

- Song 49 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- “Do You Keep Your Promises?”: (10 min.)
Eze 17:1-4—Babylon replaced King Jehoiachin with Zedekiah (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)
Eze 17:7, 15—Zedekiah broke his loyalty oath and sought military help from Egypt (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)
Eze 17:18, 19—Jehovah expected Zedekiah to keep his word (w12 10/15 30 ¶11; w88 9/15 17 ¶8)
- Digging for Spiritual Gems: (8 min.)
Eze 16:60—What is the “permanent covenant,” and who are included in it? (w88 9/15 17 ¶7)

Eze 17:22, 23—Who is the “tender shoot” that Jehovah said he would plant? (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- Bible Reading: (4 min. or less) Eze 16:28-42

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- Initial Call: (2 min. or less) wp17.4 cover
—Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

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- Fulfill Your Marriage Vow Even When You Are Disappointed With Your Marriage: (10 min.) Talk by an elder based on the March 2014 *Awake!* pages 14-15.
- Become Jehovah’s Friend—Be Truthful: (5 min.) Play the video. Afterward, invite selected young children to the stage, and ask them questions about the video (video category CHILDREN).
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EZEKIEL 15-17 | Do You Keep Your Promises?

17:18, 19



Write your answers in the spaces provided.



What oath did King Zedekiah break?

What were the consequences of breaking his oath?



Promises and agreements I have made:

Possible consequences of breaking my promises and agreements:

49 *Making Jehovah's Heart Glad*

(Proverbs 27:11)

1. Great God, we've vowed to do your will;
 In wisdom your work we'll fulfill,
 For then we know we'll have a part
 In making glad your loving heart.
2. Your slave, your steward here on earth,
 Declares your greatness and your worth
 And feeds us nourishment when due,
 To strengthen us your will to do.
3. Impart to us your active force,
 That we may keep a faithful course
 And bring forth fruitage to your praise.
 May we make glad your heart each day.

Ezekiel 15-17

15 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying:
² “Son of man, how does the wood of the vine compare with that of any other tree or branch from the trees of the forest? ³ Can a pole from it be used to do work? Or do people make a peg from it to hang utensils on?
⁴ Look! It is thrown into the fire for fuel, and the fire consumes both ends and scorches the middle. Is it now fit for any work? ⁵ Even when it was whole, it could not be used for anything. How much less useful it will be when the fire has consumed and scorched it!”

⁶ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Just like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given as fuel for the fire, so I will deal with the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ⁷ I have set my face against them. They have escaped from the fire, but fire will consume them. And you will have to know that I am Jehovah when I set my face against them.’”

⁸ “‘And I will make the land desolate because they have acted unfaithfully,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

16 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying:
² “Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her detestable practices. ³ You must say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says to Jerusalem: “Your

origin and your birth were in the land of the Ca'naan-ite. Your father was an Am'or-ite, and your mother was a Hit'tite. ⁴ As for your birth, on the day you were born, your umbilical cord was not cut, you were not washed in water to make you clean, you were not rubbed with salt, and you were not wrapped in cloths. ⁵ No one pitied you enough to do any of these things. No one had compassion for you. Instead, you were thrown into the open field because you were hated on the day you were born.

⁶ ““When I was passing by, I saw you kicking about in your own blood, and as you lay there in your blood, I said: ‘Keep living!’ Yes, I said to you lying there in your blood: ‘Keep living!’ ⁷ I made you a very great multitude, like plants sprouting in the field, and you grew up and developed and wore the finest ornaments. Your breasts became firm, and your hair grew; but you were still naked and exposed.””

⁸ ““When I was passing by and saw you, I noticed that you were old enough for expressions of love. So I spread my garment over you and covered your nakedness and made an oath and entered into a covenant with you,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘and you became mine. ⁹ Furthermore, I washed you with water and rinsed away your blood and put oil on you. ¹⁰ I then clothed you with an embroidered garment and gave you fine leather

sandals and wrapped you in fine linen, and I clothed you with costly garments. ¹¹ I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. ¹² I also put a ring in your nose and earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ You kept adorning yourself with gold and silver, and your clothing was fine linen, costly material, and an embroidered garment. Fine flour, honey, and oil were what you ate, and you grew to be extremely beautiful, and you became fit to be a queen.”

¹⁴ “Your fame began to spread among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect because my own splendor I placed upon you,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

¹⁵ “But you began to trust in your beauty, and you became a prostitute because of your fame. You lavished your acts of prostitution on everyone passing by, and your beauty became his. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments and made colorful high places where you prostituted yourself—such things should not take place, nor should they ever happen. ¹⁷ You also took your beautiful jewelry made from the gold and silver that I had given to you and you made for yourself male images and prostituted yourself with them. ¹⁸ And you took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you offered them my oil and my incense. ¹⁹ And

the bread that I had given to you—made from fine flour, oil, and honey that I gave you to eat—you also offered to them as a pleasing aroma. That is exactly what happened,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

²⁰ “‘You took your sons and your daughters whom you had borne to me, and you sacrificed these to idols to be devoured—have your acts of prostitution not gone far enough? ²¹ You slaughtered my sons, and you offered them as sacrifices by making them pass through the fire. ²² While engaging in all your detestable practices and acts of prostitution, you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and exposed, kicking about in your own blood. ²³ After all your evil, woe, woe to you,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. ²⁴ ‘You built yourself a mound and made a high place for yourself in every public square. ²⁵ You built your high places at the most prominent place of every street, and you turned your beauty into something detestable by offering yourself to everyone passing by, and you multiplied your acts of prostitution. ²⁶ You prostituted yourself to the sons of Egypt, your lustful neighbors, and you offended me with your countless acts of prostitution. ²⁷ Now I will bring my hand against you and diminish your food allowance and give you over to the will of the women who hate you, the daughters of the Phi-lis'tines, who were appalled because of your obscene conduct.

²⁸ “‘Because you could not be satisfied, you then prostituted yourself to the sons of As-syr'i-a, but after prostituting yourself to them, you still did not find satisfaction. ²⁹ So you increased your prostitution toward the land of traders and toward the Chal-de'ans, but even then you did not find satisfaction. ³⁰ How sick your heart was,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘when you did all these things, behaving like a brazen prostitute! ³¹ But when you built your mound at the most prominent place of every street and made your high place in every public square, you were not like a prostitute, because you refused any payment. ³² You are an adulterous wife who takes strangers instead of her own husband! ³³ People give all prostitutes a gift, but you are the one who has given gifts to all those lusting after you, and you bribe them to come to you from all around to commit prostitution. ³⁴ You are the opposite of other women who engage in prostitution. No one commits prostitution your way! You pay others, and they do not pay you. Your way is the opposite.’

³⁵ “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of Jehovah. ³⁶ This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Because your lust has been poured out and your nakedness has been exposed during your prostitution with your lovers and all your detestable, disgusting idols to which you even sacrificed the blood of your sons, ³⁷ therefore I am collecting together all the lovers

you have given pleasure to, all those you loved together with all those you hated. I will collect them together against you from all around and expose your nakedness to them, and they will see you completely naked.

³⁸ ““And I will punish you with the judgments that adulteresses and women shedding blood deserve, and your blood will be shed in rage and jealousy. ³⁹ I will give you into their hand, and they will tear down your mounds, and your high places will be pulled down; and they will strip you of your garments and take your beautiful jewelry and leave you naked and exposed.

⁴⁰ They will bring against you a crowd, and they will stone you and will slaughter you with their swords.

⁴¹ They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgment on you before the eyes of many women; and I will bring an end to your prostitution, and you will stop giving payment. ⁴² I will satisfy my rage against you, and my indignation will turn away from you; and I will be calm and no longer feel offended.’

⁴³ ““Because you did not remember the days of your youth and you have angered me by doing all these things, I will now bring the consequences of your ways on your own head,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘and you will no longer carry on your obscene conduct and all your detestable practices.

⁴⁴ “Look! Everyone who uses proverbs will apply this proverb to you: “Like mother, like daughter!” ⁴⁵ You are the daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and her children. And you are the sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hit'tite, and your father was an Am'or-ite.”

⁴⁶ “Your older sister is Sa-mar'i-a, who is dwelling to the north of you with her daughters, and your younger sister, who is dwelling to the south of you, is Sod'om with her daughters. ⁴⁷ Not only did you walk in their ways and follow their detestable practices, but in a short while you were even more corrupt in all your conduct than they were. ⁴⁸ As surely as I am alive,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘Sod'om your sister and her daughters have not done what you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ Look! This was the error of Sod'om your sister: She and her daughters were proud and had an abundance of food and carefree tranquillity; yet they did not support the afflicted and the poor. ⁵⁰ They remained haughty and carried on detestable practices in my sight, so I found it necessary to remove them.

⁵¹ “Nor did Sa-mar'i-a commit even half as many sins as you did. You kept making your detestable practices abound more than they have, to the point that your sisters appeared righteous because of all your

detestable practices. ⁵² You must now bear your humiliation because you have justified the behavior of your sisters. On account of your sin of acting more detestably than they have, they are more righteous than you. So now, be ashamed and bear the humiliation of making your sisters appear righteous.'

⁵³ “And I will gather their captives, the captives of Sod'om and her daughters and the captives of Sa-mar'i-a and her daughters; I will also gather your captives along with them, ⁵⁴ so that you may bear your humiliation; and you will feel humiliated because of what you have done by comforting them. ⁵⁵ Your own sisters, Sod'om and her daughters, will return to their former state, and Sa-mar'i-a and her daughters will return to their former state, and you along with your own daughters will return to your former state.

⁵⁶ Sod'om your sister was not worthy of your mention in the day of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your own wickedness was exposed. Now the daughters of Syria and her neighbors reproach you, and the daughters of the Phi-lis'tines, those all around you, treat you with scorn.

⁵⁸ You will bear the consequences of your obscene conduct and your detestable practices,' declares Jehovah.”

⁵⁹ “For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘I will now do with you just as you have done, for you despised the oath by breaking my covenant. ⁶⁰ But I

myself will remember the covenant that I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you a permanent covenant. ⁶¹ You will remember your behavior and feel humiliated when you welcome your sisters, those older than you as well as those younger than you, and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.'

⁶² “‘And I myself will establish my covenant with you; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah. ⁶³ Then you will remember and be too ashamed to open your mouth because of your humiliation, when I make an atonement for you despite all that you have done,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

17 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying:
² “Son of man, tell a riddle and relate a proverb about the house of Israel. ³ You must say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “The great eagle, with great wings, long pinions, and full, colorful plumage, came to Leb'a-non and took the top of the cedar. ⁴ He plucked off its topmost shoot and brought it to the land of traders and set it down in a city of traders. ⁵ He then took some of the seed of the land and put it in a fertile field. He planted it like a willow by abundant waters. ⁶ So it sprouted and became a low, sprawling vine with its foliage facing inward and its roots growing under it. Thus it became a vine and produced shoots and sent out branches.

⁷ ““And there came another great eagle, with great wings and large pinions. This vine then stretched its roots eagerly toward him, away from the garden beds where it was planted, and it sent out its foliage toward him so that he would irrigate it. ⁸ It had already been planted in a good field near abundant waters, in order to produce branches, to bear fruit, and to become a majestic vine.””

⁹ “Say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Will it prosper? Will someone not tear out its roots and make its fruit rot and cause its sprouts to wither? It will become so dry that neither a strong arm nor many people will be needed to pull it up by the roots. ¹⁰ Although it is transplanted, will it prosper? Will it not dry up completely when the east wind blows on it? It will dry up in the garden bed where it sprouted.””

¹¹ And the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ¹² “Please tell the rebellious house, ‘Do you not realize what these things mean?’ Say, ‘Look! The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took its king and its princes and brought them back with him to Babylon.

¹³ Furthermore, he took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him and put him under an oath. Then he took away the prominent men of the land, ¹⁴ so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise up, so that only by keeping his covenant might it continue to exist. ¹⁵ But the king finally rebelled against

him by sending his messengers to Egypt to obtain horses and a large army from them. Will he succeed? Will the one doing these things escape punishment? Can he break the covenant and still escape?’

¹⁶ ““As surely as I am alive,” declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, “he will die in Babylon, in the place where the king who made him king lives, the one whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke. ¹⁷ And the great army and numerous troops of Phar'aoh will be of no help in the war, when siege ramparts are raised and siege walls are built to destroy many lives. ¹⁸ He has despised an oath and broken a covenant. Even though he gave his promise, he has done all these things, and he will not escape.””

¹⁹ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “As surely as I am alive, I will bring upon his head the consequences of despising my oath and breaking my covenant. ²⁰ I will cast my net over him, and he will be caught in my hunting net. I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there because of the unfaithfulness he committed against me. ²¹ All the fugitives of his troops will fall by the sword, and those remaining will be scattered in every direction. Then you will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have spoken.””

²² “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “I will take a shoot from the top of the lofty cedar and plant it, from the top of its twigs I will pluck a tender shoot, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On a high mountain of Israel I will plant it; and its branches will grow, and it will produce fruit and become a majestic cedar. And every kind of bird will live beneath it and reside in the shadow of its foliage. ²⁴ And all the trees of the field will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree; I have dried up the green tree and made the dry tree blossom. I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.””

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EZEKIEL 15-17 | Do You Keep Your Promises?

17:18, 19



Write your answers in the spaces provided.



What oath did King Zedekiah break?

What were the consequences of breaking his oath?



Promises and agreements I have made:

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July 10-16

Treasures From God's Word

Ezekiel 17:1-4—Babylon replaced King Jehoiachin with Zedekiah

Reference: w07 7/1 12 **paragraph 6**.

Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the “tender one” transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle, Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off “a tender one,” the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon “a high and lofty mountain,” upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become “a majestic cedar,” a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

Ezekiel 17:7, 15—Zedekiah broke his loyalty oath and sought military help from Egypt

Reference: w07 7/1 12 **paragraph 6**.

[See reference given above.]

Ezekiel 17:18, 19—Jehovah expected Zedekiah to keep his word

Reference: w12 10/15 30 **paragraph 11**.

Why has Jehovah had the above examples recorded for us in his Word? And how serious is the matter of letting our Yes mean Yes? The Bible clearly warns that a person who is “false to agreements” is among those who are “deserving of death.” (**Romans 1:31, 32**) Pharaoh of Egypt, Judean King Zedekiah, and Ananias and Sapphira are among the bad examples highlighted in the Bible of individuals whose Yes did not mean Yes. They all fared badly and stand as warning examples for us.—**Exodus 9:27, 28, 34, 35; Ezekiel 17:13-15, 19,20; Acts 5:1-10**.

Reference: w88 9/15 17 **paragraph 8**.

Next, the rulers of Babylon and Egypt were likened to great eagles. One broke off the top of a cedar tree by removing King Jehoiachin and replacing him with Zedekiah. Although Zedekiah took a loyalty oath to Nebuchadnezzar, he broke it, seeking the military help of Egypt’s ruler, the other great eagle. If Zedekiah invoked God’s name in taking his oath, breaking it brought reproach on Jehovah. The very thought of bringing reproach on God should restrain us from ever proving false to our word. Privileged we are indeed to bear the divine name as Jehovah’s Witnesses!—**Ezekiel 17:1-21**.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Ezekiel 16:60—What is the “permanent covenant,” and who are included in it?

Reference: w88 9/15 17 **paragraph 7**.

Because of her unfaithful inhabitants, Judah was likened to a wild vine without good fruit and fit only for the fire. (Ezekiel 15:1-8) She was also likened to a foundling saved by God from Egypt and nurtured to womanhood. Jehovah took her as his wife, but she turned to false gods and would suffer destruction for her spiritual adultery. Yet, with faithful ones God would ‘establish an indefinitely lasting covenant’—the new covenant with spiritual Israel.—Ezekiel 16:1-63; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:16.

Ezekiel 17:22, 23—Who is the “tender shoot” that Jehovah said he would plant?

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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What Does the
Bible Say About

Life and Death?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is death part of God's will for us? The Bible says: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more."—Revelation 21:4. This issue of *The Watchtower* examines what the Bible says about life and death.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH?

- 3 A Puzzling Question
- 4 What the Bible Says About Life and Death

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13 A POWERFUL REASSURANCE FROM HEBREW'S SMALLEST LETTER

14 PARADISE ON EARTH —FANTASY OR REALITY?

16 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



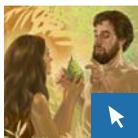
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Why Do People Die?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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COVER SUBJECT

A Puzzling Question

VIEWS about life and death are many and varied. Some feel that after death they will live on, perhaps in another form or in another place. Others feel that they will be reborn to live another existence. Still others think that death simply ends it all.

You may have your own belief on the subject, depending on your upbringing or cultural background. Since opinions as to what happens at death differ so widely, is there someone or somewhere we can turn to for reliable and truthful answers to this puzzling question?

For centuries, religious leaders have taught the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. Followers of nearly all major religions—Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others—believe in the existence of an immortal soul, which is said to survive the death of the body and live on in the spirit realm. Buddhists, on the other hand, believe that by way of countless rebirths, the force, or mental energy, within a person can reach a blissful state called Nirvana.

On account of such teachings, the majority of people around the world have come to believe that death opens the door to life in another world. To many, death is therefore an important step in the cycle of life, and dying appears to them to be part of God's will. But what does the Bible say about the matter? Please read the following article. The answer may surprise you.



Followers of nearly all major religions believe that the human soul is immortal



What the Bible Says About Life and Death



Reading the creation account in the Bible book of Genesis, we learn that the first man, Adam, was told by God: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17) That statement clearly and simply shows that if Adam had obeyed God’s command, he would not have died but would have continued living in the garden of Eden.

Sadly, rather than choosing to obey and live forever, Adam chose to ignore God’s command, and he ate the forbidden fruit when his wife, Eve, gave it to him. (Genesis 3:1-6) The consequences of that act of disobedience are still with us today. The apostle Paul explained it this way: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) That “one man” was, of course, Adam. But what was the sin, and why did it lead to death?

What Adam did—willfully disobeying or breaking God’s law—is sin. (1 John 3:4) And the penalty for sin is death, as God told Adam. As long as Adam—and his future offspring—remained obedient to God’s command, they would have no sin and would never have to taste death. God did not create humans to die but to live—even forever.



Can Humans Live Forever?

A few years ago, researchers reported the discovery of some underwater plants that they believe have been alive for thousands of years—perhaps the longest of any living thing on earth. The plants are of the species *Posidonia oceanica*, a type of seagrass that covers huge swaths of the Mediterranean seabed between Spain and Cyprus.

If plants can live to that amazing age, what about humans? Some scientists who study aging are optimistic about the prospect of an extended life span. For example, a book on the subject is said to delve into “the multitude of cutting-edge scientific developments” in that field. Whether scientific developments will have any real impact on the human life span remains to be seen.

True prospects for living forever, though, do not hinge on modern science. The Bible points to our Creator, Jehovah God, and says: “With you is the source of life.” (Psalm 36:9) To him, Jesus Christ said in prayer: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) Indeed, our efforts to know and please Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, will be rewarded with everlasting blessings.



Biosphoto/Biosphoto/Superstock

Researchers believe that some plants of this species of seagrass have lived for thousands of years

There is no disputing that death has “spread to all men,” as the Bible stated. But does some part of us live on after we die? Many would say yes, that a part of us—something called the soul—is immortal. This, however, would amount to saying that God lied to Adam. How so? Because if a part of us moves on to live in some other realm after we die, then death would not be the penalty for sin, as God stated. The Bible says: “It is impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18) In reality, it was Satan who lied when he told Eve: “You certainly will not die.”—Genesis 3:4.

That raises the question, If the teaching of the immortality of the soul is based on a lie, then what really happens at death?

THE BIBLE SETS THINGS STRAIGHT

The Genesis account of creation says: “Jehovah God went on to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living person.” The expression “a living person” is translated from the Hebrew word *ne’phesh*,* which literally means “a breathing creature.”—Genesis 2:7, footnote.

The Bible thus makes clear that humans are not created as individuals *with* a soul that is immortal. Rather, each individual *is* “a living person.” That is why, search as you may, you will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul.”

Since the Bible does not say that humans possess what some call an immortal soul, why do so many religions teach the contrary? The answer takes us all the way back to ancient Egypt.

* Some Bible translations, such as the *King James Version* and the *Catholic Douay Version*, render *ne’phesh* by the words “living soul,” whereas many modern translations render it “living creature,” *The New English Bible*: “living being,” *New International Version* and *The Jerusalem Bible*; or simply “began to live,” *Today’s English Version*.



WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Simply put, the Bible says that the dead are in the grave, awaiting the resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) They are not suffering or in any kind of pain, for “the dead know nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) In his teachings, Jesus likened death to a deep sleep. (John 11:11-14) Thus, we have no need to fear those who have fallen asleep in death or to appease them by making offerings to them. They can neither help nor harm us, because “there is no work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) By means of the resurrection, however, God will do away with death forever.—1 Corinthians 15:26, 55; Revelation 21:4.

A PAGAN TEACHING FLOURISHES

Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E., said that the Egyptians were “the first of mankind who have defended the immortality of the soul.” Another ancient culture, the Babylonians, also toyed with the idea of the immortal soul. By the time Alexander the Great

You will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul”

conquered the Middle East in 332 B.C.E., Greek philosophers had popularized the teaching, and it soon spread throughout the Greek Empire.

In the first century C.E., two prominent Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Pharisees, taught that the soul survives the body at death. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: “The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato.” Likewise, first-century Jewish historian Josephus attributed the teaching, not to the Holy Scriptures, but to “the belief of the sons of Greece,” which he viewed as a collection of tales by their mythologists.

As the influence of Greek culture continued to expand, professed Christians adopted this pagan teaching as well. According to historian Jona Lendering, “Plato’s hypothesis that our soul was once in a better place and now lives in a fallen world made it easy to combine platonic philosophy and Christianity.” Thus, the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul was absorbed into the “Christian” church and became a fundamental part of its beliefs.

Why You Can Trust What the Bible Says

We can have full confidence that what the Bible says is worthy of our trust. Why? Consider the following:

“THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE”

In the first century, the apostle Paul sounded this warning: “The inspired word clearly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired statements and teachings of demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1) How true those words proved to be! The doctrine of the immortal soul is but one example of “teachings of demons.” It is not supported by the Bible, and it has its roots in ancient pagan religions and philosophies.

Happily for us, Jesus said: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) By gaining an accurate knowledge of Bible truth, we are set free from the God-dishonoring teachings and practices promoted by so many of the world’s religions. Moreover, the truth in God’s Word sets us free from the shackles of the traditions and superstitions associated with death.—See the box “Where Are the Dead?”

Our Creator did not intend for humans to live just 70 or 80 years on earth and then move on to spend an eternity in another realm. His original purpose was for his human creation to live forever right here on earth as his obedient children. This grand purpose is an expression of God’s love for humankind, and it will not be thwarted. (Malachi 3:6) Reassuringly, the inspired psalmist declared: “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29. ■



For more information on what the Bible says about life and death, see chapter 6 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is also available at www.jw.org, or you can scan this code.



Unique Authorship: The Bible is composed of 66 books written by some 40 writers over a period of 16 centuries, from 1513 B.C.E. to about 98 C.E. Still, its content is harmonious and coherent throughout. This proves that its real Author is the almighty God. He revealed the information to the men who penned it.



Historical Accuracy: Events recorded in the Bible are in full harmony with proven historical facts. The book *A Lawyer Examines the Bible* remarks: “While romances, legends and false testimony are careful to place the events related in some distant place and some indefinite time, . . . the Bible narratives give us the date and place of the things related with the utmost precision.”



Scientific Accuracy: The Bible is not a science textbook, but when it touches on scientific matters, it reflects an accuracy far ahead of its time. For example, in chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Leviticus, detailed laws on hygiene and quarantine were given to the Israelites, long before people knew anything about germs and contagion. The Bible also speaks of the earth as being round and suspended in space, facts that were not fully understood by science until centuries later.—Job 26:7; Isaiah 40:22.

These are just a few examples to substantiate the Bible’s claim of authenticity when it says: “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproof, for setting things straight.”—2 Timothy 3:16.

How Do Bible Principles Benefit Us?



1. Why do we need guidance?

Our Creator is wiser than we are. As a loving Father, he cares for us. Also, he did not intend for us to be independent of him. (Jeremiah 10:23) So just as a small child needs the guidance of parents, we all need the guidance of God. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Bible principles provide guidance that is a gift from God. Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Jehovah's laws and principles teach us the best way of life now and show us how we can gain everlasting rewards in the future. Since God created us, it is only right that we respond appreciatively to his guidance.

Read Psalm 19:7, 11; Revelation 4:11.

2. What are Bible principles?

Bible principles are fundamental truths. Laws, on the other hand, may be for specific circumstances. (Deuteronomy 22:8) We must use thinking ability to understand how a principle applies in a particular situation. (Proverbs 2:10-12) For example, the Bible teaches that life is a gift from God. That basic principle can guide us at work, at home, and while traveling. It leads us to take safety precautions.

Read Acts 17:28.

3. Which two principles are primary?

Jesus spoke of two principles of prime importance. The first reveals the very purpose of human life—to know God,

to love him, and to serve him faithfully. This first principle should be considered in all our decisions. (Proverbs 3:6) Those who take this principle to heart

How could Bible principles move us to take safety precautions?

—PSALM 36:9.

131 “What God Has Yoked Together”

(Matthew 19:5, 6)

1. With dignity and joy,
A threefold cord is bound.
With God and men to witness,
These sacred vows resound.

(CHORUS 1)

*He vowed before Jehovah
To love her from the heart.
“What God has yoked together,
Let no man put apart.”*

2. They both have searched God’s Word
To learn to do his will,
And now they seek his blessing,
Their promise to fulfill.

(CHORUS 2)

*She vowed before Jehovah
To love him from the heart.
“What God has yoked together,
Let no man put apart.”*

- Song 49 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Do You Keep Your Promises?”:** (10 min.)
 Eze 17:1-4—Babylon replaced King Jehoiachin with Zedekiah (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)
 Eze 17:7, 15—Zedekiah broke his loyalty oath and sought military help from Egypt (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)
 Eze 17:18, 19—Jehovah expected Zedekiah to keep his word (w12 10/15 30 ¶11; w88 9/15 17 ¶8)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Eze 16:60—What is the “permanent covenant,” and who are included in it? (w88 9/15 17 ¶7)

Eze 17:22, 23—Who is the “tender shoot” that Jehovah said he would plant? (w07 7/1 12 ¶6)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Eze 16:28-42

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) wp17.4 cover
 —Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) wp17.4 cover
 —Introduce and discuss (but do not play) the video *Why Study the Bible?*
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) fg lesson 11 ¶1-2
 —Invite the person to the meeting.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 131
- **Fulfill Your Marriage Vow Even When You Are Disappointed With Your Marriage:** (10 min.) Talk by an elder based on the March 2014 *Awake!* pages 14-15.
- **Become Jehovah’s Friend—Be Truthful:** (5 min.) Play the video. Afterward, invite selected young children to the stage, and ask them questions about the video (video category CHILDREN).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 15 ¶1-8
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 73 and Prayer

EZEKIEL 15-17 | Do You Keep Your Promises?

17:18, 19



Write your answers in the spaces provided.



What oath did King Zedekiah break?

What were the consequences of breaking his oath?



Promises and agreements I have made:

Possible consequences of breaking my promises and agreements:



When You Are Disappointed With Your Marriage



THE CHALLENGE

You and your spouse seemed to have so much in common—before you got married, that is. Now, disillusionment has driven a wedge between you, making you feel more like cell mates than soul mates.

You *can* improve your relationship. First, though, consider why you might be disillusioned.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Reality sets in. The daily routine of working, raising children, and dealing with in-laws can chip away at marital bliss. Additionally, unexpected problems—perhaps a financial setback or caring for a family member who suffers from a chronic illness—can strain a marriage.

Differences seem irreconcilable. While dating, couples tend to overlook differences. Once married, though, a man and woman discover just how unlike they are in such areas as communication styles, money management, and problem solving. Differences that once were merely an annoyance may now seem intolerable.

You have become emotionally distant. Over time, a buildup of unkind words or actions and a backlog of unresolved conflicts can cause a husband or wife to withdraw into an emotional shell or, worse yet, begin to form an emotional attachment with someone else.

Your expectations were unrealistic. Some people walk into marriage believing that they have found the *one person* they were meant to be with. While that notion may seem romantic, it can be a setup for disaster. As soon as problems arise, the myth of the “perfect match” is shattered, leaving both spouses with the feeling that they made a mistake.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Focus on your spouse's good qualities. Try this: Write down three positive qualities that your mate possesses. Keep the list with you, perhaps on the back of a small wedding picture or in a mobile device. Regularly refer to this list as a reminder of why you married your spouse. Focusing on the positive qualities of your mate promotes peace and will help you put up with your differences.
—*Bible principle: Romans 14:19.*

Plan special time together. Before you were married, likely you both set aside time to do things together. Dating was new and exciting, but it was not left to chance. Why not do something similar now? Plan occasions where you and your spouse can spend special times together, as if on a date. Doing so can help you draw closer to each other and enable you to cope better with life's unexpected problems.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 5:18.*

Discuss your feelings. If you have been hurt by your spouse's words or actions, can you overlook the matter? If not, do not play games by resorting to the silent treatment. Calmly talk things out with your mate as soon as you can, that very day if at all possible.—*Bible principle: Ephesians 4:26.*

Discern the difference between your feelings and your spouse's intentions. Likely neither one of you ever intends to hurt the other. Assure your spouse of this by sincerely apologizing for any hurt feelings you may have caused. Then discuss what specific things you both can do to avoid unwittingly causing hurt feelings. Follow the Bible's advice: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another."
—Ephesians 4:32.

Be realistic in your expectations. The Bible acknowledges that those who marry "will have tribulation." (1 Corinthians 7:28) When you experience such tribulation, do not hastily conclude that your marriage was a mistake. Instead, work with your mate to resolve differences and "continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely."—Colossians 3:13. ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

"Pursue the things making for peace."—Romans 14:19.

"Rejoice with the wife of your youth."—Proverbs 5:18.

"Do not let the sun set while you are still angry."—Ephesians 4:26.

LIVING UP TO YOUR WEDDING VOW

Do you remember the words of your wedding vow? Why not review them and ask yourself, 'How well am I doing in living up to what I promised?' Resist the urge to dwell on how your spouse may be doing in this regard. Your vow contains words that *you* expressed regarding what *you* would do. If *each* of you focuses on living up to your vow, *both* of you will likely be pleased with the results.

If you have been hurt by your spouse's words or actions, can you overlook the matter?

15 Fighting for Freedom to Worship

FOCUS OF CHAPTER

How Christ has helped his followers to fight for legal recognition and the right to obey God's laws

ARE you a citizen of God's Kingdom? As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, you certainly are! And what is the proof of your citizenship? Not a passport, nor some other government document. Rather, the proof lies in the way that you worship Jehovah God. True worship involves more than what you believe. It involves what you do—your obedience to the laws of God's Kingdom. For all of us, our worship touches every aspect of life, including the way we raise our families and even the way we respond to certain health issues.

² However, the world we live in does not always respect our most cherished citizenship or its requirements. Some governments have tried to restrict our worship or even stamp it out altogether. At times, **1, 2. (a) What is the proof of your citizenship in God's Kingdom? (b) Why have Jehovah's Witnesses sometimes had to fight for religious freedom?**

Christ's subjects have had to fight for the freedom to live by the laws of the Messianic King. Is that surprising? No. Jehovah's people in Bible times often had to fight for the freedom to worship Jehovah.

³ In the days of Queen Esther, for example, God's people had to fight for their very existence. Why? The wicked Prime Minister Haman suggested to Persian King Ahasuerus that all the Jews living in the king's realm be killed because their "laws are different from those of all other peoples." (Esther 3:8, 9, 13) Did Jehovah abandon his servants? No, he blessed the efforts of Esther and Mordecai as they appealed to the Persian king to protect God's people.—Esther 9:20-22.

⁴ What about modern times? As we saw in the preceding chapter, secular powers have, at times, opposed Jehovah's Witnesses. In this chapter, we will discuss some ways in which such governments have tried to restrict our way of worship. We will focus on three general areas: (1) our right to exist as an organization and to worship as we choose, (2) the free-

3. What fight did God's people face in Queen Esther's day?

4. What will we discuss in this chapter?

dom to choose medical treatment in harmony with Bible principles, and (3) the right of parents to raise children according to Jehovah's standards. In each area, we will see how loyal citizens of the Messianic Kingdom have struggled valiantly to guard their precious citizenship and how their efforts have been blessed.

Struggling for Legal Recognition and Basic Freedoms

⁵ Do we need legal recognition from human governments in order to worship Jehovah? No, but legal recognition makes it easier for us to carry on our worship—for example, to meet freely in our own Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls, to print and import Bible literature, and to share the good news with our neighbors openly, without hindrance. In many countries, Jehovah's Witnesses are legally registered and enjoy the same freedoms to worship as do the adherents of other legally recognized religions. What, though, has happened when governments have denied legal recognition or have tried to restrict our basic freedoms?

5. Legal recognition offers what benefits to true Christians?

⁶ **Australia.** In the early 1940's, the governor-general of Australia deemed our beliefs "prejudicial" to the war effort. A ban was imposed. Witnesses were unable to meet or preach openly, Bethel operations were closed down, and Kingdom Halls were seized. Merely possessing our Bible literature was prohibited. After operating in secret for several years, the Australian Witnesses found relief at last. On June 14, 1943, the High Court of Australia reversed the ban.

⁷ **Russia.** Jehovah's Witnesses spent decades under Communist ban but were finally registered in 1991. After the breakup of the former Soviet Union, we were granted legal recognition in the Russian Federation in 1992. Before long, however, some opposers—particularly those associated with the Russian Orthodox Church—were unnerved by the rapid growth in our numbers. Opposers filed a series of five criminal complaints against Jehovah's Witnesses between 1995 and 1998. Each time, the prosecutor found no evidence of wrongdoing. The determined opposers

6. Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia faced what challenge in the early 1940's?

7, 8. Describe the fight for freedom of worship that our brothers in Russia have waged over the years.

then filed a civil complaint in 1998. The Witnesses prevailed at first, but the opposers rejected the verdict and the Witnesses lost on the appeal in May 2001. A retrial began in October of that year, leading to a decision in 2004 to liquidate the registered legal entity that the Witnesses use in Moscow and ban its activities.

⁸ A wave of persecution followed. (**Read 2 Timothy 3:12.**) Witnesses faced harassment and assault. Religious literature was confiscated; renting or building houses of worship was severely restricted. Imagine how our brothers and sisters felt as they faced those hardships! The Witnesses had applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2001, and they submitted additional information to the Court in 2004. In 2010, the ECHR reached its decision. The Court saw clearly that religious intolerance was behind Russia's ban on the Witnesses and ruled that there was no reason to uphold the decisions of the lower courts, since there had been no evidence of wrongdoing on the part of any Witnesses. The Court further noted that the ban was designed to strip the Witnesses of their legal rights. The Court's decision

upheld the Witnesses' right of freedom of religion. Although various Russian authorities have failed to comply with the ECHR ruling, God's people in that land have drawn great courage from such victories.

⁹ **Greece.** In 1983, Titos Manoussakis rented a room in Heraklion, Crete, so that a small group of Jehovah's Witnesses could meet there for worship. (Heb. 10:24, 25) Soon, though, an Orthodox priest filed a complaint with government authorities, protesting the Witnesses' use of the room for worship. Why? Simply because the Witnesses' beliefs differ from those of the Orthodox Church! Authorities initiated criminal proceedings against Titos Manoussakis and three other local Witnesses. They were fined and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. As loyal citizens of God's Kingdom, the Witnesses considered the court's judgment to be a violation of their freedom to worship, so they pursued their case through the domestic courts and eventually applied to the ECHR.

¹⁰ Finally, in 1996, the ECHR delivered a stunning **9-11. In Greece, how have Jehovah's people struggled for the freedom to worship together, and what have been the results?**

Grant Us Boldness

(Acts 4:29)

1. As we tell about the Kingdom,
As we witness for your name,
There are many who oppose us
And who try to bring us shame.
But instead of fearing men,
It's really you we must obey.
So we beg you now for your spirit;
O Jehovah, hear what we pray.

(CHORUS)

*Grant us boldness as we witness;
Help us overcome our fear.
Give us confidence and courage
So that all the world may hear.
Armageddon draws ever near,
But until that great day is here,
Grant us boldness as we witness.
This is our prayer.*

2. Even though we may be fearful,
You remember we are dust.
Your assurance to support us
Is a promise we can trust.
Give attention to the threats
Of those who persecute and blame.
May you help us all to continue
As we boldly speak in your name.

(Chorus)

MAY 2017

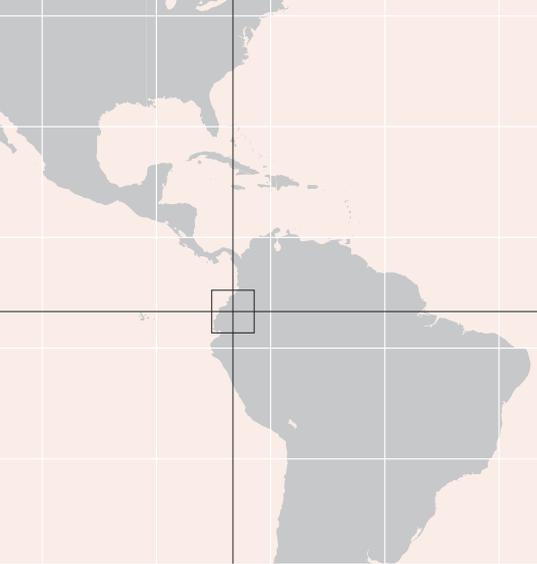
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JULY 3-30, 2017

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

ECUADOR

A regular pioneer shares the Bible’s message in the Quichua (Imbabura) language with a vendor at a crafts market in the city of Otavalo in northern Ecuador.

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Helping “Foreign Residents”
to “Serve Jehovah With Rejoicing”

16 WEEK OF JULY 10-16

Helping the Children of “Foreign Residents”

The first of these articles discusses the difficult situation of our brothers and sisters who have become refugees, and it provides practical suggestions on how we can best help them. The second article considers how applying Bible principles will help immigrant parents to make decisions that will benefit their children.

134 *Children Are a Trust From God*

(Psalm 127:3-5)

1. When a man becomes a father

And a woman has a child of her own,
They share a trust, they must remember,
That is not theirs, not theirs alone.
The gift they share is from Jehovah;
Of life and love he is the one true Source.
To parents he gives sure direction
That they may follow the wisest course.

(CHORUS)

*A sacred trust you have been given;
A precious life is in your hands.
You can bestow the greatest favor;
Instruct your child in God's commands.*

2. All the words God has commanded—

They must always prove to be on your heart.
These words you'll speak to sons and daughters;
This is your trust, this is your part.
To them you'll speak along your roadway,
When you rise up and when you are at rest.
In years to come, may they remember,
May they be faithful, may they be blessed.

(Chorus)



SONGS:
134, 133

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can parents set a good example for their children?

How can family heads decide which language congregation the family will attend?

How can others help immigrant parents and their children?

Helping the Children of “Foreign Residents”

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

—3 JOHN 4.

“FROM infancy, I spoke my immigrant parents’ language at home and in the congregation,” relates Joshua. “But after I started

1, 2. (a) What problem do many immigrant children experience? (b) What questions will this article discuss?

school, I began to prefer the local language. Within a few years, the shift was complete. I couldn't understand the meetings, and I didn't identify with my parents' culture." Joshua's experience is not uncommon.

² Today, more than 240,000,000 people live outside the land of their birth. If you are an immigrant parent, how can you give your children the best possible opportunity to become spiritual children who "go on walking in the truth"? (3 John 4) And how can others help?

PARENTS, SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

³ Parents, your example is essential to start your children on the path to endless life. When your children see you "seeking first the Kingdom," they learn to depend on Jehovah for their daily needs. (Matt. 6:33, 34) So live modestly. Sacrifice material things for spiritual benefits—not the other way around. Strive to stay out of debt. Seek "treasure in heaven"—Jehovah's approval—and not riches or "the glory of men."—Read Mark 10:21, 22; John 12:43.

3, 4. (a) How can parents set a good example for their children?
(b) What should parents not expect of their children?

⁴ Never get so busy that you do not have time for your children. Let them know that you are proud of them when they decide to put Jehovah first instead of seeking prestige or riches—for themselves or for you. Avoid the unchristian view that children should provide their parents with a life of ease. Remember, “children are not expected to save up for their parents, but the parents for their children.” —2 Cor. 12:14.

PARENTS, BRIDGE THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

⁵ As foretold, people “out of all the languages of the nations” are flocking to Jehovah’s organization. (Zech. 8:23) But a language barrier can make it difficult for you to teach your children the truth. Your children are the most important Bible students you will ever have, and their “coming to know” Jehovah means their eternal life. (John 17:3) In order for your children to learn Jehovah’s teachings, you must “speak of them” on all appropriate occasions. —Read Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

⁶ Your children will likely learn the local language at school and in their environment, but they learn

5. Why must parents speak with their children about Jehovah?

6. How may your children benefit from learning your language? (See opening picture.)

your language primarily by *frequently* interacting with you in your language. Besides enabling your children to have heart-to-heart conversations with you, knowing your language gives them other advantages. Being bilingual sharpens your children's thinking ability and enhances their social skills. It may also open opportunities for them to expand their ministry. "Being in a foreign-language congregation has been fun," says Carolina, whose parents are immigrants. "And it's cool to be helping where there is a greater need."

⁷ Yet, as children of immigrants assimilate the local culture and language, some of them may lose much of their desire and even their ability to communicate in their parents' mother tongue. Parents, if that describes your children, can you learn at least some of the local language? You will be in a much better position to raise your children as Christians if you understand their conversations, entertainment, and schoolwork and if you can communicate directly with their teachers. Granted, learning a new language takes time, effort, and humility. But if your child somehow became deaf, would you not try to learn sign language in order to communicate with him? A child who communicates

7. What can you do if there is a language barrier in your family?

best in another spoken language deserves the same concern, would you not agree?*

⁸ Realistically, it may not be possible for some immigrant parents to become fluent in their children's new language. The resulting barrier may make it hard for parents to impart to their children a deep knowledge of "the holy writings." (2 Tim. 3:15) If that is your situation, you can still help your children to come to know and love Jehovah. "Our single mom's grasp of the language we understood best was limited, and my sisters and I didn't speak her language very well," recalls an elder named Shan. "But when we saw her studying, praying, and doing her best to conduct family worship every week, we understood that getting to know Jehovah was very important."

⁹ Some children may need to learn about Jehovah in two languages—their school language and the language that is spoken at home. To that end, some parents make use of printed literature, audio re-

* See the article "You Can Learn Another Language!" in *Awake!* of March 2007, pp. 10-12.

8. How can you help your children if your language ability is limited?

9. How can parents help children who may need to study in two languages?

cordings, and videos in both languages. Clearly, immigrant parents must devote more time and show more initiative in order to help their children develop a strong relationship with Jehovah.

TO WHICH LANGUAGE CONGREGATION SHOULD YOU BELONG?

¹⁰ When “foreign residents” live far from other Witnesses who speak their language, they need to associate with a local-language congregation. (Ps. 146:9) But if there is a congregation nearby that uses your mother tongue, the question arises: Which language congregation is best for your family? After careful thought and prayer and consultation with his mate and children, a family head must decide. (1 Cor. 11:3) What factors will the family head take into consideration? What principles apply? Let us consider some.

¹¹ Parents must evaluate their children’s needs realistically. Of course—regardless of language—to gain a firm grasp of the truth, a child needs much more than just a few hours of spiritual education

10. (a) Who must decide which language congregation to attend? (b) What should he do before making a decision?

11, 12. (a) How does language affect what a child absorbs at meetings? (b) Why do some children resist learning their parents’ language?

each week at meetings. But consider this: At meetings conducted in the language they understand best, children may absorb instruction simply by being present, perhaps learning more than their parents realize. That may not be the case when children do not fully understand the language. (Read **1 Corinthians 14:9, 11.**) And a child's native language will not necessarily remain the language of his mind or even of his heart. In fact, some children can learn to give comments, presentations, and talks in their parents' language without the words really coming from their heart.

¹² Furthermore, a child's heart is influenced by more than just language. That was the case with Joshua, quoted at the outset. As his sister, Esther, notes, "to young children, their parents' language, culture, and religion come bundled together." If children do not identify with their parents' culture, they may resist learning their parents' language—and their faith. What can immigrant parents do?

¹³ Christian parents put their children's spiritual well-being ahead of personal preferences. (1 Cor. 10:24) Joshua and Esther's father, Samuel, relates:

13, 14. (a) Why did one immigrant couple move their family to a local-language congregation? (b) How did the parents stay spiritually strong?

“My wife and I observed our children to see in which language they thrived spiritually, and we prayed for wisdom. The answer was not what we personally found convenient. But when we saw that they were getting little benefit from the meetings in our language, we decided to move to the local-language congregation. Together, we regularly attended meetings and shared in the ministry. We also invited local friends to join us for meals and excursions. All of this helped our children to get to know the brothers and to get to know Jehovah, not only as their God but also as their Father and Friend. We considered this to be much more important than their mastering our language.”

¹⁴ Samuel adds: “To keep ourselves spiritually strong, my wife and I also attended meetings in *our* language. Life was very busy, and we were tired. But we thank Jehovah for blessing our efforts and sacrifices. Our three children are all serving Jehovah in the full-time ministry.”

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN DO

¹⁵ Adult children may come to realize that they could better serve Jehovah in a congregation that

15. Why did a sister named Kristina feel that she could do better in a local-language congregation?

uses the language that they understand best. If so, their parents need not feel that their children are rejecting *them*. “I knew the basics of my parents’ language, but the language spoken at the meetings was over my head,” recalls Kristina. “When I was 12, I attended a convention in my school language. For the first time, I understood that what I was hearing was the truth! Another turning point came when I began to pray in my school language. I could speak to Jehovah from my heart!” (Acts 2:11, 41) When she reached adulthood, Kristina discussed the matter with her parents and decided to move to a local-language congregation. She recalls: “Learning about Jehovah in my school language moved me to action.” Before long, Kristina became a joyful regular pioneer.

¹⁶ Young people, do you think that you would prefer being part of a local-language congregation? If so, ask yourself why. Would moving to such a congregation help you draw closer to Jehovah? (Jas. 4:8) Or might you want to move because you expect to have less supervision or less work? “When my siblings and I got into our teens, we wanted to switch to the local-language congregation,” says

16. Why is a sister named Nadia glad she stayed in the foreign-language congregation?

Nadia, who now serves at Bethel. But her parents knew that such a move would not be in their children's best spiritual interest. "Now we're grateful that our parents worked hard to teach us their language and kept us in the foreign-language congregation. It has enriched our lives and broadened our opportunities to help others get to know Jehovah."

HOW OTHERS CAN HELP

¹⁷ Jehovah has assigned *parents*—not grandparents or anyone else—the privilege of raising their children in the truth. (Read Proverbs 1:8; 31:10, 27, 28.) Still, parents who do not know the local language may need help to reach their children's heart. Arranging for such help need not mean abdicating their spiritual responsibility; rather, it can be part of bringing up their children "in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) For example, parents may ask elders in the congregation for suggestions on conducting family worship and for help in providing good association for their children.

¹⁸ For instance, parents may invite other families

17. (a) Whom has Jehovah assigned to raise children? (b) How can parents get help in teaching their children the truth?

18, 19. (a) How can spiritually-minded brothers and sisters benefit young ones? (b) What must parents continue to do?



Both children and parents benefit
from association with the congregation
(See paragraphs 18, 19)

to join them in family worship from time to time. Further, many young people thrive under the influence of spiritually balanced companions who may, for example, accompany them in the ministry and share with them in wholesome recreation. (Prov. 27: 17) “I well remember the brothers who took me under their wing,” recalls Shan, quoted earlier. “When they helped me with student talk assignments for the meeting, I always learned more. And I enjoyed the leisure activities we shared in as a group.”

19 Of course, those whom the parents choose to help their children should always build up the young ones' respect for their parents, speaking positively about them, not taking over their responsibility. Moreover, those who help should avoid any conduct that could be misinterpreted by some inside or outside the congregation as morally questionable. (1 Pet. 2:12) Parents must not merely turn their children over to others for spiritual training. They must monitor the help given by companions and continue to teach their children themselves.

20 Parents, pray to Jehovah for help, and try your best. (Read 2 Chronicles 15:7.) Put your child's friendship with Jehovah ahead of your own interests. Do whatever you can to ensure that God's Word reaches your child's heart. Never stop believing that your child can become a fine servant of Jehovah. When your children follow God's Word and your good example, you will feel as the apostle John did about his spiritual children: "No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth."—3 John 4.

20. How can parents help their children to become fine servants of Jehovah?

133 *Worship Jehovah During Youth* (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

1. Precious to God, we are daughters and sons,
 Giving our strength as his faithful young ones.
Loving attention to us he will give,
 Blessing our days for as long as we live.
2. Honoring parents who care for our lives
 Helps us express what we're feeling inside.
Then we find favor with God and with men,
 Drawing us close to Jehovah, our Friend.
3. May we remember our God in our youth,
 Growing each day in our love of the truth.
Giving our best to our God, we will bring
 Joy to the heart of Jehovah, our King.

