh day you are to desist, in order that your bull and your ass may rest and the son of your slave girl and the alien resident may refresh themselves.” (Ex. 23:12) Yes, out of consideration for those under the Law, Jehovah lovingly arranged for a day of rest so that his people might “refresh themselves.”

² Was the Sabbath just a day for relaxation? No, it was an integral part of the Israelites’ worship of Jehovah. Keeping the Sabbath allowed family heads time to teach their family to “keep Jehovah’s way to do righteousness.” (Gen. 18:19) It also provided an opportunity for family and friends to get together to reflect on Jehovah’s deeds and to have joyous association. (Isa. 58:13, 14) More important, the Sabbath prophetically pointed forward to a time when true refreshment would come through Christ’s Millennial Reign. (Rom. 8:21) But what about our day? Where and how can true Christians, who are interested in Jehovah’s ways, find such refreshment?

1. What did God arrange for at Mount Sinai, and why?
2. How did Israel benefit from keeping the Sabbath?

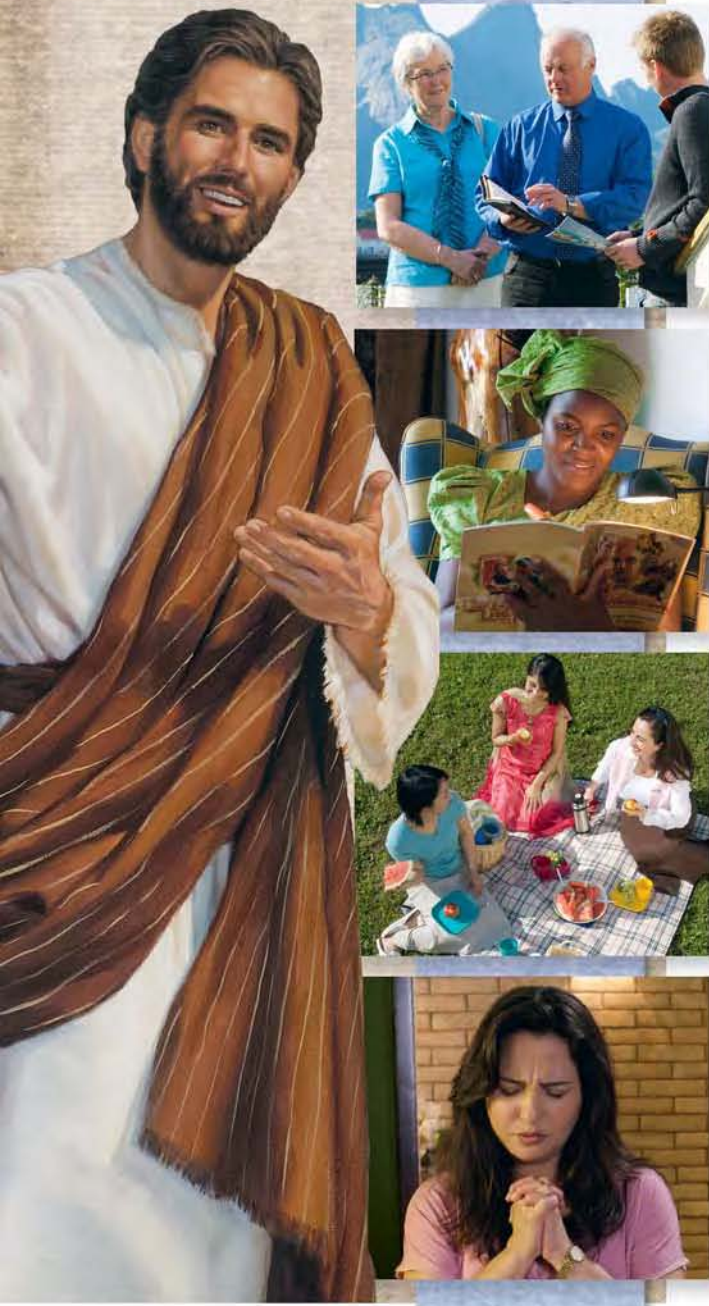
Find Refreshment Through Christian Association

³ The apostle Paul described the Christian congregation as “a pillar and support of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15) Early Christians received much support by encouraging one another and building one another up in love. (Eph. 4:11, 12, 16) While in Ephesus, Paul received an encouraging visit from members of the congregation in Corinth. Notice the effect that it had: “I rejoice over the presence of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus,” said Paul, “for they have refreshed my spirit.” (1 Cor. 16:17, 18) Similarly, when Titus went to Corinth to minister to the brothers there, Paul wrote back to the congregation, saying: “His spirit has been refreshed by all of you.” (2 Cor. 7:13) Likewise today, Jehovah’s Witnesses find genuine refreshment through upbuilding Christian fellowship.

⁴ You know from experience that congregation meetings are a source of great joy. There we find an “interchange of encouragement . . . each one through the other’s faith.” (Rom. 1:12) Our Christian brothers and sisters are not mere passing acquaintances, superficial associates with whom we casually meet now and again. They are true friends, people we love and respect. We

3. In what way did first-century Christians support one another, and with what result?
4. How do congregation meetings refresh us?

By taking Jesus' yoke upon us, we find many sources of refreshment



receive much joy and comfort by regularly assembling with them at our meetings. —Philem. 7.

⁵ Another source of refreshment comes through our annual conventions and assemblies. In addition to supplying life-giving waters of truth from God's Word, the Bible, these larger gatherings provide opportunity for us to "widen out" in our associations. (2 Cor. 6:12, 13) But what if we are shy and find it difficult to meet people? One way to get acquainted with our brothers and sisters is to give of ourselves at a convention. After helping to assist at an international convention, one sister remarked: "Except for my family and a handful of friends, I didn't know many there. But when I helped with the cleaning, I met a lot of brothers and sisters! It was great fun!"

⁶ The Israelites used to travel to Jerusalem for worship at three festivals each year. (Ex. 34:23) That often meant leaving fields and shops behind and traveling for days on foot along dusty roads. Still, going up to the temple resulted in "great rejoicing" as those present were 'offering praise to Jehovah.' (2 Chron. 30:21) Many of Jehovah's servants today likewise find that traveling with their family to visit Bethel, the nearby branch facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses, results in great rejoicing. Could you include such a visit in your next family vacation?

⁷ Getting together with family and friends for social gatherings can also be encouraging. Wise King Solomon declared: "With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and indeed drink and cause his

5. How can we refresh one another at conventions and assemblies?

6. What is one way we can find refreshment while on vacation?

7. (a) How can social gatherings be beneficial?
(b) What can contribute to a memorable and up-building gathering?

soul to see good because of his hard work.” (Eccl. 2:24) Social gatherings not only refresh the soul but also strengthen our bond of love with fellow Christians as we get to know them better. To help contribute to a memorable and upbuilding occasion, it is best to keep social gatherings small and to make sure that they are properly supervised, especially if any alcohol is served.

The Ministry Brings Refreshment

⁸ Jesus was zealous for the ministry, and he encouraged his disciples to be the same. This is evident in his words: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.” (Matt. 9:37, 38) The message that Jesus taught was truly refreshing; it was “good news.” (Matt. 4:23; 24:14) This was in stark contrast with the burdensome rules that the Pharisees imposed on the people.—*Read Matthew 23:4, 23, 24.*

⁹ When sharing the Kingdom message with others, we offer them spiritual refreshment and, at the same time, sound down precious Bible truths into our own minds and hearts. The psalmist aptly said: “Praise Jah, you people, for it is good to make melody to our God; for it is pleasant.” (Ps. 147:1) Could you increase the joy you find in praising Jehovah to your neighbors?

¹⁰ Granted, in some territories people are more receptive to the good news than they are in others. (*Read Acts 18:1, 5-8.*) If you live in an area where there is limited response to the Kingdom message, try to focus on the good that you are accomplishing in the ministry. Remember that your continued effort

8, 9. (a) Contrast Jesus’ message with that of the scribes and Pharisees. (b) How do we benefit by sharing Bible truths?

10. Does our success in the ministry depend upon receiving a positive response to our message? Explain.

to proclaim Jehovah’s name is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58) Moreover, people’s response to the good news is not the measure of our success. We can rest assured that Jehovah will see to it that rightharted people will be given an opportunity to respond to the Kingdom message.—John 6:44.

Family Worship Refreshes

¹¹ Godly parents are responsible for instructing their children about Jehovah and his ways. (Deut. 11:18, 19) If you are a parent, do you schedule time to teach your children about our loving heavenly Father? To help you fulfill this solemn responsibility and address your family’s needs, Jehovah has supplied an abundance of wholesome spiritual food through books, magazines, videos, and audio recordings.

¹² In addition, the faithful and discreet slave class has made arrangements for a Family Worship evening. This is an evening set aside each week for family Bible study. Many have found that this arrangement has drawn them closer together in love and has strengthened their relationship with Jehovah. But how can parents make sure that their family worship is a source of spiritual refreshment?

¹³ The Family Worship evening should not be a dry, somber occasion. After all, we worship “the happy God,” and he wants us to be joyful in our worship. (1 Tim. 1:11; Phil. 4:4) Having an extra evening to discuss spiritual gems from the Bible is a real blessing. Parents can be flexible in their teaching methods, using imagination and ingenuity.

11. What responsibility has Jehovah given parents, and how can they fulfill it?

12, 13. (a) How can families benefit from the Family Worship evening? (b) How can parents make sure that their family worship is a source of refreshment?

For example, one family allowed their ten-year-old son, Brandon, to present a report entitled “Why Did Jehovah Use a Snake to Represent Satan?” This issue had bothered Brandon because he loves snakes, and he was upset that they were associated with Satan. Some families have occasionally put on Bible dramas, with each member of the family playing a character, reading his part from the Bible, or acting out an event. Not only are these teaching methods fun but they can keep your children involved, so that Bible principles can touch their heart.*

Avoid What Might Weigh You Down

¹⁴ Stress and insecurity have increased in these last days of this wicked system of things. Unemployment and other economic hardships affect millions. Even those who have a job often feel that the money they earn is carried home in a pocket full of holes, resulting in little benefit to their family. (Compare Haggai 1:4-6.) Politicians and other leaders seem helpless as they struggle to cope with terrorism and other sources of

* For additional information on how a family study can be made interesting and informative, see *Our Kingdom Ministry* of December 1990, pages 1-2.

14, 15. (a) How have stress and insecurity increased in the last days? (b) What added stress may we face?

How Would You Answer?

- How do Jehovah’s people find refreshment today?
- In what way does the ministry refresh us and those to whom we speak?
- What can family heads do to make sure that their family worship brings refreshment?
- What things weigh us down spiritually?

evil. Many people are plagued by their own personal shortcomings.—Ps. 38:4.

¹⁵ True Christians are not immune to the problems and pressures exerted by Satan’s system of things. (1 John 5:19) In some instances, Christ’s disciples may face certain added stress as they strive to remain faithful to Jehovah. “If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also,” said Jesus. (John 15:20) However, even when “we are persecuted,” we are “not left in the lurch.” (2 Cor. 4:9) Why is that so?

¹⁶ Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you.” (Matt. 11:28) By having full faith in the ransom provision of Christ, we put ourselves in Jehovah’s hands, so to speak. In this way, we obtain “power beyond what is normal.” (2 Cor. 4:7) “The helper,” God’s holy spirit, bolsters our faith significantly so that we can not only endure the trials and tribulations we face but also remain joyful.—John 14:26; Jas. 1:2-4.

¹⁷ Genuine Christians today need to guard against being unduly influenced by the pleasure-mad spirit of this world. (*Read Ephesians 2:2-5.*) Otherwise, we may be ensnared by “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) Or we may mistakenly believe that yielding to the desires of the flesh will bring refreshment. (Rom. 8:6) For example, some people have turned to drug and alcohol abuse, pornography, extreme sports, or various illicit activities in an effort to excite their senses. The “crafty acts” of Satan are intended to mislead by giving one a perverted sense of refreshment.—Eph. 6:11, ftn.

16. What can help us to maintain our joy?

17, 18. (a) What spirit do we need to guard against? (b) What can result from putting emphasis on mundane pleasures?

¹⁸ True, there is nothing wrong with eating, drinking, and engaging in wholesome forms of entertainment when done in moderation. Yet, we do not allow such things to become our primary focus in life. Balance and self-control are vital, especially in view of the times in which we live. Personal pursuits could weigh us down to the extent that we become “inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 Pet. 1:8.

¹⁹ When we are attuned to Jehovah’s regulations, we recognize that any pleasures offered by this world are momentary. Moses

19, 20. How can true refreshment be found?

realized that, and so do we. (Heb. 11:25) The fact is that true refreshment, the kind that brings a deep, long-lasting sense of joy and satisfaction, comes from doing our heavenly Father’s will.—Matt. 5:6.

²⁰ May we continue to find refreshment in spiritual things. By doing so, we “repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires . . . while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of the Savior of us, Christ Jesus.” (Titus 2:12, 13) So let us be determined to remain under Jesus’ yoke by submitting to his authority and direction. In doing so, we will find true happiness and refreshment!