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SONG 54

“This Is the Way”

PREVIEW

Even though Jesus was the greatest Teacher who ever walked the earth, the majority of people in his day were stumbled by him. Why? In this article, we will consider four reasons. We will also see why many today stumble at what Jesus’ true followers say and do. More important, we will learn why we can have strong faith in Jesus so that we are not stumbled.

Will You Stumble Because of Jesus?

“Happy is the one who finds no cause for stumbling in me.”

—MATT. 11:6.

DO YOU remember the moment when you first realized that you had found the truth? The Bible teachings that you were learning seemed so clear—crystal clear! You felt that everyone would want to accept the things you had come to believe. You were convinced that the Bible’s message would give them a meaningful life now and a wonderful hope for the future. (Ps. 119:105) So you enthusiastically shared the truths you had found with all your friends and relatives. But what happened? To your surprise, many rejected what you told them.

² None of us should be surprised when others reject the message we preach. In Jesus’ day, the majority rejected him, even though he performed miracles, proving that he had God’s backing. For example, Jesus resurrected Lazarus—a miracle that those who opposed him could not deny. Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They even wanted to kill both Jesus and Lazarus!—John 11:47, 48, 53; 12:9-11.

³ Jesus knew that most people would refuse to acknowledge him as the Messiah. (John 5:39-44) He told a group of disciples of John the Baptist: “Happy is the one who finds no cause for stumbling in me.” (Matt. 11:2, 3, 6) Why did so many reject Jesus?

⁴ In this article, as well as in the following one, we will examine a number of reasons why many in the first centu-

1. What may have surprised you when you first tried to share the Bible’s message with others?
- 2-3. How did the majority of people in Jesus’ day react to him?
4. What will we consider in this article?

ry did not put faith in Jesus. We will also see why many today allow themselves to be stumbled. Most important, we will learn why we can have strong faith in Jesus so that we are not stumbled.

(1) JESUS' BACKGROUND

⁵ Many stumbled because of Jesus' background. They admitted that Jesus was an amazing teacher and that he performed miracles. But to them, he was just the son of a humble carpenter. And he was from Nazareth, a city that may have been considered of little importance. Even Nathanael, who became a disciple of Jesus, at first said: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Nathanael may have been unimpressed by the city in which Jesus then lived. Or he may have had in mind the prophecy found at Micah 5:2, which foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth.

⁶ *What do the Scriptures say?* The prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus' enemies would fail to concern themselves "with the details of [the Messiah's] generation." (Isa. 53:8) Many such details were prophesied. If those people had taken the time to examine all the facts, they would have learned that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that he was a descendant of King David. (Luke 2:4-7) So Jesus' place of birth was in line with the prophecy found at Micah 5:2. What, then, was the problem? People were too quick to make a judgment. They did not

5. Why might some have concluded that Jesus could not be the foretold Messiah?

6. What should have helped people in Jesus' day to identify Jesus as the Messiah?

have all the facts. Because of this, they were stumbled.

⁷ *Do we see the same problem today?*

Yes. As a whole, Jehovah's people are of a humble background; they are viewed by many as being "uneducated and ordinary." (Acts 4:13) Some feel that God's people cannot teach about the Bible because they have not graduated from recognized theological schools. Others claim that Jehovah's Witnesses are an "American religion," even though, in fact, only approximately 1 in 7 of Jehovah's Witnesses lives in the United States. Still others have been told that the Witnesses do not accept Jesus. Over the years, Jehovah's people have been labeled "Communists," "American spies," and "extremists." Because those who are told these stories do not have or do not accept the facts, they are stumbled.

⁸ *How can one avoid being stumbled?*

People need to examine the facts. That is what the Gospel writer Luke was determined to do. He made it a point to trace "all things from the start with accuracy." He wanted his readers to "know fully the certainty of the things" they had heard about Jesus. (Luke 1:1-4) The Jewish people in ancient Beroea were like Luke. When they first heard the good news about Jesus, they consulted the Hebrew Scriptures to confirm what they were being told. **(Read Acts 17:11.)** In a similar way, people today need to examine the facts. They must compare what they are taught by God's people with

7. Why do many today reject Jehovah's people?

8. According to Acts 17:11, what should people do if they want to identify God's servants today?

Many were stumbled because of (1) Jesus' background, (2) his refusal to perform showy signs, (3) his rejection of some of their traditions, and (4) his lack of interest in political issues.

How could the same things stumble some today?



(See paragraph 5) **1**



(See paragraphs 9-10) **2**

what the Scriptures say. They also need to study the record of Jehovah's people in modern times. If they do a proper "background check," they will not allow prejudice or hearsay to blind them.

(2) JESUS REFUSED TO PERFORM SHOWY SIGNS

⁹ Some in Jesus' day were not satisfied with his amazing teachings. They wanted more. They demanded that he prove that he was the Messiah by displaying "a sign from heaven." (Matt. 16:1) Perhaps they based this demand on a misunderstanding of Daniel 7:13, 14. However, it was not Jehovah's time for that prophecy to be fulfilled. What Jesus was teaching should have been enough to convince them that he was the Messiah. But when he refused to give them the sign they were seeking, they were stumbled.—Matt. 16:4.

9. What happened when Jesus refused to display a sign from heaven?

¹⁰ **What do the Scriptures say?** Of the Messiah, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "He will not cry out or raise his voice, and he will not make his voice heard in the street." (Isa. 42:1, 2) Jesus went about his ministry in a quiet and modest way. He did not build impressive temples, and he did not wear distinctive religious garments or demand to be addressed by pretentious religious titles. When he was on trial for his life, Jesus refused to try to impress King Herod by performing a sign for him. (Luke 23:8-11) Jesus did perform some miracles, but his main focus was on preaching the good news. "This is why I have come," he told his disciples.—Mark 1:38.

¹¹ **Do we see the same problem today?** Yes. Today many are impressed by great cathedrals containing priceless artwork,

10. How did Jesus fulfill what Isaiah wrote about the Messiah?

11. What wrong expectations do some have today?



(See paragraph 13) **3**



(See paragraph 17) **4**

by clergymen with high-sounding titles, and by ceremonies the origin and meaning of which have been forgotten by most. But what are people who attend religious services learning about God and his purposes? Those who attend our Christian meetings learn what Jehovah requires of us and how to act in harmony with his will. Our Kingdom Halls are clean and functional, but they are not extravagant. Those taking the lead do not wear distinctive garb; nor do they take on pretentious titles. God's Word forms the basis for our teachings and beliefs. Even so, many today are stumbled because they think that our way of worship is too simple and that what we teach does not match what they want to hear.

¹² *How can we avoid being stumbled?* The apostle Paul told Christians living in Rome: "Faith follows the thing heard. In turn, what is heard is through the

12. As explained at Hebrews 11:1, 6, on what should our faith be built?

word about Christ." (Rom. 10:17) So we build up our faith by studying the Scriptures, not by participating in unscriptural religious ceremonies, no matter how pleasing to the eye these ceremonies might be. We must acquire strong faith based on accurate knowledge because "without faith it is impossible to please God well." (**Read Hebrews 11:1, 6.**) Thus, we do not need to see a spectacular sign from heaven to prove that we have found the truth. A careful examination of the Bible's faith-strengthening teachings is enough to convince us and to dispel any doubt.

(3) JESUS DISREGARDED MANY JEWISH TRADITIONS

¹³ In Jesus' day, the disciples of John the Baptist were puzzled because Jesus' disciples did not fast. Jesus explained that they had no reason to fast while he was still alive. (Matt. 9:14-17) Even

13. What caused many to condemn Jesus?

so, the Pharisees and other opposers of Jesus condemned him because he did not follow their customs and traditions. They got angry when he chose to heal sick ones on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-6; John 9:16) On the one hand, they piously claimed to honor the Sabbath; but on the other hand, they had no problem doing business in the temple. They were furious when Jesus condemned them for it. (Matt. 21:12, 13, 15) And those to whom Jesus preached in the synagogue in Nazareth were incensed when Jesus made unfavorable historical comparisons that exposed their selfishness and lack of faith. (Luke 4:16, 25-30) Jesus' unexpected behavior caused many to stumble.—Matt. 11:16-19.

14 *What do the Scriptures say?* Jehovah said through his prophet Isaiah: “This people approach me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips, but their heart is far removed from me; and their fear of me is based on commands of men that they have been taught.” (Isa. 29:13) Jesus was right in condemning human traditions that did not harmonize with the Scriptures. Those who put man-made rules and traditions above the Scriptures rejected Jehovah and the one whom he sent as the Messiah.

15 *Do we see the same problem today?* Yes. Many become upset when Jehovah's Witnesses do not join them in celebrating unscriptural traditions, such as birthdays and Christmas. Others become angry when Jehovah's Witnesses

14. Why did Jesus condemn human traditions that did not harmonize with the Scriptures?

15. What disturbs many today about Jehovah's Witnesses?

do not join nationalistic celebrations or do not follow funeral customs that are out of harmony with God's Word. Those who are stumbled in this way may sincerely believe that they are worshipping God acceptably. But they cannot please him if they prefer the world's traditions to the clear teachings found in the Bible.—Mark 7:7-9.

16 *How can we avoid being stumbled?* We need to develop a strong love for Jehovah's laws and principles. (**Read Psalm 119:97, 113, 163-165.**) When we love Jehovah, we will reject any traditions that displease him. We will not allow anything to interfere with our love for Jehovah.

(4) JESUS DID NOT PROVIDE AN IMMEDIATE POLITICAL SOLUTION

17 Some in Jesus' day wanted an immediate political change. They expected the Messiah to free them from the rule of the Roman oppressors. But when they tried to make Jesus their king, he refused. (John 6:14, 15) Others—including the priests—were worried that Jesus would bring about a political change that would antagonize the Romans, who had granted those religious leaders a measure of power and authority. Such political concerns caused many Jews to stumble.

18 *What do the Scriptures say?* Although many prophecies foretold that the Messiah would eventually be a victo-

16. According to Psalm 119:97, 113, 163-165, what must we do and what must we avoid?

17. What expectations led many to stumble in Jesus' day?

18. What Bible prophecies about the Messiah did many disregard?

rious Warrior, other prophecies showed that he would first have to die for our sins. (Isa. 53:9, 12) So why did they have wrong expectations? Many in Jesus' day disregarded any of the prophecies that did not promise immediate solutions to their problems.—John 6:26, 27.

19 Do we see the same problem today?

Yes. Many today are stumbled because of our neutral stand with regard to politics. They expect us to vote in elections. However, we realize that from Jehovah's standpoint, if we choose a human leader to rule over us, we are rejecting Him. (1 Sam. 8:4-7) People may also feel that we should build schools and hospitals as well as perform other charitable works. They are stumbled because we focus our efforts on the preaching work, not on solving the world's immediate problems.

20 How can we avoid being stumbled? (Read Matthew 7:21-23.) Our main focus should be on doing the work that Je-

19. What expectations have stumbled many today?

20. As highlighted by Jesus' words found at Matthew 7:21-23, what should be our main focus?

sus commanded us to do. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Never should we become distracted by the political and social issues of this world. We love people and care about their problems, but we know that the best way to assist our neighbors is by teaching them about God's Kingdom and by helping them to develop a friendship with Jehovah.

21 In this article, we have considered four stumbling blocks that caused many to reject Jesus in the first century and could cause some today to reject Jesus' followers. But are these the only things that we need to avoid? No. In the next article, we will examine four additional stumbling blocks. May we be determined to avoid being stumbled and to keep our faith strong!

21. What should be our determination?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 4-5: (1) Philip encourages Nathanael to meet Jesus. (2) Jesus preaches the good news. (3) Jesus cures a man with a withered hand as opposers look on. (4) Jesus withdraws to a mountain all alone.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why were some in the first century stumbled by Jesus?
- Why are many today stumbled by what Jesus' true followers say and do?
- Why are we not stumbled?

SONG 122

Be Steadfast, Immovable!

PREVIEW

In the preceding article, we discussed four reasons why people rejected Jesus in the past and why they reject his followers today. In this article, we will consider four additional reasons. We will also see why honesthearted individuals who love Jehovah do not allow themselves to be stumbled.

Nothing Can Make the Righteous Stumble

“Abundant peace belongs to those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.”—PS. 119:165.

TODAY millions claim to believe in Jesus, but they do not accept the things he taught. (2 Tim. 4:3, 4) In fact, a writer once stated: “If there were another ‘Jesus’ among us today who would say things the way the original Jesus said . . . , would we reject him today the way we did two thousand years ago? . . . The answer has generally been: Yes, we would.”

² Many in the first century heard Jesus teach and saw him perform miracles, but they refused to put faith in him. Why? In the preceding article, we considered four reasons why people stumbled at what Jesus said and did. Let us consider four additional reasons. As we do, we will see why people today reject Jesus’ followers and how we can avoid being stumbled.

(1) JESUS WAS IMPARTIAL

³ While on earth, Jesus chose to associate with all types of people. He dined with the rich and the powerful, but he also spent much of his time with the poor and the downtrodden. In addition, he was compassionate toward those who were generally regarded as “sinners.” Some self-righteous individuals stumbled at what Jesus did. They asked his disciples: “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” To this, Jesus replied:

1-2. What comment did one writer make, and what will we discuss in this article?

3. What choice did Jesus make that led some to be stumbled?

“Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but those who are ill do. I have come to call, not righteous people, but sinners to repentance.”—Luke 5:29-32.

⁴ ***What do the Scriptures say?*** Long before the Messiah came, the prophet Isaiah described him as one who would not be accepted by the world. The prophecy foretold: “He was despised and was avoided by men . . . It was as if his face were hidden from us. He was despised, and we held him as of no account.” (Isa. 53:3) The Messiah was to be avoided “by men,” so those first-century Jews should have expected that Jesus would be rejected.

⁵ ***Do we see the same problem today?*** Yes. Many clergymen are eager to accept as members of their congregations individuals who are prominent, wealthy, and viewed as wise by the world. Such clergy do this even though the morals and lifestyle of those new members often are out of harmony with God’s standards. The same clergymen look with disdain on Jehovah’s zealous, morally clean servants because they are not prominent by this world’s standards. As Paul said, God chose those who are “looked down on.” (1 Cor. 1:26-29) However, to Jehovah, all his faithful servants are precious.

⁶ ***How can we avoid being stumbled?*** (Read Matthew 11:25, 26.) Do not be influenced by the world’s view of God’s people. Recognize that Jehovah uses

only humble people to do his will. (Ps. 138:6) And reflect on how much he has accomplished by using those whom the world does not consider to be wise or intellectual.

(2) JESUS EXPOSED WRONG IDEAS

⁷ Jesus courageously denounced the hypocritical religious practices of his day. For example, he exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were more concerned with how they washed their hands than with how they cared for their parents. (Matt. 15:1-11) Jesus’ disciples may have been surprised by his words. In fact, they asked him: “Do you know that the Pharisees were stumbled at hearing what you said?” Jesus answered: “Every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. Let them be. Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matt. 15:12-14) Jesus did not allow the negative reaction of the religious leaders to stop him from speaking the truth.

⁸ Jesus also exposed false religious teachings. He did not say that all religious beliefs are acceptable to God. Rather, he spoke of many who would be on the spacious road that leads to destruction, whereas only a few would be on the cramped road to life. (Matt. 7:13, 14) He made it clear that some would appear to serve God, but in reality they were not serving him. He warned: “Be on the watch for the false prophets who

4. According to the prophet Isaiah, what should the Jews have expected about the Messiah?

5. How do many today view Jesus’ followers?

6. How can we imitate Jesus’ attitude, as expressed at Matthew 11:25, 26?

7. Why did Jesus call the Pharisees hypocrites, and how did they react?

8. How did Jesus show that not all religious beliefs are acceptable to God?

Many were stumbled because of (1) Jesus' choice of associates, (2) his condemnation of false beliefs and practices, (3) his death on a stake, and (4) his betrayal by Judas.

How could the same things stumble some today?



(See paragraph 3) 1



(See paragraph 9) 2

come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will recognize them."—Matt. 7:15-20.

⁹ **What do the Scriptures say?** Bible prophecy foretold that the Messiah would be consumed by zeal for Jehovah's house. (Ps. 69:9; John 2:14-17) That zeal moved Jesus to expose false religious beliefs and practices. For instance, the Pharisees believed that the soul is immortal; Jesus taught that the dead are sleeping. (John 11:11) The Sadducees denied the resurrection; Jesus resurrected his friend Lazarus. (John 11:43, 44; Acts 23:8) The Pharisees attributed everything to fate and to God; Jesus taught that humans can choose whether to serve God or not.—Matt. 11:28.

¹⁰ **Do we see the same problem today?**

9. What are some of the false religious teachings that Jesus exposed?

10. Why are many stumbled by our teachings?

Yes. Many are stumbled because our Bible-based teachings expose false religious ideas. Clergymen teach their flocks that God punishes the wicked in hell. They use that false teaching to maintain control over the people. As Jehovah's servants, who worship a God of love, we expose that false teaching. The clergy also teach that the soul is immortal. We expose the pagan origin of that doctrine, which—if true—would make the resurrection irrelevant. And contrary to the belief in predestination that many religions embrace, we teach that man has free will and can choose to serve God. How do religious leaders respond? Often, they are furious!

¹¹ **How can we avoid being stumbled?** If we love the truth, we must accept the sayings of God. **(Read John 8:45-47.)** Unlike Satan the Devil, we stand fast in the truth. We never compromise our

11. According to Jesus' words found at John 8:45-47, what does God require of his people?



(See paragraph 12) **3**



(See paragraphs 17-18) **4**

beliefs. (John 8:44) God requires that his people “abhor what is wicked” and “cling to what is good,” just as Jesus did.—Rom. 12:9; Heb. 1:9.

(3) JESUS WAS PERSECUTED

¹² What was another stumbling block to the Jews in Jesus’ day? Paul said: “We preach Christ executed on the stake, to the Jews a cause for stumbling.” (1 Cor. 1:23) Why were many Jews disturbed by the way Jesus died? To them, Jesus’ death on a stake made him appear to be a criminal and a sinner—not the Messiah.—Deut. 21:22, 23.

¹³ Those among the Jews who stumbled at Jesus failed to recognize that he was innocent, that he was falsely accused, and that he was treated unjustly. Those conducting Jesus’ trial made a

12. Why was the manner of Jesus’ death a cause for stumbling to many Jewish people?

13. What did those who stumbled at Jesus fail to recognize?

mockery of justice. The Jewish supreme court was hastily convened, and the proceedings were most irregular. (Luke 22:54; John 18:24) Rather than impartially listen to the charges and the evidence against Jesus, the judges themselves sought “false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death.” When that failed, the high priest tried to get Jesus to incriminate himself. This was completely out of harmony with accepted legal standards. (Matt. 26:59; Mark 14:55-64) And after Jesus was raised from the dead, those unrighteous judges paid the Roman soldiers who were guarding his tomb “a considerable number of silver pieces” to spread a false story to explain why the tomb was empty.—Matt. 28:11-15.

¹⁴ *What do the Scriptures say?* Although many Jews in Jesus’ day did not expect that the Messiah would need to

14. What did the Scriptures foretell concerning the Messiah’s death?

die, notice what had been prophesied in the Scriptures: “He poured out his life even to death and was counted among the transgressors; he carried the sin of many people, and he interceded for the transgressors.” (Isa. 53:12) So the Jews had no reason to be stumbled when Jesus was executed as a sinner.

¹⁵ ***Do we see the same problem today?*** Absolutely! Jesus was charged and convicted unfairly, and Jehovah’s Witnesses have been subjected to similar unjust treatment. Note some examples. During the 1930’s and 1940’s in the United States, our freedom to worship God was time and again challenged in the courts. Some judges were shamelessly prejudiced against us. In Quebec, Canada, Church and State worked hand in glove in opposition to our work. Many publishers were jailed simply for speaking to their neighbors about God’s Kingdom. In Nazi Germany, a number of faithful young brothers were put to death by that godless regime. And in recent years, many of our brothers in Russia have been convicted and imprisoned for discussing the Bible, which has been classified as an “extremist activity.” Even the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in the Russian language has been banned and classified as “extremist material” because it uses the name Jehovah.

¹⁶ ***How can we avoid being stumbled?*** Learn the facts. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned his listeners that

15. What accusations against Jehovah’s Witnesses have caused some to stumble?

16. As highlighted at 1 John 4:1, why should we not be misled by false stories about Jehovah’s people?

some would “lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against” them. (Matt. 5:11) The source of these lies is Satan. He influences opposers to spread malicious slander about those who love the truth. (Rev. 12:9, 10) We must reject the lies told by our opponents. Never should we allow such lies to intimidate us or to undermine our faith.—**Read 1 John 4:1.**

(4) JESUS WAS BETRAYED AND ABANDONED

¹⁷ Just before his death, Jesus was betrayed by one of his 12 apostles. Another apostle denied Jesus three times, and all his apostles abandoned him on the evening before his death. (Matt. 26:14-16, 47, 56, 75) Jesus was not surprised. He had even foretold that this would happen. (John 6:64; 13:21, 26, 38; 16:32) On seeing this, some could have been stumbled, reasoning, ‘If that is the way Jesus’ apostles behave, I want no part of that group!’

¹⁸ ***What do the Scriptures say?*** Centuries earlier, Jehovah revealed in his Word that the Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. (Zech. 11:12, 13) The betrayer would be one of Jesus’ close companions. (Ps. 41:9) The prophet Zechariah also wrote: “Strike the shepherd, and let the flock be scattered.” (Zech. 13:7) Instead of being stumbled by these events, honesthearted ones should have been strengthened by seeing these prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.

17. In what way could the events prior to Jesus’ death have stumbled some?

18. What prophecies were fulfilled in the events surrounding Jesus’ death?

¹⁹ ***Do we see the same problem today?***
Yes. In modern times, a few well-known Witnesses have left the truth, become apostate, and then tried to turn others away. They have spread negative reports, half-truths, and outright lies about Jehovah’s Witnesses through the news media and the Internet. But honesthearted ones are not stumbled. On the contrary, they realize that the Bible foretold that such things would happen. —Matt. 24:24; 2 Pet. 2:18-22.

²⁰ ***How can we avoid being stumbled?***
We need to keep our faith strong by studying regularly, by praying continually, and by keeping busy in the work that Jehovah has given us to do. **(Read 2 Timothy 4:4, 5.)** If we exercise faith, we will not panic when we hear negative reports. (Isa. 28:16) Our love for Jehovah, his Word, and our brothers will help

19. What do honesthearted ones realize?

20. How can we avoid being stumbled by those who have left the truth? (2 Timothy 4:4, 5)

us to avoid being stumbled by those who have left the truth.

²¹ In the first century, many were stumbled, and they rejected Jesus. Yet, many others accepted him. These included at least one member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and even “a large crowd of priests.” (Acts 6:7; Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:43) Likewise today, millions have not been stumbled. Why not? Because they know and love the truths found in the Scriptures. God’s Word says: “Abundant peace belongs to those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” —Ps. 119:165.

21. Even though the majority of people today reject our message, of what can we be confident?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 10-11: (1) Jesus shares a meal with Matthew and tax collectors. (2) Jesus drives the merchants out of the temple. (3) Jesus is made to bear the torture stake. (4) Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

■ Why were some in the first century stumbled by Jesus’ words and actions?

■ Why are many today stumbled?

■ How can we avoid being stumbled?

SONG 70

Search Out
Deserving Ones

PREVIEW

How can we remain positive in the ministry even when many either are not at home or seem to be indifferent to our message? This article will provide suggestions that can help us to maintain a positive outlook.

Maintain a Positive Attitude Toward Your Ministry

“Sow your seed . . . and do not let your hand rest.”—ECCLES. 11:6.

JESUS maintained a positive attitude throughout his ministry on earth, and he wants his followers to remain positive about the ministry as well. (John 4:35, 36) While Jesus was with his disciples, they were enthusiastic about the preaching work. (Luke 10:1, 5-11, 17) With the arrest and death of Jesus, however, the disciples temporarily lost their desire to preach. (John 16:32) After his resurrection, Jesus urged them to focus on preaching. And after his ascension to heaven, they preached with so much zeal that their enemies complained: “Look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.”—Acts 5:28.

² Jesus directed the work done by those first-century Christians, and Jehovah blessed them with growth. At Pentecost 33 C.E., for example, about 3,000 got baptized. (Acts 2:41) And the number of disciples continued to grow dramatically. (Acts 6:7) Still, Jesus foretold that the preaching work would have even greater success in the last days.—John 14:12; Acts 1:8.

³ All of us try to keep a positive view of the ministry. In some lands, it is easy to do that. Why? Because so many are interested in having a Bible study that some of them must be placed on a waiting list until a Witness is avail-

1. What example did Jesus set for his followers, and how did they respond? (See cover picture.)

2. How has Jehovah blessed the preaching work?

3-4. Why may some find the preaching work to be challenging, and what will we consider in this article?

able! But in other parts of the earth, publishers find the preaching work to be more of a challenge; people are seldom at home, and those who are at home may show little interest in the Bible.

⁴ If you live in an area where the preaching work is challenging, the suggestions in this article will likely help you. We will consider what some have done to contact more people in their ministry. And we will examine why we can remain positive whether people respond to our message or not.

REMAIN POSITIVE IF PEOPLE ARE HARD TO FIND

⁵ Many Witnesses find it increasingly difficult to contact people in their homes. Some publishers live in areas where there are many high-security apartment buildings or gated communities. There may be a doorman or a security guard who denies entry to anyone who does not have an invitation from a specific householder. Other publishers can go from door to door without any interference, but they find few people at home. Still other publishers preach in rural or remote areas where few people live. The publishers may cover great distances just to try to contact one householder—who may not even be at home! If we face these types of challenges, we must not give up. What can we do to overcome such obstacles and have a productive ministry?

⁶ Jesus compared the preaching work to the work of a fisherman. (Mark 1:17)

5. What challenges do many Witnesses face?
6. How are preachers like fishermen?

Some fishermen might go for days without finding any fish. But they do not give up; they adapt. They change the time, location, or method of fishing. We can make similar adjustments in our ministry. Consider these suggestions.

⁷ ***Try reaching people at a different time.*** We will contact more people if we preach when they are likely to be at home. After all, everyone returns home sometime! Many brothers and sisters find it practical to preach in the afternoon or in the evening because they find more people. In addition, householders may be more relaxed and ready to talk during those times. Or perhaps you would find it helpful to apply a suggestion from an elder named David. He says that after preaching for a while in a territory, he and his companion call back on those who did not answer the door the first time. He says, “I am surprised how many of the householders are at home when we make the second call.”*

⁸ We should not give up. Our theme text reminds us of the attitude that we need to have. (**Read Ecclesiastes 11:6.**) David, mentioned earlier, did not give up. At one house, he finally found the householder after a number of unsuccessful attempts. The man was interested in discussing the Bible and said, “I have lived here for about eight years, and I have never met one of Jehovah’s

* Publishers should carry out the various forms of their ministry as discussed in this article in a way that complies with applicable data protection laws.

7. What may result if we preach at different times?
8. How can we apply Ecclesiastes 11:6 to our ministry?

Witnesses at my door.” David says, “I have found that when you finally reach people at home, they are often receptive to the message we preach.”

⁹ **Try a different location.** In order to contact people who are hard to reach at home, some publishers have changed the location where they preach. For example, street work and the use of literature carts have proved to be effective methods to meet people who live in large apartment buildings where door-to-door witnessing is not permitted. This allows the Witnesses to speak face-to-face with people who may otherwise be unreachable. Also, many pub-

9. How have some Witnesses contacted people who are hard to reach?

lishers have found that people are more likely to converse or to accept literature in public parks, markets, and business districts. Floiran, a circuit overseer in Bolivia, says: “We go to the markets and businesses between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. when the vendors tend to be less busy. We usually have good conversations and even start Bible studies.”

¹⁰ **Try a different approach.** Suppose you have tried repeatedly to contact someone in person. You have called at different times but have still not found him at home. Are there other ways to reach such a person? Katarína, says, “I write personal letters to those I never find at home, expressing what I would

10. What methods can you use to reach people?



When preaching in areas where people are seldom at home, try to reach them at different times, in different locations, or with different methods

(See paragraphs 7-10)

have told them in person.” The point? Try to reach everyone in your territory in one way or another as you carry out your personal ministry.

REMAIN POSITIVE WHEN PEOPLE ARE INDIFFERENT

¹¹ Some people are indifferent to our message. They do not see the need for God or the Bible. They do not believe in God because they see so much suffering in the world. They reject the Bible because they see the hypocrisy of religious leaders who claim to live by that book. Others are preoccupied with their jobs, families, or personal problems, and they fail to see how the Bible

11. Why are some people indifferent to our message?

can help them. How can we maintain our joy when those whom we preach to see little value in our message?

¹² **Show personal interest.** Many who were at first indifferent later responded to the good news when they felt that a publisher was genuinely interested in them. **(Read Philippians 2:4.)** For example, David, quoted earlier, says, “If someone says that he is not interested, we put away our Bible or our literature and say: ‘I am interested in knowing why you feel this way.’” People can sense when someone cares about them. They may forget exactly what we said, but they will likely remember how we made them feel. Even if householders do not let us speak, we can show by our attitude and facial expressions that we care about them.

¹³ We show personal interest when we adapt our message to the needs and interests of the householder. For instance, do we see evidence that children live in the house? The parents may be interested in the Bible’s advice about raising children or its practical suggestions on how to have a happier family life. Do we see several locks on their door? We may decide to talk about the crime and the fear prevalent in the world, after which the householder might appreciate learning about the permanent solution to crime. Whatever the case, try to help those who listen to see how the Bible’s advice can help them. Katarína,

12. How can applying the words of Philippians 2:4 help us in the ministry?

13. How could we adapt our message to meet the needs of each householder?



mentioned earlier, says, “I remind myself of how the truth made my life better.” As a result, Katarína speaks with conviction, and the people she talks to no doubt sense that.

¹⁴ **Benefit from the assistance of others.** In the first century, Paul shared his preaching and teaching methods with Timothy, and he encouraged Timothy to use those methods to help others. (1 Cor. 4:17) Like Timothy, we can benefit from experienced ones in our congregation. **(Read Proverbs 27:17.)** Consider the example of a brother named Shawn. For a while, he pioneered in a rural area where most people were satisfied with their religion. How did he maintain his joy? “Whenever possible, I worked with a companion,” he says. “We used the time traveling between houses to help each other improve our teaching skills. For example, we would review how we had handled a call. Then we discussed how we might respond differently if we faced that situation again.”

¹⁵ **Pray to Jehovah for help.** Look to Jehovah for guidance every time you share in the ministry. Without the help of his powerful holy spirit, none of us would be able to accomplish anything. (Ps. 127:1; Luke 11:13) When you ask for Jehovah’s help in prayer, be specific. For example, ask him to direct you to anyone who may be rightly disposed and ready to listen. Then work in harmony with your prayer by preaching to all whom you meet.

14. Based on Proverbs 27:17, how can preaching companions assist each other?

15. Why is prayer essential to our ministry?

¹⁶ **Make time for personal study.** God’s Word says: “Prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) The more convinced we are that we know the truth about God, the greater will be our conviction when we talk to others in the ministry. Katarína, mentioned earlier, says: “A little while ago, I realized that I needed to strengthen my faith regarding some basic Bible teachings. So I studied in detail the evidence that there is a Creator, that the Bible is really God’s Word, and that God has an organization that represents him today.” Katarína says that her personal study strengthened her faith and increased her joy in the ministry.

WHY WE REMAIN POSITIVE IN OUR MINISTRY

¹⁷ Jesus remained positive and kept preaching even though some were indifferent to his message. Why? He knew how much the people needed to know the truth, and he wanted to give as many as possible an opportunity to accept the Kingdom message. He also knew that some who initially were indifferent would eventually respond. Consider what happened in his own family. During Jesus’ entire three-and-a-half-year ministry, none of his brothers became his disciples. (John 7:5) Yet, after his resurrection, they became Christians.—Acts 1:14.

¹⁸ We do not know who will eventually accept the Bible truths we teach. Some

16. Why is personal study vital to our ministry?

17. Why did Jesus remain positive in his ministry?

18. Why do we continue preaching?

people take longer than others to respond to our message. Even those who choose not to listen to us see our good conduct and positive attitude, and they may eventually begin to “glorify God.” —1 Pet. 2:12.

¹⁹ As we plant and water, we must recognize the role that God plays. **(Read 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.)** Getahun, a brother who serves in Ethiopia, says: “For more than 20 years, I was the only Witness in a seldom-worked territory. But now there are 14 publishers here. Thirteen of them got baptized, including my wife and three children. We have an average of 32 people at the meetings.” Getahun is glad that he continued preaching while he patiently waited for Jehovah to draw honesthearted people to His organization!—John 6:44.

²⁰ Jehovah views all human life as precious. He gives us the privilege of working along with his Son in gathering people from all nations before the end of this system comes. (Hag. 2:7) Our

19. According to 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7, what must we recognize?

20. In what way are we like rescuers?

preaching work could be likened to a rescue mission. And we are like members of a rescue team sent to free people trapped in a mine. Although only a few miners may be found alive, the work done by all the rescuers is valuable. The same is true of the work we do in our ministry. We do not know how many people will yet be rescued from Satan’s system. But Jehovah can use any one of us to help them. Andreas, who lives in Bolivia, says, “I see each person who learns Bible truths and gets baptized as the result of a group effort.” May we maintain a similar positive attitude toward our ministry. If we do, Jehovah will bless us, and our ministry will be a real source of joy.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 16-17 (from top to bottom): A husband and wife preach where it is difficult to find people at home. The first householder is at his job, the second one is at a medical clinic, and the third one is out shopping. They reach the first householder by visiting him at a later hour of the day. They meet the second one while sharing in public witnessing near the clinic. They reach the third householder by giving her a phone call.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What may help us contact people who are hard to find?
- How can we assist people who initially seem to be indifferent to Bible truths?
- Why do we remain positive in our ministry?

SONG 73

Grant Us Boldness

PREVIEW

We are living in challenging times, but Jehovah provides the help we need to endure them. In this article, we will consider how Jehovah helped the apostle Paul and Timothy to continue serving him despite their problems. We will discuss four provisions Jehovah has made available to help us endure today.

Jehovah Will Give You Strength

“When I am weak, then I am powerful.”—2 COR. 12:10.

THE apostle Paul encouraged Timothy and by extension all Christians to accomplish their ministry fully. (2 Tim. 4:5) All of us take Paul’s counsel seriously. Yet, there are challenges. For many of our brothers and sisters, it takes real courage to share in the preaching work. (2 Tim. 4:2) Think, for example, of our brothers who live in lands where our work is restricted or even banned. They share in the ministry at the risk of their freedom!

² Jehovah’s people must deal with a variety of problems that could dishearten them. For instance, many have to work long hours just to provide the basic necessities for their family. They would like to do more in the ministry, but they have little energy at the end of the week. Others are severely limited in what they can do because of chronic illness or advancing age; they may even be confined to their home. Still others are constantly plagued by feelings of worthlessness. Mary,* a sister who lives in the Middle East, says: “It takes so much effort to fight my negative feelings that I’m left emotionally exhausted. Then I feel guilty because it takes time and energy away from my ministry.”

³ Regardless of our circumstances, Jehovah can empower us to cope with personal challenges and still serve him to the extent that our circumstances allow. Before we consider how Jehovah can help us, let us examine how he strengthened Paul and Timothy to accomplish their ministry despite challenges.

* Name has been changed.

- 1-2. What challenges do many Witnesses face?
3. What will we consider in this article?

STRENGTH TO ACCOMPLISH THE PREACHING WORK

⁴ Paul faced many challenges. He especially needed strength when he was beaten, stoned, and imprisoned. (2 Cor. 11:23-25) Paul openly admitted that he at times battled negative emotions. (Rom. 7:18, 19, 24) He also endured “a thorn in the flesh” of some sort, which he desperately wanted God to remove.—2 Cor. 12:7, 8.

⁵ Jehovah empowered Paul to carry out his ministry despite all the challenges he faced. Consider what Paul accomplished. For example, while he was housebound—in custody in Rome—he zealously defended the good news before Jewish leaders and perhaps before government officials. (Acts 28:17; Phil. 4:21,22) He also preached to many in the Praetorian Guard, and he witnessed to all who visited him. (Acts 28:30, 31; Phil. 1:13) During that same time, Paul wrote inspired letters that benefit true Chris-

4. What challenges did Paul face?

5. What did Paul accomplish despite the challenges he faced?

tians to this day. Furthermore, Paul’s example strengthened the congregation in Rome, which resulted in his brothers’ having “all the more courage to speak the word of God fearlessly.” (Phil. 1:14) Although at times Paul was limited in what he could do, he made the most of his situation, and it “actually turned out for the advancement of the good news.”—Phil. 1:12.

⁶ Paul realized that everything he did in Jehovah’s service was with God’s strength, not his own. He acknowledged that God’s power was “made perfect in weakness.” **(Read 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.)** By means of His holy spirit, Jehovah gave Paul the power to accomplish his ministry fully—despite the persecution, imprisonment, and other challenges he faced.

⁷ Timothy, Paul’s younger companion, also had to rely on God’s power to carry out his ministry. Timothy accompanied

6. According to 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, what enabled Paul to accomplish his ministry?

7. What challenges did Timothy have to overcome in order to accomplish his ministry?



What enabled Paul and Timothy to carry out their ministry?
(See paragraphs 5-7)



Paul on long missionary journeys. Moreover, Paul sent him on additional trips to visit and encourage congregations. (1 Cor. 4:17) Timothy may have felt inadequate. Perhaps that is why Paul admonished him: “Never let anyone look down on your youth.” (1 Tim. 4:12) Furthermore, during this time, Timothy had his own thorn in the flesh—“frequent cases of sickness.” (1 Tim. 5:23) But Timothy knew that Jehovah’s powerful holy spirit would give him the strength he needed to preach the good news and serve his brothers.—2 Tim. 1:7.

STRENGTH TO REMAIN FAITHFUL DESPITE CHALLENGES

⁸ Today, Jehovah gives his people “power beyond what is normal” so that they can continue to serve him faithfully. (2 Cor. 4:7) Let us consider four provisions Jehovah makes available to strengthen us and to help us remain faithful to him: prayer, the Bible, Christian association, and our ministry.

⁹ *Strengthened through prayer.* As recorded at Ephesians 6:18, Paul encourages us to pray to God “on every occasion.” In response, God will strengthen us. Jonnie, who lives in Bolivia, experienced that support when he underwent a series of trials. His wife and both of his parents became seriously ill at the same time. Jonnie struggled to care for the needs of the three of them. His mother died, and it took a long time for his wife and father to recover from their illnesses. Looking back, Jonnie says,

8. How does Jehovah strengthen his people today?

9. How can prayer help us?

“When I was under extreme pressure, what always helped me was to be specific in my prayers.” Jehovah gave Jonnie the strength he needed to endure. Ronald, an elder in Bolivia, learned that his mother had cancer. She died a month later. What helped him to cope? He says: “Praying to Jehovah allows me to pour my heart out and vent my feelings. I know that he understands me better than anybody, even better than I understand myself.” At times, we may feel overwhelmed or unsure about what we should pray for. But Jehovah invites us to pray to him even if we find it hard to put our thoughts and feelings into words.—Rom. 8:26, 27.

¹⁰ *Strengthened by means of the Bible.* Just as Paul relied on the Scriptures for strength and comfort, we too can rely on them. (Rom. 15:4) As we read God’s Word and meditate on it, Jehovah can use his spirit to help us understand better how the Scriptures apply to our situation. **(Read Hebrews 4:12.)** Ronald, mentioned earlier, says: “I’m grateful that I cultivated the habit of reading a portion of the Bible every night. I meditate a lot on Jehovah’s qualities and his loving dealings with his servants. This helps me to regain my power.”

¹¹ We can develop the right attitude about our circumstances by meditating on God’s Word. Consider how the Bible benefited a grieving widow. An elder suggested that she could learn helpful

10. As indicated at Hebrews 4:12, why is reading the Bible and meditating on what we read so important?

11. How did the Bible strengthen a distressed sister?

Jehovah strengthens us by means of
(1) prayer, (2) the Bible, (3) Christian
association, and (4) the ministry
(See paragraphs 9-10, 12, 14)

1



2



4



3



lessons from reading the book of Job. As she did, she was at first quick to criticize Job for his wrong thinking. In her imagination she warned him: “Job! Don’t be so negative!” But then she realized that her attitude had been very similar to that of Job. This helped her to re-adjust her viewpoint and strengthened her to cope with the pain of losing her husband.

¹² ***Strengthened by means of Christian association.*** Another way that Jehovah strengthens Christians is by means of fellow worshippers. Paul wrote that he was longing to have “an interchange of encouragement” with his spiritual brothers and sisters. (Rom. 1:11, 12) Mary, mentioned earlier, treasures such association. She says: “Jehovah has used brothers and sisters who were not even aware of my struggles. They said something encouraging or sent a card, and it was exactly what I needed. It also helps to open up to other sisters who have had similar struggles and learn from their experiences. And the elders always make me feel that I am a valuable part of the congregation.”

¹³ One of the best places to encourage one another is at congregation meetings. When you attend meetings, why not take the initiative to strengthen others with sincere expressions of affection and appreciation? For example, before one meeting an elder named Peter said to a sister with an unbelieving mate: “You cannot imagine how encour-

aging it is to see you here. You always have your six children ready and prepared with comments.” Her eyes filled with tears of gratitude as she replied: “You have no idea how much I needed to hear that today.”

¹⁴ ***Strengthened by means of the ministry.*** When we share Bible truths with others, we feel refreshed and invigorated, whether they respond positively or not. (Prov. 11:25) A sister named Stacy experienced how strengthening the ministry can be. When a family member was disfellowshipped, she was distraught, and she kept asking herself, ‘Could I have done more to help?’ Stacy could barely think of anything else. What helped her to cope with this distressing situation? The ministry! As she engaged in the preaching work, she began to focus on the people in the territory who needed her help. She says: “During that time, Jehovah gave me a Bible student who made rapid progress. That encouraged me greatly. The most stabilizing factor in my life is to get out in the ministry.”

¹⁵ Because of their circumstances, some may feel that they are not able to do much in the ministry. If that is how you feel, remember that Jehovah is pleased if you do your best. Consider again the example of Mary. When she moved to a foreign-language field, she felt very limited. She says, “For some time, all I could do was offer a simple comment or read a Bible verse or give a tract in service.” This left her feeling inadequate in comparison with

12. How does Jehovah strengthen us by means of fellow worshippers?

13. How can we strengthen one another at congregation meetings?

14. How does sharing in the ministry affect us?

15. What do you learn from Mary’s comments?

fluent speakers. However, she adjusted her point of view. She began to realize that Jehovah could use her despite her limited abilities. She says, “The life-saving truths are elegantly simple, and those truths are what change people’s lives.”

¹⁶ Jehovah sees and appreciates our desire to share in the ministry even if we are housebound. He can open opportunities for us to give a witness to caregivers or medical personnel. If we compare our present activity with what we were able to do in the past, we may become discouraged. But if we recognize how Jehovah is helping us now, we will have the strength we need to endure any trial with joy.

¹⁷ We do not know which of the seeds of truth that we plant may take root and start to grow. **(Read Ecclesiastes 11:6.)** For example, Barbara, a sister in her 80’s, regularly witnesses by telephone and by letter. In one of her letters, she enclosed *The Watchtower* of March 1, 2014, with the article “What

God Has Done for You.” Unbeknownst to her, she had sent the letter to a married couple who were no longer Jehovah’s Witnesses. They read the magazine over and over. The husband felt as if Jehovah were speaking directly to him. The couple started to attend meetings and eventually became active Witnesses again—after more than 27 years. Just imagine how encouraged and strengthened Barbara was to see such positive results from that one letter!

¹⁸ Jehovah provides us with ample opportunity to receive his abundant power. When we use his provisions—such as prayer, the Bible, Christian association, and the ministry—we show that we trust in Jehovah’s ability and desire to help us. Let us always rely on our heavenly Father, who delights “to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him.”—2 Chron. 16:9.

18. What can we do to benefit from God’s power?

16. What can help those who are housebound to gain strength?

17. According to Ecclesiastes 11:6, why should we continue in our ministry even if we do not see immediate results?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 21: While under house arrest in Rome, Paul writes letters to several congregations and preaches the message of good news to his visitors. Timothy encourages the brothers as he visits congregations.

HOW CAN WE GAIN STRENGTH THROUGH . . .

- prayer and Bible reading?
- Christian association?
- the ministry?



“I Have Learned So Much From Others!”

AS TOLD BY LOUIS BREINE

IT WAS a pitch-black night in the mountains of Algeria, where my French regiment was camped, and the battles in Algeria had become especially fierce. Machine gun in hand, I was alone at my guard post, a stack of sandbags. Suddenly, the silence was broken by the crunch of approaching footsteps. I froze. I was just out of my teens and had no desire to kill or to be killed. I cried out: “God! Oh, God!”

That scary event changed my life because it marked the beginning of my quest for the Creator. But before I relate what happened next on that dark night, let me tell you about the childhood experiences that influenced my thinking and prepared my heart to search for God.

EARLY LESSONS FROM MY FATHER

I was born in 1937 in Guesnain, a mining town in northern France. From my father, a coal miner, I learned the value of hard work. I also adopted his strong sense of justice, which moved him to act in behalf of miners who endured poor working conditions. In an effort to improve their situation, Father got involved in trade unions and strikes. He was also upset by the hypocrisy he saw among local priests. Many lived in relative luxury; yet, they asked for food and money from miners who were struggling to make a living. Father was so disgusted with the priests' behavior that he gave me no religious education. In fact, we never even spoke about God.

As I grew up, I too began to hate injustice. That injustice included the prejudice shown by some against the foreigners living in France. I played soccer with the children of immigrants and enjoyed their company. Besides, my mother was Polish, not French. I longed for racial peace and equality.

I BEGAN TO THINK MORE SERIOUSLY ABOUT LIFE

I was conscripted into the military in 1957. That is how I ended up in the Algerian mountains on the dark night described earlier. After I cried “God! Oh, God!” I came face-to-face, not with an enemy soldier, but with a wild donkey! What a relief that was! Still, that event—and the war itself—made me think more seriously about the meaning of life. Why are we here? Does God care about us? Will we ever have lasting peace?

Later, while I was on leave at my parents’ home, I met one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He gave me a copy of *La Sainte Bible*, a French Catholic translation of the Bible, which I began to read after I returned to Algeria. A particular passage that struck me was Revelation 21:3, 4. It reads: “The tent of God is with mankind . . . And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”* These words surprised me. ‘Could they be true?’ I wondered. At the time, I knew practically nothing about God and the Bible.

After I completed my military service in 1959, I met a Witness named François, who taught me many Bible truths. For example, he showed me in the Bible that God has a personal name, Jehovah. (Ps. 83:18) François also explained that Jehovah will bring justice to the earth, turn the earth into a paradise, and fulfill the words of Revelation 21:3, 4.

* *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.*



When I was in the army

Those teachings made a lot of sense, and they touched my heart. But I also became very angry at the priests and wanted to denounce them for teaching things that are not in the Bible! It seems that I was still influenced by my father’s views, and I was impatient. I wanted to do something immediately!

François and my other newfound Witness friends helped me to calm down. They explained that our work as Christians is not to judge but to offer hope by means of the good news of God’s Kingdom. That is the work Jesus did and the work he gave his followers to do. (Matt. 24:14; Luke 4:43) I also had to learn to speak to people kindly and tactfully, regardless of their beliefs. The Bible says: “A slave of the Lord does not need to fight, but needs to be gentle toward all.” —2 Tim. 2:24.

I made the needed changes and got baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1959 at a circuit assembly. There I met a young



On our wedding day

sister named Angèle, whom I was attracted to. I started visiting the congregation she attended, and we got married in 1960. She is truly an excellent woman, a wonderful wife, and a precious gift from Jehovah. —Prov. 19:14.

I LEARNED MUCH FROM WISE AND EXPERIENCED MEN

Over the years, I have learned many important lessons from wise and experienced brothers. High on the list is this: To succeed in any challenging assignment, we have to be humble and apply the wisdom found at Proverbs 15:22, which states: “There is accomplishment through many advisers.”

In 1964, I started to see just how truthful those inspired words are. In that year, I began serving as a circuit overseer, visiting congregations to encourage the brothers and build them up spiritually. However, I was 27 years old at the time and lacked experience. So I made mistakes. But I tried to learn from them. Above all, I learned many valuable lessons from capable and experienced “advisers.”

An early example comes to mind. After I visited a congregation in Paris, a spiritually mature brother asked me if he could have a private word with me. “Sure,” I said.

He asked, “Louis, when a doctor makes a home visit, whom does he go to see?”

“The sick,” I replied.

He said: “That’s right. But I have observed that you spend most of your time with ones doing well spiritually, such as the congregation overseer. Our congregation has many brothers and sisters who are discouraged, new, or shy. They would deeply appreciate your spending time with them, even going to their homes for a meal.”

That dear brother’s counsel was both valid and invaluable. His love for Jehovah’s sheep touched my heart. So I swallowed my pride and immediately began to apply what he said. I thank Jehovah for brothers like that.

In the years 1969 and 1973, I was appointed to oversee the Food Service Department at two international conventions in Colombes, Paris. At the 1973 convention,

In the circuit work in France, 1965



about 60,000 people had to be fed for five days! I was intimidated, to say the least. But once again, the key to success was Proverbs 15:22—consult the wise. I sought the advice of spiritually mature men who had experience in the food industry. They included butchers, vegetable growers, cooks, and purchasers. Together, we were able to fulfill a mountainlike assignment.

In 1973, my wife and I were invited to serve at Bethel in France. My first assignment there proved to be yet another big challenge. I had to get literature to our brothers in the African country of Cameroon, where our work was banned between 1970 and 1993. Again, I felt overwhelmed. Perhaps detecting that, the brother then overseeing the work in France encouraged me, saying: “Our brothers in Cameroon are in great need of spiritual food. Let’s feed them!” And feed them we did.

I made several trips to countries bordering Cameroon to meet with elders from that country. Those courageous and discreet men helped me to make the needed arrangements to get a regular supply of spiritual food into Cameroon. Jehovah blessed our efforts. In fact, for some 20 years, his people in that land never missed a single issue of *The Watchtower* and of a monthly publication then called *Our Kingdom Service*.

I LEARNED MUCH FROM MY PRECIOUS WIFE

From the very start of our courtship, I observed Angèle’s spiritual qualities. Those qualities became even more evident in our married life. In fact, on the very evening of our wedding day, she asked me to pray about our desire to serve Jehovah to the full as a married couple. Jehovah answered that prayer.



A. At a special meeting in Nigeria with Witnesses from Cameroon, 1973

B. In 1977, Angèle and I enjoyed visiting in Nigeria with circuit overseers and their wives from Cameroon



With Angèle in the garden of Bethel, France

Angèle has also helped me to trust more fully in Jehovah. To illustrate: When in 1973 we were invited to serve at Bethel, I hesitated because I loved the circuit work. But Angèle reminded me that we had dedicated our lives to Jehovah. Should we not do whatever his organization asks us to do? (Heb. 13:17) How could I argue with that! So off to Bethel we went. Throughout our long life together, my wife's discretion, soundness of mind, and spiritual outlook have strengthened our marriage and helped us to make good decisions.

In our advancing years, Angèle continues to be an excellent, supportive wife. For

example, in order to attend theocratic schools, many of which are conducted in English, Angèle and I began working hard to improve in that language. That included joining an English-speaking congregation, even though we were in our mid-70's at the time. Because of my responsibilities as a member of the France Branch Committee, studying another language was a challenge. But Angèle and I helped each other. Now in our 80's, we continue to prepare for our congregation meetings in both English and French. We also try to share as often as we can in the meetings and ministry with our congregation. Jehovah has blessed our efforts to learn English.

One outstanding blessing came along in 2017. Angèle and I had the privilege of attending the School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives, held at the Watchtower Educational Center at Patterson, New York.

Jehovah truly is the Grand Instructor. (Isa. 30:20) So it is no surprise that his people—old and young—get the very best education possible! (Deut. 4:5-8) Indeed, I have observed that young ones who listen both to Jehovah and to experienced brothers and sisters make fine spiritual progress and become successful adults. Proverbs 9:9 reminds us: "Share with a wise person, and he will become wiser. Teach someone righteous, and he will add to his learning."

Occasionally, I reflect on that dark, scary night in the mountains of Algeria some 60 years ago. Little did I know then what good lay ahead for me. I have learned so much from others! Jehovah has truly given me, as well as Angèle, a rich and rewarding life. So we are determined never to stop learning from our heavenly Father and from wise and experienced brothers and sisters who love him.

DID YOU KNOW?

Was papyrus used for boatbuilding in Bible times?

IT IS well-known that papyrus was the chief writing material in ancient Egypt. The Greeks as well as the Romans wrote on papyrus.* It is less known that papyrus was used not only for writing but also for boatbuilding.

Over 2,500 years ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote that people living “in the region of the rivers of Ethiopia” sent “envoys by sea, across the waters in papyrus vessels.” Later, the prophet Jeremiah foretold that when the city of Babylon would be invaded by the Medes and the Persians, they would burn “the papyrus boats” of the Babylonians to prevent their escape.—Isa. 18:1, 2; Jer. 51:32.

The Bible is inspired of God, so it does not come as a surprise to Bible students that archaeological finds show that papyrus was indeed used for boatbuilding in Bible times. (2 Tim. 3:16) What has been discovered? Archaeologists have found detailed evidence of papyrus-boat production in Egypt.

HOW WERE PAPYRUS BOATS MADE?

Paintings and reliefs in Egyptian tombs describe the process of harvesting papyrus and making boats. Men would cut the papyrus stems, tie them in bundles, and then lash the bundles together. Papyrus stems are triangular. So when tied tightly together, the stems form a compact, strong bundle. According to the book *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, papyrus boats could reach a length of over 55 feet (17 m), allowing for 10 or 12 oars per side.

* Papyrus plants flourish in marshlands and in slow-moving waters. A plant can grow some 16 feet (5 m) tall, and the stem can have a diameter of some 6 inches (15 cm) at its base.



A. Papyrus plant

B. Two models of papyrus boats found inside an Egyptian tomb

C. Egyptian relief describing the making of a papyrus boat

WHY DID BOATBUILDERS USE PAPYRUS?

Papyrus was a readily available raw material in the Nile Valley. Moreover, papyrus boats were relatively easy to make. Even when wood became the main building material for large vessels, it seems that fishermen and hunters continued to employ papyrus rafts and small boats.

Ancient papyrus boats remained popular for a long time. According to Greek author Plutarch, who lived between the first and the second centuries C.E., papyrus rafts were still familiar to the readers of his day.

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Nothing Can Make the Righteous Stumble

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