

- Song 34 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Do Not Follow After the Crowd”:** (10 min.)
 Ex 23:1—Do not repeat falsehoods (*w18.08 4 ¶7-8*)
 Ex 23:2—Do not be swayed by the crowd to do evil (*it-1 11 ¶3*)
 Ex 23:3—Do not show partiality (*it-1 343 ¶5*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (10 min.)
 Ex 23:9—How did Jehovah appeal to the Israelites’ empathy? (*w16.10 9 ¶4*)

Ex 23:20, 21—What evidence supports the conclusion that the angel mentioned here is Michael? (*it-2 393*)

What spiritual gems from this week’s Bible reading would you like to share regarding Jehovah, the field ministry, or something else?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Ex 23:1-19 (5)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call Video:** (4 min.) Discussion. Play the video, and then ask the audience: How did the publisher maintain common ground when the householder gave a wrong answer? How could the publisher have introduced the public edition of *The Watchtower* No. 3 2020?
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- **Talk:** (5 min. or less) *w16.05 30-31*—Theme: What Can Help Christians Determine Whether It Is Appropriate to Give Gifts or Tips to Government Employees? (14)

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 124
- **“Beware of Spreading Falsehoods”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the whiteboard animation *How Can I Stop the Gossip?* (video category TEENAGERS).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min. or less) *jj* chap. 131
- Concluding Comments (3 min. or less)
- Song 145 and Prayer

EXODUS 23-24 | Do Not Follow After the Crowd

23:1-3

Jehovah’s warning to witnesses and judges in legal cases not to be swayed by the crowd to give false testimony or render a perverted judgment also applies to other areas of life. Christians are under constant pressure to conform to this world’s ungodly thinking and conduct.—Ro 12:2.

- ✍ **Why is it unwise to follow after the crowd when**
 - hearing unsubstantiated rumors or gossip?
 - choosing clothing, hairstyles, or entertainment?
 - thinking about and dealing with people of a different race, culture, or economic standing?



Walking in Integrity

(Psalm 26)

1. Please judge me, Lord, observe my loyalty;
Observe my trust in you and my integrity.
Examine me, and put me to the test;
My mind and heart refine, that my soul might be blessed.

(CHORUS)

*But as for me, Determined I will be
to walk eternally In my integrity.*

2. I do not sit with wicked men of lies.
I hate the company of those who truth despise.
Jehovah, please, don't take away my life
With men who take delight in bribery and strife.

(Chorus)

3. For I have loved the dwelling of your house.
Your worship, oh, so pure, I daily will espouse.
And I will march around your altar grand,
To make thanksgiving heard aloud throughout the land.

(Chorus)

Exodus 23-24

23 “You must not spread a report that is not true. Do not cooperate with a wicked one by becoming a malicious witness. ² You must not follow after the crowd to do evil, and you must not pervert justice by giving testimony to go along with the crowd. ³ You must show impartiality in the dispute of a poor person.

⁴ “If you come upon your enemy’s bull or his donkey straying, you must return it to him. ⁵ If you see that the donkey of someone who hates you has fallen under its load, you must not ignore it and leave. You must help him release the animal.

⁶ “You are not to pervert the judgment of the poor one among you in his legal case.

⁷ “Have nothing to do with a false accusation, and do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I will not declare the wicked one righteous.

⁸ “You must not accept a bribe, for the bribe blinds clear-sighted men and can distort the words of righteous men.

⁹ “You must not oppress a foreign resident. You know how it feels to be a foreigner, because you were foreign residents in the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ “You are to sow your land with seed and gather its produce for six years. ¹¹ But the seventh year you should leave it uncultivated and let it lie fallow, and the poor among

your people will eat of it, and what they leave, the wild animals of the field will eat. That is what you should do with your vineyard and your olive grove.

¹² “Six days you are to do your work; but on the seventh day, you are to cease from your labor, in order that your bull and your donkey may rest and the son of your slave girl and the foreign resident may refresh themselves.

¹³ “You must be careful to do all that I have said to you, and you must not mention the names of other gods; they should not be heard on your lips.

¹⁴ “Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me.
¹⁵ You will observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread. You will eat unleavened bread for seven days, just as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of A'bib, for at that time you came out of Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶ Also, you are to observe the Festival of Harvest of the first ripe fruits of your labors, of what you sow in the field; and the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the results of your labors. ¹⁷ Three times a year all your men are to appear before the true Lord, Jehovah.

¹⁸ “You must not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened. And the sacrifices of fat offered at my festivals should not stay overnight until the morning.

¹⁹ “You are to bring the best of the first ripe fruits of your ground to the house of Jehovah your God.

“You must not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

²⁰ “I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you on the way and to bring you into the place that I have prepared.

²¹ Pay attention to him, and obey his voice. Do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, because my name is in him. ²² However, if you strictly obey his voice and do all that I say, I will show hostility to your enemies and oppose those who oppose you. ²³ For my angel will go ahead of you and will bring you to the Am'or-ites, the Hit'tites, the Per'iz-zites, the Ca'naan-ites, the Hi'vites, and the Jeb'u-sites, and I will annihilate them. ²⁴ You must not bow down to their gods or be persuaded to serve them, and you must not imitate their practices. Instead, you must demolish them and smash their sacred pillars. ²⁵ You must serve Jehovah your God, and he will bless your bread and your water. I will remove sickness from among you. ²⁶ The women in your land will not suffer a miscarriage or be barren, and I will give you a full life span.

²⁷ “I will send the fear of me ahead of you, and I will throw into confusion all the people you encounter, and I will cause all your enemies to flee from you in defeat. ²⁸ I will send the feeling of dejection ahead of you, and it will drive the Hi'vites, the Ca'naan-ites, and the Hit'tites out from before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, so that the land does not become desolate and the wild animals of the field multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them

out from before you, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land.

³¹ “I will set your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Phi-lis'tines and from the wilderness to the River; for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out from before you. ³² You must not make a covenant with them or their gods. ³³ They should not dwell in your land, so that they may not cause you to sin against me. If you should serve their gods, it would surely become a snare to you.”

24 Then he said to Moses: “Go up to Jehovah, you and Aaron, Na'dab and A-bi'hu, and 70 of the elders of Israel, and bow down from a distance. ² Moses should approach Jehovah by himself; but the others should not approach, and the people should not go up with him.”

³ Then Moses came and related to the people all the words of Jehovah and all the judicial decisions, and all the people answered with one voice: “All the words that Jehovah has spoken, we are willing to do.” ⁴ So Moses wrote down all the words of Jehovah. Then he got up early in the morning and built at the foot of the mountain an altar and 12 pillars corresponding to the 12 tribes of Israel. ⁵ After that he sent young Israelite men, and they offered up burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as communion sacrifices to Jehovah. ⁶ Then Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the book of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they

said: “All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do, and we will be obedient.” ⁸ So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said: “This is the blood of the covenant that Jehovah has made with you in harmony with all these words.”

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Na'dab and A-bi'hu, and 70 of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was what seemed like a sapphire pavement, and it was as pure as the heavens themselves. ¹¹ He did not harm the distinguished men of Israel, and they saw a vision of the true God and ate and drank.

¹² Jehovah now said to Moses: “Come up to me on the mountain and stay there. I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment that I will write for their instruction.” ¹³ So Moses got up with his attendant Joshua, and Moses went up the mountain of the true God. ¹⁴ But to the elders he had said: “Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you. Whoever has a legal case may go to them.” ¹⁵ Then Moses went up the mountain while the cloud was covering it.

¹⁶ Jehovah's glory remained on Mount Si'nai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites who were watching, the appearance of Jehovah's glory was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop. ¹⁸ Moses then entered into the cloud and went up the mountain. And Moses stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights.

- Song 34 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Do Not Follow After the Crowd”:** (10 min.)
 Ex 23:1—Do not repeat falsehoods (*w18.08 4 ¶7-8*)
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Jehovah’s warning to witnesses and judges in legal cases not to be swayed by the crowd to give false testimony or render a perverted judgment also applies to other areas of life. Christians are under constant pressure to conform to this world’s ungodly thinking and conduct.—Ro 12:2.

- ✍ **Why is it unwise to follow after the crowd when**
 - hearing unsubstantiated rumors or gossip?
 - choosing clothing, hairstyles, or entertainment?
 - thinking about and dealing with people of a different race, culture, or economic standing?



September 7-13 /Exodus 23-24

- Song 34 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

“Do Not Follow After the Crowd”: (10 minutes)

Exodus 23:1-3

Jehovah's warning to witnesses and judges in legal cases not to be swayed by the crowd to give false testimony or render a perverted judgment also applies to other areas of life.

Christians are under constant pressure to conform to this world's ungodly thinking and conduct.—Romans 12:2.

Why is it unwise to follow after the crowd when

- hearing unsubstantiated rumors or gossip?
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Picture: Men and women viewing the news on cell phones and on large television screens in a public space.

Exodus 23:1—Do not repeat falsehoods

Exodus 23:1: “You must not spread a report that is not true. Do not cooperate with a wicked one by becoming a malicious witness.

w18.08 4 paragraphs 7-8

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

8 There is another danger in quickly forwarding e-mails and text messages. In some lands, our work is under restriction or outright ban. Our opposers in such lands may purposely circulate reports designed to instill fear or to cause us to

distrust one another. Consider what happened in the former Soviet Union. The secret police, known as the KGB, spread rumors that various prominent brothers had betrayed Jehovah's people. Many put confidence in such false reports, and as a result, they separated themselves from Jehovah's organization. How sad! Thankfully, many later returned, but some never did. Their faith was shipwrecked. (1 Timothy 1:19) How can we avoid such a disastrous outcome? Refuse to circulate negative or unsubstantiated reports. Do not be naive, or gullible. Be sure you have the facts.

Exodus 23:2—Do not be swayed by the crowd to do evil

Exodus 23:2: You must not follow after the crowd to do evil, and you must not pervert justice by giving testimony to go along with the crowd.

it-1 11 paragraph 3

It is noteworthy that in each of his three deflections, Aaron does not appear as the principal initiator of the wrong action but, rather, seems to have allowed the pressure of the

circumstances or the influence of others to sway him from a course of rectitude. Particularly in his first trespass, he could have applied the principle underlying the command: "You must not follow after the crowd for evil ends." (Exodus 23:2) Nevertheless, his name is thereafter used in the Scriptures in an honorable way, and God's Son, during his earthly lifetime, recognized the legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood.—Psalm 115:10, 12; 118:3; 133:1, 2; 135:19; Matthew 5:17-19; 8:4.

Exodus 23:3—Do not show partiality

Exodus 23:3: You must show impartiality in the dispute of a poor person.

it-1 343 paragraph 5

Miscarriage of justice through judicial corruption was symbolized by blindness, and many are the exhortations in the Law against bribery, gifts, or prejudice, as such things can blind a judge and prevent the impartial administration of justice. "The bribe blinds clear-sighted men." (Exodus 23:8) "The bribe blinds the eyes of wise ones." (Deuteronomy

16:19) A judge, no matter how upright and discerning, may be consciously or even unconsciously affected by a gift from those involved in the case. God's law thoughtfully considers the blinding effect not only of a gift but also of sentiment, as it states: "You must not treat the lowly with partiality, and you must not prefer the person of a great one." (Leviticus 19:15) So, for sentimentality or for popularity with the crowd, a judge was not to render his verdict against the rich merely because they were rich.—Exodus 23:2, 3.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Exodus 23:9—How did Jehovah appeal to the Israelites' empathy?

Exodus 23:9: "You must not oppress a foreign resident. You know how it feels to be a foreigner, because you were foreign residents in the land of Egypt.

w16.10 9 paragraph 4

Rather than order the Israelites to respect foreigners, Jehovah appealed to their empathy. (Read Exodus 23:9.) They knew 'how it felt to be a foreigner.' Even before they were

reduced to slavery, the Hebrews were likely shunned by the Egyptians because of racial pride or religious prejudice. (Genesis 43:32; 46:34; Exodus 1:11-14) The Israelites had experienced a bitter life as foreign residents, but Jehovah expected them to treat the foreigner "like a native" among them.—Leviticus 19:33, 34.

Exodus 23:20, 21—What evidence supports the conclusion that the angel mentioned here is Michael?

Exodus 23:20, 21: "I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you on the way and to bring you into the place that I have prepared. Pay attention to him, and obey his voice. Do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, because my name is in him.

it-2 393

1. The only holy angel other than Gabriel named in the Bible, and the only one called "archangel." (Jude 9) The first occurrence of the name is in the tenth chapter of Daniel, where Michael is described as "one of the foremost princes";

he came to the aid of a lesser angel who was opposed by “the prince of the royal realm of Persia.” Michael was called “the prince of [Daniel’s] people,” “the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of [Daniel’s] people.” (Daniel 10:13, 20, 21; 12:1) This points to Michael as the angel who led the Israelites through the wilderness. (Exodus 23:20, 21, 23; 32:34; 33:2) Lending support to this conclusion is the fact that “Michael the archangel had a difference with the Devil and was disputing about Moses’ body.”—Jude 9.

What spiritual gems from this week’s Bible reading would you like to share regarding Jehovah, the field ministry, or something else?

Bible Reading: (4 minutes or less) Exodus 23:1-19 (*th* study 5)

- Song 34 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

▲ The high priest enters the Most Holy

● INITIAL CALL

Question: How does God feel about those who sincerely seek him?

Scripture: 1Pe 5:6, 7

Link: To what extent does God pay attention to us as individuals?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:



● wp20.3 16;
bhs 116 ¶4

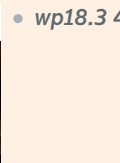
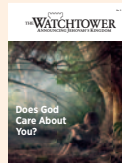
● RETURN VISIT

Question: To what extent does God pay attention to us as individuals?

Scripture: Mt 10:29-31

Link: How do we know that God understands us?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:



● wp18.3 4

Questions From Readers

What can help Christians determine whether it is appropriate to give gifts or tips to government employees?

▪ A number of factors need to be borne in mind. Christians must be honest. They have a responsibility to obey the law of the land when this does not conflict with Jehovah's law. (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1, 2; Heb. 13:18) They also strive to respect local customs and sensibilities and to 'love their neighbor as themselves.' (Matt. 22:39; Rom. 12:17, 18; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12) Applying such principles will likely affect how Christians in different parts of the world view the giving of gifts and tips.

In many places, a member of the community does not have to give anything to public employees in order to obtain what he is entitled to. Public employees perform services for which they are paid by the government, and they neither ask for nor expect to receive anything in addition to their normal wages. In many lands, it is illegal for government employees to seek or accept anything of value for an official action, even if they would be acting in what is otherwise a completely legal manner in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. Such a gift would be considered a bribe, even if the gift did not change the outcome of the official action. Where this situation exists, the question of whether a Christian might give gifts or tips to government employees does not even arise. Such gifts are simply improper.

However, public employees in parts of the world without such laws or where such laws are not rigorously enforced do not have the same attitude toward the functions they fulfill. In some lands, government officials take advantage of their position to extort money or other favors from those whom they are supposed to serve, and they are unwilling to do anything unless they receive a gift. Tips are thus demanded by officials who legalize marriages, who accept legitimate income tax payments, who issue building permits, and so on. When tips are not forthcoming, officials may deliberately create obstacles to make it very difficult, if not impossible, for citizens to obtain what is their legal right. It is even reported that in one country, firemen who respond to emergencies will not begin to tackle a blaze unless they first receive a substantial tip.

Where the practices described above are widespread, some feel that it is impossible to avoid giving tips. In such circumstances, a Christian might view a tip as an additional fee that he is required to pay in order to obtain a legitimate service. In an environment where corruption is common, however, a Christian needs to be on guard so that the boundary between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable from God's standpoint does not become blurred for him. It is one thing to give a tip in order to obtain what one is legally entitled to, yet quite another to seek an illegal favor. In an atmosphere of corruption, some people tip an official in order to obtain a service to which they are not entitled or offer a policeman or a government inspector a "tip" in order to avoid a proper and justifiable fine. Of course, it would be wrong to seek to corrupt anyone with a "gift," just

as it would also be wrong to be corrupted by accepting such a “gift.” Either action would distort justice.—Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Prov. 17:23.

On the basis of their Bible-trained conscience, most mature Christians are not comfortable giving tips solicited by officials. They feel that by doing so, they would be condoning or promoting corruption. Thus, they reject requests for any kind of gift at all.

While mature Christians recognize that gift-giving to obtain an unlawful favor could be tantamount to bribery, local circumstances and sensibilities may allow some to offer a small token of appreciation to receive a legitimate service or to avoid unfair delay. In other cases, after receiving free medical treatment in a public hospital, some Christians give gifts to doctors and nurses out of gratitude for the treatment received. They feel free to do this after the treatment has been received, rather than before, so that there can be no suggestion that the gift is intended as a bribe or a request for preferential treatment.

It is impossible to consider here every conceivable situation in every different land. Irrespective of local circumstances, therefore, when deciding how to act, Christians should pursue a course that leaves them with a good conscience. (Rom. 14:1-6) They should avoid lawless actions. (Rom. 13:1-7) They should avoid any practice that might bring reproach on Jehovah’s name or stumble others. (Matt. 6:9; 1 Cor. 10:32) And their decisions should reflect their love for neighbor.—Mark 12:31.

Ever Loyal (Psalm 18:25)

1. Ever loyal to Jehovah,
Loyal love we wish to show.
As a people, dedicated,
His commands we want to know.
His advice will never fail us,
And his counsel we obey.
He is loyal; we can trust him.
From his side we'll never stray.
2. Ever loyal to our brothers,
Sticking close in times of need.
Ever caring, always trusting,
Ever kind in word and deed.
We show honor to our brothers
And respect them from the heart.
Ever loyal, ever closer,
From their side we'll never part.
3. Ever loyal to their guidance
When our brothers lead the way.
When they give us clear direction,
May we loyally obey.
Then the blessing from Jehovah
Will be ours to make us strong.
When we're loyal, ever faithful,
To Jehovah we'll belong.

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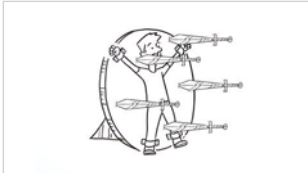
Beware of Spreading Falsehoods

Today, information can be circulated to millions of people very quickly via print, radio, television, and the Internet. Those who worship “the God of truth” do not want to spread false information, even unwittingly. (Ps 31:5; Ex 23:1) Falsehoods that are passed on to others can cause great harm. When trying to determine whether something is true, ask yourself:

- **‘Is the source reliable?’** The one telling the story may not know the facts. Stories that pass from one person to another inevitably change, so be cautious when you cannot pinpoint the exact source. Because those who have privileges in the congregation are respected sources of information, they should be especially careful about passing on unverified information
- **‘Is the information slanderous?’** If it detracts from the good name of a person or group, it is best not to repeat it.—Pr 18:8; Php 4:8
- **‘Is the story plausible?’** Be cautious when hearing sensational stories and experiences



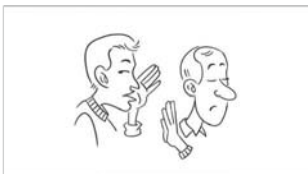
WATCH THE VIDEO *HOW CAN I STOP THE GOSSIP?* AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



- According to Proverbs 12:18, what harm can words cause?



- How does Philippians 2:4 help us to have a balanced view of talking about others?



- What should we do when comments about others turn sarcastic or negative?



- Before we start talking about others, what questions should we ask ourselves?

AN INNOCENT KING SUFFERS ON THE STAKE

MATTHEW 27:33-44 MARK 15:22-32
LUKE 23:32-43 JOHN 19:17-24

- JESUS IS NAILED TO A TORTURE STAKE
 - THE SIGN OVER JESUS' HEAD PROVOKES MOCKERY
 - JESUS OFFERS HOPE OF LIFE IN PARADISE ON EARTH
-

Jesus is led to a location not far from the city where he and two robbers are to be executed. The place is called Golgotha, or Skull Place, and is a spot that is visible “from a distance.”—Mark 15:40.

The three condemned men are stripped of their garments. Then wine drugged with myrrh and bitter gall is provided. Apparently, women of Jerusalem have prepared the mixture, and the Romans do not deny this pain-dulling potion to those being put to death. Upon tasting it, though, Jesus refuses to drink any. Why? He wants to have full possession of all his senses during this major test; he wants to be conscious and faithful to death.

Jesus is stretched out on the stake. (Mark 15:25) The soldiers pound nails into his hands and his feet, piercing flesh and ligaments, causing intense pain. As the stake is swung upright, the pain is even more excruciating as the weight of Jesus' body tears at his wounds. Yet, Jesus does not berate the soldiers. He prays: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."—Luke 23:34.

The Romans customarily post a sign stating the crime of the condemned criminal. This time, Pilate has posted a sign that reads: "Jesus the Nazarene the King of the Jews." It is written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so most everyone can read it. Pilate's act reflects his disdain for the Jews who insisted on Jesus' death. The dismayed chief priests protest: "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" However, not wanting to be their pawn once again, Pilate answers: "What I have written, I have written."—John 19:19-22.

The enraged priests repeat the false testimony that was given earlier at the Sanhedrin trials. Not



surprisingly, passersby wag their heads in mockery and say abusively: “Ha! You who would throw down the temple and build it in three days, save yourself by coming down off the torture stake.” Similarly, the chief priests and scribes say to one another: “Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down off the torture stake, so that we may see and believe.” (Mark 15:29-32) Even the condemned robbers on Jesus’ left and right reproach him, though he is the only one truly innocent.

The four Roman soldiers also make fun of Jesus. They may have been drinking sour wine, so now in mockery they apparently hold some of it before Jesus, who obviously cannot reach out and take any. The Romans tauntingly allude to the sign above Jesus’ head and say: “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.” (Luke 23:36, 37) Think of it! The man who has proved to be the way, the truth, and the life is now being subjected to undeserved abuse and ridicule. Yet he resolutely suffers it all, without reproaching the Jews who are watching, the Roman soldiers mocking him, or the two condemned criminals hanging on stakes alongside him.

The four soldiers have taken Jesus' outer garments and divided them into four parts. They cast lots to see who gets which piece. Jesus' inner garment, though, is of superior quality, "without a seam, being woven from top to bottom." The soldiers reason: "Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots over it to decide whose it will be." They thus fulfill the scripture that says: "They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing."—John 19:23, 24; Psalm 22:18.

In time, one of the criminals realizes that Jesus truly must be a king. He rebukes his companion with the words: "Do you not fear God at all, now that you have received the same judgment? And we rightly so, for we are getting back what we deserve for the things we did; but this man did nothing wrong." Then he beseeches Jesus: "Remember me when you get into your Kingdom."—Luke 23:40-42.

Jesus replies: "Truly I tell you today, you will be with me," not in the Kingdom, but "in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) This promise differs from what Jesus has told his apostles, namely, that they would sit on



thrones with him in the Kingdom. (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30) However, this Jewish criminal may have heard about the earthly Paradise that Jehovah had originally provided as a home for Adam, Eve, and their descendants. Now this robber can die with that hope before him.

- ◇ Why does Jesus refuse to drink the wine offered to him?
- ◇ What sign is posted over Jesus' head, and how do the Jews react to it?
- ◇ How is prophecy fulfilled in what is done with Jesus' garments?
- ◇ What prospect does Jesus hold out to one of the criminals?

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.”*

JULY 2020

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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COVER PICTURE:

When David met Goliath's challenge, he turned what seemed to be a disadvantage into an opportunity to see God's power at work (See study article 29, paragraph 11)

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56 *Make the Truth Your Own*

(Proverbs 3:1, 2)

1. The way of the truth is the best way of living,
 But no one can live your life for you.
 So take the advice that Jehovah is giving;
 Believe what he tells you is true.

(CHORUS)

*Make the truth your own.
 Make it live, yes, make it real.
And then feel the joy
 Jehovah gives you
When you make the truth your own.*

2. The effort you make and the time you are spending
 In service to God and his Kingdom
 Will yield rich results and a life that's unending,
 A life full of good things to come.

(Chorus)

3. Compared with our God, we are all little children
 And need his direction and counsel.
 So walk ev'ry day with our Father in heaven;
 Receive his rich blessing in full.

(Chorus)

Be Convinced That You Have the Truth

“Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe.”—2 TIM. 3:14.

SONG 56

Make the Truth Your Own

PREVIEW

This article will help us to appreciate the truthful teachings of God’s Word. It will also discuss ways in which we can strengthen our conviction that what we believe in is the truth.

“HOW did you find the truth?” “Were you raised in the truth?” “How long have you been in the truth?” You have likely been asked such questions—or maybe you have asked them of others. What do we mean by the term “the truth”? Generally, we use it to describe our beliefs, our way of worship, and our way of life. People who are “in the truth” know what the Bible teaches, and they live according to its principles. As a result, they are set free from religious falsehood and they enjoy the best life possible for imperfect humans.—John 8:32.

² What initially attracted you to the truth? Maybe it was the good conduct of Jehovah’s people. (1 Pet. 2:12) Or perhaps it was the love they showed. Many took note of it at the first meeting they attended, and more than anything that was said from the platform, that love made a lasting impression on them. This is not surprising because Jesus said that his disciples would be identified by their love for one another. (Read John 13:34, 35.) But more is needed if we are to have strong faith.

-
1. What do we mean by the term “the truth”?
 2. According to John 13:34, 35, what might initially attract a person to the truth?

³ Our faith has to be based on more than just the Christlike love of God’s people. Why? Suppose a fellow believer—even an elder or a pioneer—commits a serious sin. Or what if a brother or a sister hurts you in some way? Or perhaps someone becomes an apostate, asserting that we do not have the truth. If such things happen, will you be stumbled and stop serving Jehovah? The lesson is this: If you were to build your faith in God purely on the way that other people act instead of on your relationship with Jehovah himself, your faith would not be solid. In your house of faith, you should use not only such soft materials as feelings and emotions but also hard facts and solid logic. You need to prove to yourself that the Bible contains the truth about Jehovah.—Rom. 12:2.

⁴ Jesus said that some would accept the truth “with joy,” but their faith would wither when tested. (Read Matthew 13:3-6, 20, 21.) Perhaps they did not realize that following Jesus would involve challenges and hardship. (Matt. 16:24) Or maybe they thought that being a Christian meant living a

3. What may happen if our faith in God is based only on the Christlike love shown by our brothers and sisters?

4. According to Matthew 13:3-6, 20, 21, how are some affected by tests of their faith?

trouble-free life—one with only blessings, no challenges. But in this imperfect world, there will be challenges. Circumstances can change, causing our joy to diminish for a time.—Ps. 6:6; Eccl. 9:11.

⁵ The vast majority of our brothers and sisters prove that they are convinced that they have the truth. How? Their conviction does not waver even if a fellow believer hurts them or gets involved in unchristian conduct. (Ps. 119:165) With each test, their faith grows stronger, not weaker. (Jas. 1:2-4) How can you build that type of strong faith?

GAIN “THE ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD”

⁶ The first-century disciples built their faith on their knowledge of the Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, “the truth of the good news.” (Gal. 2:5) This truth consists of the whole body of Christian teachings, including the facts about Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and his resurrection. The apostle Paul was convinced that these teachings were true. Why? Because he used the Scriptures to prove “by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead.”

5. How are the majority of our brothers and sisters proving that they are convinced that they have the truth?

6. On what did the first-century disciples build their faith?

(Acts 17:2, 3) The first-century disciples accepted those teachings and relied on the holy spirit to help them understand God’s Word. They proved to themselves that these teachings were based on the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11, 12; Heb. 5:14) They did not build their faith on feelings and emotions alone, and they did not serve Jehovah simply because they felt good when they associated with fellow believers. Instead, their faith was built on “the accurate knowledge of God.”—Col. 1:9, 10.

⁷ The truths of God’s Word remain constant. (Ps. 119:160) For example, they do not change if a fellow believer offends us or commits a serious sin. And they do not change when we face adversity. So we need to be thoroughly familiar with Bible teachings and convinced that they are truthful. Our firm faith built on Bible truths will steady us in times of test, just as an anchor can steady a boat during a turbulent storm. How can you strengthen your conviction that you have the truth?

BE “PERSUADED TO BELIEVE”

⁸ Timothy was convinced that he had the truth.

7. What will our faith in Bible truths do for us?

8. As shown at 2 Timothy 3:14, 15, how did Timothy become convinced that he had the truth?

How did he arrive at that conclusion? (Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.) His mother and his grandmother introduced him to the teachings of “the holy writings.” But no doubt he himself also spent time and energy studying those writings. As a result, he was “persuaded to believe” that they contained the truth. Later, Timothy, his mother, and his grandmother came in contact with Christianity. Timothy was no doubt impressed by the love shown by Jesus’ followers, and he had a strong desire to associate with and care for his spiritual brothers and sisters. (Phil. 2:19, 20) However, his faith was built, not on his feelings for fellow humans, but on facts that drew him closer to Jehovah. You too must logically reason on what you have learned about Jehovah from reading the Bible.

⁹ To start with, you need to prove to yourself at least three basic truths. First, you need to be convinced that Jehovah God is the Creator of all things. (Ex. 3:14, 15; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11) Second, you must prove to yourself that the Bible is God’s inspired message to mankind. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) And third, you need to confirm that Jehovah has an organized group of people who are worshipping him under Christ’s headship and that Jehovah’s Wit-

9. What three basic truths do you need to prove to yourself?

nesses are that group. (Isa. 43:10-12; John 14:6; Acts 15:14) Proving to yourself those basic truths does not require that you become a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge. Your goal should be to use your “power of reason” to strengthen your conviction that you have the truth.—Rom. 12:1.

BE PREPARED TO CONVINCe OTHERS

¹⁰ Once you have established the three basic truths regarding God, the Bible, and God’s people, you need to be able to use the Scriptures to prove these truths to others. Why? Because as Christians, we have a responsibility to teach the truths that we learn to those who will listen to us.* (1 Tim. 4:16) And as we try to convince others about Bible truths, we strengthen our own conviction about those truths.

¹¹ When the apostle Paul taught people, he would

* To help you reason with others on basic Bible teachings, see the series “A Conversation With a Neighbor,” which appeared in *The Watchtower* from 2010 to 2015. Topics include “Is Jesus God?,” “When Did God’s Kingdom Begin Ruling?,” and “Does God Punish People in Hellfire?”

10. In addition to knowing the truth, what do we need to be able to do?

11. What example did the apostle Paul set as a teacher?

“persuade them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets.” (Acts 28:23) How can we imitate Paul when teaching others the truth? We must do more than recite facts. We must help our Bible students to reason on the Scriptures as they draw close to Jehovah. We want them to accept the truth, not because they admire us, but because they have proved to themselves that what they are learning is the truth about our loving God.

**Parents, help your children develop faith
by teaching them “the deep things of God”
(See paragraphs 12-13)**



¹² Parents, no doubt you want your children to remain in the truth. You may feel that if they have good associates in the congregation, they will make good spiritual progress. However, if your children are to be convinced that they have the truth, they need something more than wholesome friends. They need to have a personal relationship with God and to be convinced of the truthfulness of what the Bible teaches.

¹³ If parents are to teach their children the truth about God, they must set the example by being good students of the Bible. They must take time to meditate on what they learn. Then they will be able to teach their children to do the same. They need to teach their children to use our Bible study tools, just as they teach one of their Bible students. In doing so, they will help their children to appreciate Jehovah and the channel he uses to dispense spiritual food—“the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45-47) Parents, do not settle for teaching your children only basic Bible truths. Help them develop strong faith by teaching them about “the deep things of God” to an extent that is appropriate to their age and ability.—1 Cor. 2:10.

12-13. How can parents help their children to remain in the truth?

STUDY BIBLE PROPHECY

¹⁴ Bible prophecy is an important part of God’s Word that helps us build strong faith in Jehovah. What prophecies have strengthened your faith? You might point to the prophecies about “the last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5; Matt. 24:3, 7) But what other fulfilled prophecies can strengthen your conviction? For example, can you explain how the prophecies recorded in Daniel chapter 2 or in Daniel chapter 11 have been and are being fulfilled?* When you have faith that is solidly based on the Bible, that faith will become unbreakable. Consider the example of our brothers who suffered severe persecution in Germany during World War II. While they did not completely understand Bible prophecies relating to the last days, they had strong faith in God’s Word.

¹⁵ Under the rule of Nazi Germany, thousands of our brothers and sisters were sent to concentration camps. Hitler and SS Chief Heinrich Himmler hat-

* For a discussion of these prophecies, see the June 15, 2012, and the May 2020 issues of *The Watchtower*.

14. Why should we study Bible prophecy? (See also the box “Can You Explain These Prophecies?”)

15-17. How did studying the Bible strengthen our brothers who were persecuted by the Nazis?

CAN YOU EXPLAIN THESE PROPHECIES?

- **Revelation 11:3, 7-12.** “Two witnesses” prophecy for 1,260 days, are killed, and then are raised up. —*w14 11/15 30.*
- **Matthew 13:36-43.** The wheat and the weeds. —*w13 7/15 9-14.*
- **1 Thessalonians 5:3.** The proclamation of “peace and security.” —*w19.10 8-9.*
- **Ezekiel 38:2, 10-20.** The attack of “Gog of the land of Magog.” —*w19.09 11-12; rr 240.*

ed Jehovah’s Witnesses. According to one sister, Himmler said to a group of our sisters in one concentration camp: “Your Jehovah may reign in heaven, but here upon earth it is we who rule! We’ll show you who will endure longer, you or we!” What helped Jehovah’s people remain faithful?

¹⁶ Those Bible Students knew that God’s Kingdom had begun ruling in 1914. They were not surprised at the intense opposition they faced. However, Jehovah’s people were convinced that no

human government could stop God's purpose from succeeding. Hitler could not wipe out true worship or set up a government that would shove aside God's Kingdom. Our brothers were convinced that one way or another, Hitler's rule would end.

¹⁷ The conviction of those brothers and sisters was not misplaced. Before long, the Nazi regime

Our study of the Bible, including its prophecies,
can give us confidence during times of trial
(See paragraphs 15-17)



collapsed, and Heinrich Himmler—the man who said “here upon earth it is we who rule”—was running for his life. While doing so, he encountered Brother Lübke, a former prisoner whom he recognized. Thoroughly defeated, Himmler asked Brother Lübke: “Well, Bible Student, what happens now?” Brother Lübke explained to Himmler that Jehovah’s Witnesses knew all along that the Nazi regime would fail and that they would be delivered. Himmler—the man who previously had so much to say about Jehovah’s Witnesses—was finally speechless. Shortly thereafter, he committed suicide. The point? Our study of the Bible, including its prophecies, can build unbreakable faith in God and give us confidence during times of trial. —2 Pet. 1:19-21.

¹⁸ Each one of us should show love—the identifying mark of true Christians. But we also need “accurate knowledge and full discernment.” (Phil. 1:9) Otherwise, we could be influenced “by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men,” including apostates. (Eph. 4:14) When many disciples in the first century C.E. stopped following Jesus, the apostle Peter expressed his firm conviction that

18. As indicated at John 6:67, 68, why do we need the “accurate knowledge and full discernment” that Paul wrote of?

Jesus had “sayings of everlasting life.” (Read John 6:67, 68.) Even though Peter at that time did not understand all the details of those sayings, he remained loyal because he had discerned the truth about Christ. You too can strengthen your conviction in what the Bible teaches. If you do, your faith will stand the test of time, and you will help to build strong faith in others.—2 John 1, 2.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 22: During family worship, parents study with their children Bible prophecies about the great tribulation.

Page 26: During the great tribulation, the same family will not be surprised at what takes place.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why should our faith be based on more than mere feelings and emotions for fellow humans?
- How can you strengthen your conviction that you have the truth?
- How can Bible teachers help their students understand the truth?

SONG 72

Making Known the Kingdom Truth

72 *Making Known the Kingdom Truth* (Acts 20:20, 21)

1. There was a time we did not know
 The way a Christian ought to go.
 Then Jehovah sent the light,
 His Kingdom truth so clear and bright.
Our Father's will we then could see
 To serve the grand Theocracy,
 To declare Jehovah's fame,
 And help to glorify his holy name.
We witness now to all we meet,
 From door to door and on the street.
We take the time to help them see;
 We teach the truth that sets us free.
And as we strive in ev'ry land
 Jehovah's worship to expand,
May we serve our God as one
 Until Jehovah says the work is done.