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THE WATCHTOWER®

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(Pages 3-7, 7-11, 20-24, 24-28)

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE
WEEKS OF:

May 31–June 6

Young People—Strengthen Your
Desire to Serve Jehovah

PAGE 3 SONGS TO BE USED: 89, 41

June 7-13

Holy Spirit's Role in the Outworking
of Jehovah's Purpose

PAGE 7 SONGS TO BE USED: 116, 19

June 14-20

Turn Your Eyes Away From
Worthless Things!

PAGE 20 SONGS TO BE USED: 61, 52

June 21-27

Are You Fully Following the Christ?

PAGE 24 SONGS TO BE USED: 54, 17

PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 3-7

Jehovah invites young people to listen, learn, and follow his direction. This article discusses how Bible reading, prayer, and good conduct can help youths to worship Jehovah wholeheartedly.

STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 7-11

We know that Jehovah's purpose keeps moving forward toward its complete fulfillment. This article examines the holy spirit's role—in the past, at present, and in the future—in the outworking of that purpose.

STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 20-24

As Satan's world nears its end, we are being bombarded all the more with images of things that can harm our relationship with God. In this article, we will discuss what some of these things are, why Satan uses them, and how we can protect ourselves.

STUDY ARTICLE 4 PAGES 24-28

What will help us to maintain our zeal for God's service? Against what human tendency do we need to guard ourselves if we want to keep on following Christ? This article will consider the answers to these important questions.

YOUNG PEOPLE —STRENGTHEN YOUR DESIRE TO SERVE JEHOVAH

*“Remember, now, your Grand Creator
in the days of your young manhood.”—ECCL. 12:1.*

SOME 3,500 years ago, Jehovah’s prophet Moses commanded the priests and the older men of Israel: “Congregate the people, the men and the women and the little ones . . . , in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn, as they must fear Jehovah your God and take care to carry out all the words of this law.” (Deut. 31:12) Note who were instructed to attend gatherings for worship: men, women, and little ones. Yes, even young ones were among those who were told to listen, learn, and follow Jehovah’s direction.

² In the first century, Jehovah continued to express his concern for godly youths. For example, he inspired the apostle Paul to include in some of the letters that he sent to the congregations instructions specifically directed to young people. (*Read Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20.*) Young Christians who applied such counsel progressed in their appreciation for their loving heavenly Father and received his blessing.

³ Are young ones today invited to congregate in order to worship Jehovah? Yes! It is, therefore, a source of joy for all of God’s people to observe that so many young servants

1. What invitation was extended to children in Israel?
2. How did Jehovah express his concern for youths in the early Christian congregation?
3. How do young people today demonstrate their desire to serve God?

of God around the world take to heart Paul’s exhortation: “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:24, 25) Further, many children share with their parents in preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom. (Matt. 24:14) And as an expression of their heartfelt love for Jehovah, many thousands of young people every year present themselves for baptism and enjoy the blessings that result from being a disciple of Christ. —Matt. 16:24; Mark 10:29, 30.

Accept the Invitation—Now

⁴ Ecclesiastes 12:1 states: “Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood.” How old do you young ones need to be in order to accept that warm invitation to worship and serve Jehovah? No age is specified in the Scriptures. Therefore, do not hold back, thinking that you are too young to listen to Jehovah and to serve him. No matter how old you are, you are encouraged to respond without delay.

⁵ Many of you are helped to make spiritual advancement by one or both of your

4. When can youths accept God’s invitation to serve him?
5. How can parents help their children to make spiritual advancement?

parents. In this way, you are like Timothy of Bible times. When he was just an infant, he was taught the holy writings by his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois. (2 Tim. 3:14, 15) Likely, your parents are training you in a similar way by studying the Bible with you, praying with you, taking you to congregation meetings and larger assemblies of God's people, and sharing with you in the field ministry. Really, teaching you God's ways is a highly important responsibility that your parents received from Jehovah himself. Do you appreciate their love and concern for you?—Prov. 23:22.

⁶ Still, as you young ones grow older, Jehovah wants you to “prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” just as Timothy did. (Rom. 12:2) If you do that, you will share in congregation activities, not because your parents want you to, but because you want to do God's will. If you serve Jehovah with a willing spirit, it will please him. (Ps. 110:3) How, then, can you demonstrate that you want to strengthen your desire to listen to Jehovah and to follow his direction? We will consider three important ways in which you can do so. They center on study, prayer, and conduct. Let us examine these one at a time.

Know Jehovah as a Person

⁷ The first way in which you demonstrate that you want to deepen your desire to serve Jehovah is by daily Bible reading. You can satisfy your spiritual need and acquire precious Bible knowledge by regularly reading God's Word. (Matt. 5:3) Jesus set the example. On one occasion when he was 12 years old, he was found by his parents in the tem-

6. (a) According to Psalm 110:3, what form of worship is pleasing to Jehovah? (b) What will we now consider?

7. How did Jesus set an example as a student of the Scriptures, and what helped him to do so?

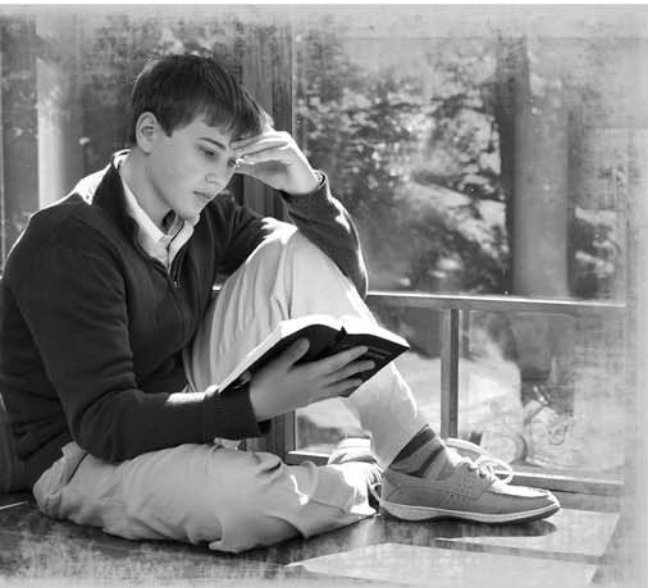
ple, “sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them.” (Luke 2:44-46) As a child, Jesus had already developed a longing for and an understanding of the Scriptures. What helped him to do so? Undoubtedly his mother, Mary, and his adoptive father, Joseph, played an important role. They were servants of God who provided Jesus with divine instruction from his infancy.—Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 2:41, 51.

⁸ Likewise, God-fearing parents today recognize the value of inculcating in their children's hearts a longing for Bible truth right from the start. (Deut. 6:6-9) That is what Rubi, a Christian sister, did soon after the birth of her first son, Joseph. Each day, she read to him from *My Book of Bible Stories*. As he grew older, she helped him to memorize various scriptures. Did Joseph benefit from such training? Soon after learning to talk, he could relate many Bible stories in his own words. And when he was five years old, he gave his first talk in the Theocratic Ministry School.

⁹ To further your spiritual advancement, you young ones should make daily Bible reading a custom that you keep throughout your teenage years and on into adulthood. (Ps. 71:17) Why will Bible reading help you to make progress? Note what Jesus said in a prayer to his Father: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God.” (John 17:3) Indeed, as you take in more knowledge of Jehovah, you will ever more clearly see him as a real Person and deepen your love for him. (Heb. 11:27) Therefore, each time you read a portion of the Bible, use that opportunity to learn more

8. (a) When should parents begin to inculcate love for God's Word in their children? (b) Relate an experience that confirms the value of training children from their infancy.

9. Why is reading the Bible and meditating on what you read important?



Is daily Bible reading your custom?

have the assurance that he will listen to them. (Prov. 15:8) Surely, “people of all flesh” include you young ones.

¹¹ You know that the basis of any real friendship is good communication. Likely, you enjoy sharing your thoughts, concerns, and feelings with a close friend. Similarly, by offering heartfelt prayers, you communicate with your Grand Creator. (Phil. 4:6, 7) Speak to Jehovah as if you were pouring out your heart to a loving parent or to a close friend. In fact, there is a strong link between how you pray and how you feel about Jehovah. You will notice that the stronger your friendship with Jehovah becomes, the more meaningful your prayers will be.

¹² Keep in mind, though, that a meaningful prayer involves more than words. It includes your innermost feelings. In your prayers, convey your warm love, deep respect, and full reliance on Jehovah. As you discern how Jehovah responds to your prayers, you will personally come to realize as never before that “Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him.” (Ps. 145:18) Yes, Jehovah will draw close to you, strengthening you to oppose the Devil and to make the right choices in life.—*Read James 4:7, 8.*

¹³ Consider how Cherie gained strength from having a close relationship with Jehovah. In high school, she won awards because she did well academically and excelled in sports. When she finished school, she was offered a scholarship that would enable her to pursue higher education. “The offer was

about Jehovah. Ask yourself: ‘What does this account teach me about Jehovah as a Person? How does this Bible passage show God’s love and concern for me?’ Taking time to meditate on such questions will help you to learn how Jehovah thinks and feels and what he requires of you. (*Read Proverbs 2: 1-5.*) Like young Timothy, you will be “persuaded to believe” what you learn from the Scriptures, and you will be moved to worship Jehovah with a willing heart.—2 Tim. 3:14.

How Prayer Deepens Your Love for Jehovah

¹⁰ The second way in which you can strengthen your desire to serve Jehovah wholeheartedly is by means of your prayers. At Psalm 65:2, we read: “O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come.” Even during the time that Israel was God’s covenant people, foreigners who came to Jehovah’s temple could approach him in prayer. (1 Ki. 8:41, 42) God is not partial. Those who observe his commandments

10, 11. How does prayer help you to strengthen your desire to serve God?

12. (a) Why do meaningful prayers involve more than words? (b) What will help you to come to realize that Jehovah is near to you?

13. (a) How did friendship with God help one sister? (b) How does friendship with God help you to deal with peer pressure?

tempting,” says Cherie, “and coaches and fellow students put a lot of pressure on me to accept it.” She realized, though, that pursuing further education would require her to devote most of her time to studying and preparing for sporting events—with little time left for serving Jehovah. What did Cherie do? She says, “After praying to Jehovah, I declined the scholarship and began serving as a regular pioneer.” In the meantime, she has been pioneering for five years. “I don’t have any regrets,” she says. “Knowing that I made a decision that pleases Jehovah makes me happy. Really, if you put God’s Kingdom first, all other things will be added to you.” —Matt. 6:33.

Good Conduct Reveals That You Are “Clean in Heart”

¹⁴ The third way you can demonstrate that you are serving Jehovah with a willing heart is by your conduct. Jehovah blesses youths who remain morally clean. (*Read Psalm 24: 3-5.*) Young Samuel refused to imitate the immoral conduct of the sons of High Priest Eli. Samuel’s fine conduct did not go unnoticed. The Bible record states: “All the while the boy Samuel was growing bigger and more likable both from Jehovah’s standpoint and from that of men.”—1 Sam. 2:26.

14. Why is your good conduct important in Jehovah’s eyes?

Can You Explain?

- How can young people share in true worship today?
- For you to benefit from Bible reading, why is meditation essential?
- How does prayer help you to draw close to Jehovah?
- What is accomplished by a Christian’s good conduct?

¹⁵ We live in a world filled with people who are lovers of themselves, haughty, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, fierce, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God—to name some of the characteristics listed by Paul. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) So it can be a real challenge for you to maintain exemplary conduct despite being surrounded by this wicked environment. However, each time you do what is right and refuse to share in ungodly conduct, you prove that you are on Jehovah’s side of the issue of universal sovereignty. (Job 2:3, 4) You also have the satisfaction of knowing that you are responding to Jehovah’s warm appeal: “Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me.” (Prov. 27:11) Moreover, knowing that you have Jehovah’s approval will strengthen you in your desire to serve him.

¹⁶ As a teenager, a Christian sister named Carol stuck to Bible principles while she attended school, and her good conduct was noticed. What happened? Carol faced ridicule from her classmates because her Bible-trained conscience would not allow her to share in holiday celebrations and patriotic ceremonies. On those occasions, she at times had the opportunity to explain her beliefs to others. Many years later, Carol received a card from a former classmate, who wrote: “I have always hoped to contact you and to thank you. Your good conduct and example as a Christian youth, along with the courageous stand you took regarding holidays, did not go unnoticed. You were my first contact with Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Carol’s example had left such a deep impression

15. What are some reasons why you maintain good conduct?

16. How did one sister make Jehovah’s heart rejoice?

that her classmate had later begun to study the Bible. She wrote in her card to Carol that she had been a baptized Witness for over 40 years! Like Carol, you young ones today who courageously stick to Bible principles may motivate honesthearted individuals to get to know Jehovah.

Young Ones Praising Jehovah

¹⁷ All of us in Jehovah's worldwide organization are thrilled to see the many thousands of zealous young ones who are sharing

17, 18. (a) How do you feel about the young ones in your congregation? (b) What future awaits God-fearing youths?

in true worship! These youths strengthen their desire to worship Jehovah by daily Bible reading, by praying, and by conducting themselves in harmony with God's will. Such exemplary youths are a source of refreshment to their parents and to all of Jehovah's people.—Prov. 23:24, 25.

¹⁸ In the future, faithful young people will be counted among those who will survive into God's promised new world. (Rev. 7:9, 14) There, they will experience untold blessings as they continue to grow in appreciation for Jehovah, and they will be able to praise him to time indefinite.—Ps. 148:12, 13.

HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN THE OUTWORKING OF JEHOVAH'S PURPOSE

"My word that goes forth from my mouth . . . will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—ISA. 55:11.

IMAGINE that two men are each preparing to take a trip by car. One maps out a specific, detailed path to his destination. The other has his destination clearly in mind, but he also knows many alternate routes. He is prepared to adjust his course as necessary to deal with any contingency. In some respects, the different approaches of these two men illustrates the distinction between a plan and a purpose. A plan might be compared to mapping out a detailed path, whereas a purpose may involve having in

1. Illustrate the difference between a plan and a purpose.

mind a goal but not necessarily one specific manner of reaching it.

² When it comes to carrying out his will, Jehovah has, not a fixed plan, but an unfolding purpose. (Eph. 3:11) This purpose involves what he originally intended for mankind and the earth—that this globe be turned into a paradise home, where perfect humans can live in peace and happiness forever. (Gen. 1:28) When Adam and

2, 3. (a) What does Jehovah's purpose involve, and how did he meet the situation that arose when Adam and Eve sinned? (b) Why should we be attuned to the unfolding of Jehovah's purpose?

Eve sinned, Jehovah met that situation and made arrangements to ensure that his purpose would be accomplished. (*Read Genesis 3:15.*) Jehovah determined that his symbolic woman would bring forth a “seed,” or Son, who would eventually destroy the instigator, Satan, and undo all the harm he has caused.—Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

³ No power in heaven or on earth can prevent God’s expressed purpose from being realized. (Isa. 46:9-11) Why can we say that? Because Jehovah’s holy spirit is involved. That irresistible force guarantees that God’s purpose “will have certain success.” (Isa. 55:10, 11) We do well to keep fully attuned to the unfolding of God’s purpose. Our future life prospects depend on its fulfillment. In addition, it is faith-strengthening to see how Jehovah uses holy spirit. Let us, then, consider the spirit’s role—in the past, at present, and in the future—in the outworking of Jehovah’s purpose.

Holy Spirit’s Role in the Past

⁴ In Bible times, Jehovah gradually revealed his purpose. At first, the identity of the promised Seed was “a sacred secret.” (1 Cor. 2:7) Not until some 2,000 years later did Jehovah again make reference to a seed. (*Read Genesis 12:7; 22:15-18.*) To Abraham, Jehovah gave an expanded promise. The words “by means of your seed” were a clear indication that the Seed would come as a human, a descendant of Abraham. We can be sure that Satan was watching with great interest as this detail was unveiled. That Adversary no doubt wanted nothing more than to destroy or corrupt Abraham’s line of descent and thus frustrate God’s purpose. But such an outcome was impossible, for God’s unseen spirit was at work. In what ways?

4. How has Jehovah gradually revealed his purpose?

⁵ Jehovah used his spirit *to protect individuals in the line of descent leading up to the Seed.* To Abram (Abraham), Jehovah said: “I am a shield for you.” (Gen. 15:1) Those were not empty words. Consider, for example, what happened about 1919 B.C.E. when Abraham and Sarah took up temporary residence in Gerar. Not knowing that Sarah was Abraham’s wife, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, took Sarah with the intention of making her his wife. Was Satan manipulating matters behind the scenes, trying to prevent Sarah from bearing Abraham’s seed? The Bible does not say. What it does tell us is that Jehovah intervened. In a dream, he warned Abimelech not to touch Sarah.—Gen. 20:1-18.

⁶ That was not just an isolated incident. Jehovah delivered Abraham and his family members on a number of occasions. (Gen. 12:14-20; 14:13-20; 26:26-29) Regarding Abraham and his descendants, the psalmist could therefore say: “He [Jehovah] did not allow any human to defraud them, but on their account he reproved kings, saying: ‘Do not you men touch my anointed ones, and to my prophets do nothing bad.’”—Ps. 105:14, 15.

⁷ By means of his spirit, Jehovah *protected the ancient nation of Israel, into which the promised Seed would be born.* Through his spirit, Jehovah gave Israel his Law, which preserved true worship and protected the Jews from spiritual, moral, and physical contamination. (Ex. 31:18; 2 Cor. 3:3) In the time of the Judges, Jehovah’s spirit empowered certain men to deliver Israel from its enemies. (Judg. 3:9, 10) During the centuries leading up to the birth of Jesus, the pri-

5, 6. How did Jehovah use his spirit to protect individuals in the line of descent leading up to the Seed?

7. In what ways did Jehovah protect the nation of Israel?

mary part of Abraham's seed, holy spirit must have been involved in protecting Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the temple—all of which would play a part in the fulfillment of the prophecies about Jesus.

⁸ Holy spirit *was directly involved in the life and ministry of Jesus*. Operating in the womb of the virgin Mary, holy spirit accomplished something never done before or since. It caused an imperfect woman to conceive and give birth to a perfect Son, who was not under the penalty of death. (Luke 1: 26-31, 34, 35) The spirit later protected the infant Jesus from premature death. (Matt. 2: 7, 8, 12, 13) When Jesus was about 30, God anointed him with holy spirit, appointing him to be the heir to David's throne and commissioning him to preach. (Luke 1:32, 33; 4:16-21) Holy spirit empowered Jesus to perform miracles, including healing the sick, feeding the crowds, and raising the dead. Such mighty acts were foregleams of the blessings we can expect under Jesus' kingly rule.

⁹ Starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., Jehovah used his spirit *to anoint the secondary part of the seed of Abraham*, many of whom were not descendants of Abraham. (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:29) Holy spirit was in evidence upon Jesus' first-century disciples, *enabling them to preach with zeal and empowering them to perform powerful works*. (Acts 1:8; 2: 1-4; 1 Cor. 12:7-11) By means of those miraculous gifts, holy spirit revealed a striking development in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose. Jehovah was no longer using the centuries-old arrangement for worship that centered on the temple in Jerusalem. His fa-

8. What shows that holy spirit was directly involved in the life and ministry of God's Son?

9, 10. (a) How was holy spirit in evidence upon Jesus' first-century disciples? (b) What development in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose was revealed in the first century C.E.?

vor had shifted to the newly formed Christian congregation. Ever since, Jehovah has been using that anointed congregation to serve his purpose.

¹⁰ Protecting, empowering, anointing—these are just a few of the ways that Jehovah used the holy spirit in Bible times to keep his purpose moving ever forward toward its fulfillment. What, though, about our day? How is Jehovah now using his spirit in support of his purpose? We need to know, for we want to work in harmony with the spirit. Let us, then, consider four of the ways in which Jehovah is using his spirit at present.

Holy Spirit's Role at Present

¹¹ First, holy spirit is a force for cleanness among God's people. Those who play a part in Jehovah's purpose must be morally clean. (*Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.*) Some who become true Christians formerly engaged in such immoral practices as fornication, adultery, and homosexuality. The desires that give birth to sinful acts can be deeply entrenched. (Jas. 1:14, 15) Yet, such individuals have been "washed clean," indicating that they have made the changes in their life needed to please God. What enables a lover of God to resist successfully the impulse to act on wrong desires? "The spirit of our God," says 1 Corinthians 6:11. By keeping morally clean, you show that you are letting that spirit be a dominant force in your life.

¹² Second, Jehovah uses his spirit to lead his organization in the direction that he wants it to go. In Ezekiel's vision, the heavenly part of Jehovah's organization is

11. What shows that the holy spirit is a force for cleanness among God's people, and how can you show that you are cooperating with the spirit?

12. (a) According to Ezekiel's vision, how does Jehovah lead his organization? (b) How can you show that you are working in harmony with the spirit?

Are You Keeping Up With Increased Light?

Jehovah continues to shed light upon his people. What are some refinements that have been published in *The Watchtower*?

- Jesus' illustration of the leaven highlights what positive lesson about spiritual growth? (Matt. 13:33)—July 15, 2008, pages 19-20.
- When does the calling of Christians to a heavenly hope cease?—May 1, 2007, pages 30-31.
- What does it mean to worship Jehovah "with spirit"? (John 4:24)—July 15, 2002, page 15.
- In which courtyard does the great crowd serve? (Rev. 7:15)—May 1, 2002, pages 30-31.
- When does the separating of the sheep and the goats take place? (Matt. 25:31-33)—October 15, 1995, pages 18-28.

depicted as a celestial chariot that is irresistibly on the move to fulfill Jehovah's purpose. What impels the chariot to move in a certain direction? Holy spirit. (Ezek. 1:20, 21) Let us remember that Jehovah's organization is made up of two parts, one in heaven and the other on earth. If the heavenly part is directed by holy spirit, the same must be true of the earthly part. By being obedient and loyal to the direction received from the earthly part of God's organization, you

show that you are keeping pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot and are working in harmony with his holy spirit.—Heb. 13:17.

¹³ Third, holy spirit is at work in bringing Bible truths to light. (Prov. 4:18) This magazine has long been used by "the faithful and discreet slave" as the primary channel for dispensing increased light. (Matt. 24:45) For example, consider our understanding of those who make up "this generation" mentioned by Jesus. (*Read Matthew 24:32-34.*) To what generation did Jesus refer? The article "Christ's Presence—What Does It Mean to You?" explained that Jesus was referring, not to the wicked, but to his disciples, who were soon to be anointed with holy spirit.* Jesus' anointed followers, both in the first century and in our day, would be the ones who would not only see the sign but also discern its meaning—that Jesus "is near at the doors."

¹⁴ What does this explanation mean to us? Although we cannot measure the exact length of "this generation," we do well to keep in mind several things about the word "generation": It usually refers to people of varying ages whose lives overlap during a particular time period; it is not excessively long; and it has an end. (Ex. 1:6) How, then, are we to understand Jesus' words about "this generation"? He evidently meant that the lives of the anointed who were on hand when the sign began to become evident in 1914 would overlap with the lives of other anointed ones who would see the start of the great tribulation. That generation had a beginning, and it surely will have an end.

* See *The Watchtower*, February 15, 2008, pages 21-25.

13, 14. (a) Who make up "this generation" mentioned by Jesus? (b) Give an example showing that the holy spirit is at work in bringing Bible truths to light. (See the box "Are You Keeping Up With Increased Light?")

The fulfillment of the various features of the sign clearly indicate that the tribulation must be near. By maintaining your sense of urgency and keeping on the watch, you show that you are keeping up with advancing light and following the leadings of holy spirit.—Mark 13:37.

¹⁵ Fourth, holy spirit empowers us to declare the good news. (Acts 1:8) What else could explain how the good news has been preached earth wide? Think about it. You may be among those who, perhaps because of extreme shyness or apprehension, once thought, ‘I could never go preaching from house to house!’ Yet, you now have a zealous share in that work.* Many faithful Witnesses of Jehovah have continued preaching in the face of opposition or persecution. Only God’s holy spirit can empower us to overcome daunting obstacles and to do things that would be impossible in our own strength. (Mic. 3:8; Matt. 17:20) By having a full share in the preaching work, you show that you are cooperating with that spirit.

Holy Spirit’s Role in the Future

¹⁶ In the future, Jehovah will employ his holy spirit in remarkable ways to accomplish the fulfillment of his purpose. Consider first the matter of protection. As we have seen, Jehovah used his spirit in the past to protect individuals as well as the nation of Israel as a whole. Hence, we have every reason to believe that he will use that same powerful spirit to protect his people during the approaching great tribulation. We need not speculate about exactly how Jehovah

* For an example of one who overcame extreme shyness and became zealous in the ministry, see *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1993, page 19.

15. What shows that it is holy spirit that empowers us to declare the good news?

16. Why can we be confident that Jehovah will protect his people during the great tribulation?

will care for us then. Rather, we can look to the future with confidence, knowing that lovers of Jehovah will never be hidden from his view or beyond the reach of his holy spirit.—2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 139:7-12.

¹⁷ How will Jehovah use his holy spirit in the coming new world? That spirit will be the force behind the new scrolls that will be opened at that time. (Rev. 20:12) What will these contain? Evidently, Jehovah’s detailed requirements for us during the thousand years. Do you look forward to examining the contents of those scrolls? With eager anticipation, we await that new world. We cannot begin to imagine what it will be like to be living at that blessed time when Jehovah will use his holy spirit to fulfill his purpose for the earth and humankind upon it.

¹⁸ Let us never forget that Jehovah’s unfolding purpose is certain to succeed, for he uses his holy spirit—the most powerful force in the universe—to carry it out. That purpose involves you. Therefore, let it be your firm determination to supplicate Jehovah for his spirit and work in harmony with its leadings. (Luke 11:13) Thus you may have the prospect of living as Jehovah purposed humans to live—forever in Paradise on earth.

17. How will Jehovah use his holy spirit in the new world?

18. What is your firm determination?

Do You Recall?

- In what ways did Jehovah use his holy spirit in Bible times to keep his purpose moving forward?
- How is Jehovah using his spirit at present?
- How will Jehovah employ his spirit in the future to accomplish the fulfillment of his purpose?

TURN YOUR EYES AWAY FROM WORTHLESS THINGS!

“Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless; preserve me alive in your own way.”—PS. 119:37.

HOW precious our sight is! By means of it, we can instantly grasp our surroundings—in depth and in color. Our sight enables us to see beloved friends or unwelcome dangers. Through it, we perceive beauty, appreciate the wonders of creation, and receive evidence of God’s existence and glory. (Ps. 8: 3, 4; 19:1, 2; 104:24; Rom. 1:20) And as a highly important channel of communication to the mind, sight plays a major role in our acquiring knowledge of Jehovah and building faith in him.—Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2, 3.

² What we look at, however, can also be to our detriment. The link between our sight and our mind is so strong that what we see with our eyes can initiate or intensify ambitions and desires in our heart. And because we live in a depraved and self-gratifying world ruled by Satan the Devil, we are bombarded with images and propaganda that can easily lead us astray—even if we would give them only a quick glance. (1 John 5:19) It is no wonder, then, that the psalmist implored God: “Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless; preserve me alive in your own way.”—Ps. 119:37.

How Our Eyes Can Mislead Us

³ Consider what happened to the first

1. How important is the gift of sight?
2. Why should we be concerned about what we see, and what can we learn from the psalmist’s earnest request?
- 3-5. What Bible accounts illustrate the danger of allowing our eyes to seduce us?

woman, Eve. Satan suggested that her eyes were “bound to be opened” if she would eat the fruit from “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.” Eve must have been intrigued by the thought of having her eyes “opened.” Her interest in eating the forbidden fruit was further heightened when she “saw that the tree was good for food and that it was something to be longed for to the eyes, yes, the tree was desirable to look upon.” Looking at the tree with longing led Eve to disobey God’s command. Her husband, Adam, also disobeyed, with disastrous consequences to all humankind.—Gen. 2: 17; 3:2-6; Rom. 5:12; Jas. 1:14, 15.

⁴ In the days of Noah, some angels were also influenced by what they saw. Referring to them, Genesis 6:2 relates: “The sons of the true God began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose.” Lustfully looking upon the daughters of men aroused in the rebellious angels an unnatural desire for sexual relations with humans, and those angels fathered violent offspring. Man’s badness at that time resulted in the destruction of all mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family.—Gen. 6: 4-7, 11, 12.

⁵ Centuries later, the Israelite Achan’s eyes seduced him into stealing some items from the captured city of Jericho. God had commanded that all things in that

city should be destroyed except for certain things that were to be given to the treasury of Jehovah. The Israelites were warned: “Keep away from the thing devoted to destruction, for fear you may get a desire” and take some items from the city. When Achan disobeyed, the people of Israel suffered defeat at the city of Ai, and a number of them died. Achan did not admit to his theft until he was exposed. “When I got to see” the items, Achan said, “then I wanted them, and I took them.” The desire of his eyes led to his destruction, along with “everything that was his.” (Josh. 6:18, 19; 7:1-26) Achan desired in his heart what was forbidden to him.

The Need for Self-Discipline

⁶ Mankind today is tempted in a way that is similar to what was used in the case of Eve, the disobedient angels, and Achan. Of all the “designs” used by Satan to mislead mankind, the appeal to “the desire of the eyes” is most powerful. (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 John 2:16) Modern commercial advertisers well know the age-old power of eye appeal. “Sight is the most seductive sense of all,” states a leading European marketing expert. “It often overrules the other senses, and has the power to persuade us against all logic.”

⁷ No wonder advertisers bombard us with images that are cleverly designed to make the greatest visual impact and stimulate desire for their goods or services! A researcher in the United States who studied how advertising influences individuals stated that it is “designed not just to convey cognitive information, but more importantly, to produce particular emotive and effectual responses.” Provocative sexual imagery is one

6, 7. Which of the “designs” of Satan is often used to ensnare us, and how do commercial advertisers make use of it?

form that is often used. “Sex sells” is a well-known adage. How important it is, then, that we control what we look at and what we allow to enter into our mind and heart!

⁸ True Christians are not immune to the desire of the eyes and of the flesh. Therefore, God’s Word encourages us to exercise self-discipline in connection with what we look at and long for. (1 Cor. 9:25, 27; *read 1 John 2:15-17.*) The upright man Job was one who recognized the strong link between seeing and desiring. He stated: “A covenant I have concluded with my eyes. So how could I show myself attentive to a virgin?” (Job 31:1) Not only did Job refuse to touch a woman in an immoral way but he would not even allow his mind to entertain such a thought. Jesus emphasized that the mind must be kept clean of immoral thoughts when he said: “Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”—Matt. 5:28.

Worthless Things to Avoid

⁹ In today’s world, it has become increasingly common to ‘keep on looking’ at pornography, particularly on the Internet. We do not have to look for such sites—they look for us! In what way? An ad with an enticing picture may suddenly appear on one’s computer screen. Or an innocuous-looking e-mail, once opened, may explode into a pornographic picture designed in such a way as to make exiting from it difficult. Even if a person gets only a glimpse before deleting it, the image has already made an impression on his mind. Just a brief brush with

8. How is the need to guard our eyes emphasized in the Bible?

9. (a) Why must we be particularly wary when using the Internet? (b) What can result from even a brief view of pornography?

pornography can have sad consequences. It can leave an individual with a guilty conscience and a struggle to erase immoral scenes from his mind. Worse yet, someone who deliberately “keeps on looking” needs to have his illicit desires deadened.—*Read Ephesians 5:3, 4, 12; Col. 3:5, 6.*

¹⁰ Children can be drawn into pornography by their natural curiosity. If that happens, it may have lasting effects on their view of sexuality. These effects, notes a report, may range from a distorted sense of sexual norms to “difficulty maintaining a healthy, loving relationship; an unrealistic view of women; and potentially, pornography addiction, which can interfere with school work, friendships and family relationships.” Even more devastating can be the effects later in a marriage relationship.

¹¹ “Of all the addictions that I had before I became a Witness, pornography was by far the most difficult to break,” wrote a Christian brother. “I still see these images at the oddest times—triggered by a random smell, some music, something I see, or even a stray thought. It is a daily and constant battle.” As a child, another brother had looked at his worldly father’s pornographic magazines when his parents were not at home. He wrote: “What a horrible effect those pictures had on my young mind! Even now, 25 years later, some of those images are still burned into my brain. No matter how hard I fight, they are still there. This makes me feel guilty, even though I don’t dwell on them.” How wise it is to avoid having such burdensome feelings by not looking at worthless

10. Why are children especially vulnerable to pornography, and what may result from their viewing it?

11. Give an example to illustrate the danger of looking at pornography.

things! How can a person accomplish that? He needs to strive to bring “every thought into captivity to make it obedient to the Christ.”—2 Cor. 10:5.

¹² Another “good-for-nothing,” or worthless, thing to avoid is entertainment that promotes materialism or the occult or that features violence, bloodshed, and death. (*Read Psalm 101:3.*) Christian parents have the responsibility before Jehovah to be selective about what they allow to be viewed in their home. Of course, no true Christian would deliberately involve himself in spiritism. Still, parents need to be aware of films, TV series, video games, and even comics and children’s books that highlight uncanny practices.—Prov. 22:5.

¹³ Whether we are young or old, our eyes should find no pleasure in video games that feature violence and depict killing with gory realism. (*Read Psalm 11:5.*) We must refuse to focus our mind on any activity that Jehovah condemns. Remember, Satan is targeting our thoughts. (2 Cor. 11:3) Even spending too much time viewing entertainment that may be considered acceptable can encroach on family worship, daily Bible reading, and our preparation for meetings.—Phil. 1:9, 10.

Follow Jesus’ Example

¹⁴ Regrettably, we cannot avoid seeing some worthless things in this wicked world. Even Jesus had such things thrust upon him. In Satan’s third attempt to draw Jesus away from doing God’s will, “the Devil took him along to an unusually high mountain, and *showed* him all the kingdoms of the

12, 13. What worthless things must Christians avoid viewing, and why?

14, 15. What was noteworthy about Satan’s third temptation of Christ, and how was Jesus able to withstand it?



*What worthless things
must Christians avoid viewing?*

world and their glory.” (Matt. 4:8) Why did Satan do so? No doubt, he wanted to exploit the powerful influence of the eye. Having a look at the splendor of all the world’s kingdoms might induce Jesus to give in to a desire for worldly prominence. How did Jesus react?

¹⁵ Jesus did not focus on this tempting offer. He did not let his heart entertain wrong desires. And he did not have to contemplate the Devil’s offer in order to reject it. Jesus reacted immediately. “Go away, Satan!” he commanded. (Matt. 4:10) Jesus kept his focus on his relationship with Jehovah and replied in harmony with his purpose in life—that of doing God’s will. (Heb. 10:7) As a result, Jesus successfully thwarted Satan’s cunning scheme.

¹⁶ We can learn much from Jesus’ example. First, no one is immune to Satan’s tactics. (Matt. 24:24) Second, what we focus our eyes on can reinforce the desires of our heart, for good or for bad. Third, Satan will exploit “the desire of the eyes” as much as he can in his attempt to lead us astray. (1 Pet. 5:8) And fourth, we too can oppose Satan,

16. What lessons can we learn from Jesus’ example of resisting Satan’s temptations?

especially if we act without delay.—Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:21.

Keep Your Eye “Simple”

¹⁷ Our dedication to Jehovah includes a solemn promise to turn away from what is worthless. In vowing to do God’s will, we join the psalmist in stating: “From every bad path I have restrained my feet, for the purpose that I may keep your word.” (Ps. 119:101) It is unwise to wait until something worthless confronts us before we decide what we will do. Matters that the Scriptures condemn have been made clear to us. We are not ignorant of Satan’s schemes. When was Jesus tempted to change stones into

17. Why is it unwise to wait until something worthless confronts us before we decide what to do?

What Should We Remember About . . .

- the connection between our eyes, mind, and heart?
- the dangers of watching pornography?
- the importance of keeping our eye “simple”?

loaves of bread? After he had fasted for 40 days and nights and “felt hungry.” (Matt. 4: 1-4) Satan is able to perceive when we are weak and more likely to succumb to temptation. Thus, *now* is the time to give careful consideration to these matters. Do not put it off! If we keep our dedication vow to Jehovah in mind day by day, we will be firmly determined to turn away from what is worthless.—Prov. 1:5; 19:20.

¹⁸ Each day, we face a wide array of eye-appealing distractions, and their number keeps increasing. We can appreciate all the

18, 19. (a) Contrast a “simple” eye with one that is “wicked.” (b) Why is it important to keep on considering what is valuable, and what advice does Philippians 4:8 give in this regard?

more, then, Jesus’ admonition to keep our eye “simple.” (Matt. 6:22, 23) A “simple” eye is totally focused on one purpose—that of doing God’s will. By contrast, a “wicked” eye is crafty, covetous, and drawn to things that are worthless.

¹⁹ Remember, our eyes feed our mind and our mind feeds our heart. How important it is, therefore, that we keep on considering what is valuable. (*Read Philippians 4:8.*) Indeed, may we continue to echo the prayer of the psalmist: “Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless.” Then, as we strive to act in harmony with that prayer, we can be confident that Jehovah will “preserve [us] alive in [his] own way.”—Ps. 119:37; Heb. 10:36.

ARE YOU FULLY FOLLOWING THE CHRIST?

“Just as you are in fact walking, . . . keep on doing it more fully.”—1 THESS. 4:1.

HAVE you ever entertained the thought of how wonderful it must have been to be alive when Jesus was on earth? You might think of the prospect of being healed by Jesus and thus spared the distress of some troublesome physical affliction. Or you might consider the sheer pleasure of being able to see and hear Jesus—to be able to learn from him or to see him perform some miracle. (Mark 4:1, 2; Luke 5:3-9; 9:11) What a great privilege it would have been to be present when Jesus did all those works!

1, 2. (a) What grand things did many people in Jesus’ day witness? (b) Why is our present era also momentous?

(Luke 19:37) No generation since then has witnessed such things, and what Jesus accomplished on earth “through the sacrifice of himself” will not be repeated.—Heb. 9:26; John 14:19.

² Our present era, though, is also momentous. Why so? We now live in what the Scriptures foretold as “the time of the end” and “the last days.” (Dan. 12:1-4, 9; 2 Tim. 3:1) During this period, Satan was cast out of heaven. Soon, he will be bound and thrown “into the abyss.” (Rev. 12:7-9, 12; 20:1-3) It is also during this time that we have the grand privilege of declaring the “good news of the kingdom” worldwide, telling people about

the hope of the Paradise to come—a never-to-be-repeated work.—Matt. 24:14.

³ Just before his ascension to heaven, Jesus told his followers: “You will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) That work would involve a global teaching activity. The goal? To make disciples—additional followers of the Christ—before the end comes. (Matt. 28:19, 20) What must we do if we want to succeed in fulfilling Christ’s commission?

⁴ Note this exclamation of the apostle Peter: “What sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah!” (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) Peter’s words emphasize the need to keep close watch during these last days to make sure that our life remains centered on deeds of godly devotion. Such deeds include the preaching of the good news. What a joy it is, therefore, for us to observe the zeal with which our brothers worldwide are carrying out Christ’s preaching commission! At the same time, we realize that we need to be careful that the daily pressures from Satan’s world and from our own inherited fleshly tendencies do not diminish the zeal with which we are carrying out God’s service. Let us consider, therefore, how we can make sure that we keep on following the Christ.

Embrace God-Given Responsibilities

⁵ In his letter to the Christians in Jerusa-

3. Just before his ascension to heaven, what did Jesus tell his followers to do, and what would that involve?

4. (a) Peter’s exclamation found at 2 Peter 3:11, 12 emphasizes what need? (b) Against what do we need to be on guard?

5, 6. (a) For what did Paul commend his fellow believers in Jerusalem, and against what did he warn them? (b) Why should we not take our God-given responsibilities lightly?

lem, the apostle Paul commended his fellow believers for their past record of faithful endurance even under persecution. He stated: “Keep on remembering the former days in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great contest under sufferings.” Yes, Jehovah remembered their faithful course. (Heb. 6:10; 10:32-34) Paul’s warm words of commendation must have encouraged those Hebrew Christians greatly. However, in that same letter, Paul also warned against a human tendency that if not kept under control, could diminish one’s zeal for God’s service. He stated that Christians should be careful not to “beg off,” or excuse themselves, from following God’s commandments.—Heb. 12:25.

⁶ That warning against the tendency to “beg off” from embracing God-given responsibilities also applies to Christians today. We realize that we need to be determined never to take our Christian responsibilities lightly or to allow our zeal for God’s service to diminish. (Heb. 10:39) After all, rendering sacred service is a matter of life and death.—1 Tim. 4:16.

⁷ What will help us to guard against excusing ourselves from fulfilling our obligations to God? One important way to fight that tendency is by regularly meditating on the meaning of our dedication vow. In essence, we promised Jehovah that we would put the doing of his will foremost in our lives, and we want to keep that promise. (*Read Matthew 16:24.*) Therefore, at times we need to pause and ask ourselves: ‘Do I still feel as determined to live up to my dedication to God as I did at the time of my baptism? Or have I lost some of my initial zeal in the years since then?’

7, 8. (a) What will help us to maintain our zeal for God’s service? (b) If we have lost some of our initial zeal, what should we remember about Jehovah and Jesus?

⁸ If an honest self-examination proves that we have slackened the hand somewhat, we do well to recall the invigorating words spoken by the prophet Zephaniah. He stated: “May your hands not drop down. Jehovah your God is in the midst of you. As a mighty One, he will save. He will exult over you with rejoicing.” (Zeph. 3:16, 17) These reassuring words first applied to the Israelites of old who returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. However, this assurance still holds true for God’s people today. Since the work we do is Jehovah’s work, we should keep in mind that both Jehovah and his Son back us up and strengthen us to discharge fully our God-given responsibilities. (Matt. 28:20; Phil. 4:13) If we strive to continue to do God’s work with zeal, he will bless us and help us to go on prospering spiritually.

Zealously “Seeking First the Kingdom”

⁹ While eating a meal in the home of a ruler of the Pharisees, Jesus gave an illustration about a grand evening meal. In that illustration, he described the opportunity extended to different ones to come in line for the Kingdom of the heavens. He also illustrated what it means to “beg off.” (Read *Luke 14:16-21*.) The invited guests in Jesus’ illustration gave excuses for not attending the feast. One said that he needed to go and examine a field he had just bought. Another said that he bought some cattle and wanted to examine them. Still another said: ‘I cannot come. I just got married.’ These were poor excuses. One who buys a field or livestock normally examines them beforehand, so there is no great urgency to examine

9, 10. What is the point of Jesus’ parable of the grand evening meal, and what lesson can we draw from it?

them afterward. And why should a recent marriage prevent one from accepting such an important invitation? No wonder the host in the illustration was incensed!

¹⁰ All of God’s people can learn a lesson from Jesus’ parable. What is it? We should never allow personal matters, such as those mentioned in Jesus’ illustration, to become so important to us that they push aside our service to God. If a Christian does not keep personal affairs in their proper place, his zeal in the ministry will gradually diminish. (Read *Luke 8:14*.) To prevent that from happening, we live by Jesus’ admonition: “Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.” (Matt. 6:33) How encouraging it is to observe that God’s servants—young and old alike—are applying that vital counsel! In fact, many have taken steps to simplify their lifestyle so that they can give more time to the ministry. They learn firsthand that zealously seeking first the Kingdom brings true happiness and great satisfaction.

¹¹ To illustrate the importance of being zealous in God’s service, note an event that took place in the life of King Jehoash of Israel. Concerned over the apparent fate of Israel at the hands of Syria, Jehoash came weeping to Elisha. The prophet instructed him to shoot an arrow out the window toward Syria, indicating victory by Jehovah’s hand against that nation. This certainly should have invigorated the king. Elisha next told Jehoash to take his arrows and strike the earth with them. Jehoash struck the earth three times. Elisha was incensed at this, for striking the earth five or six times would have indicated “striking down Syria to the finishing point.” Now Jehoash would enjoy

11. What Bible account illustrates the importance of being zealous and wholehearted in serving God?

only three partial victories. Because he acted with a lack of zeal, Jehoash experienced limited success. (2 Kings 13:14-19) What lesson can we learn from that account? Jehovah will abundantly bless us only if we do his work wholeheartedly and with zeal.

¹² Life's challenges test our zeal and devotion to God's service. Many brothers and sisters are coping with trying economic circumstances. Others are frustrated because a serious illness limits what they are able to do in Jehovah's service. Still, each of us can take steps to ensure that we maintain our zeal and continue to follow the Christ fully. Please note some of the suggestions and scriptures listed in the box "What Will Help You to Keep Following the Christ?" Consider how you can apply them to the full. If you do, you will reap real benefits. Keeping busy in the ministry has a stabilizing effect on us, enriches our life, and brings us greater peace and happiness. (1 Cor. 15:58) Moreover, being whole-souled in our service to God helps us in "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah."—2 Pet. 3:12.

Make a Frank Appraisal

¹³ It is good to remember, though, that being whole-souled is not a matter of how

12. (a) What will help us to maintain our zeal in God's service while coping with life's challenges? (b) Relate how you are benefiting from keeping busy in the ministry.

13. How can we determine what whole-souled service means for us personally?

What Will Help You to Keep Following the Christ?

- Read God's Word daily, and meditate on what you read.—Ps. 1:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:15.
- Pray often for the support and guidance of God's spirit.—Zech. 4:6; Luke 11:9, 13.
- Associate with those who demonstrate heartfelt zeal for the ministry.—Prov. 13:20; Heb. 10:24, 25.
- Appreciate the urgency of the times in which we are living.—Eph. 5:15, 16.
- Be conscious of the serious consequences of 'begging off.'—Luke 9:59-62.
- Reflect regularly on your dedication vow and the abundant blessings that result from serving Jehovah and following the Christ wholeheartedly.—Ps. 116:12-14; 133:3; Prov. 10:22.

much time we spend in the ministry. Individual circumstances vary. A person who spends just an hour or two in field service each month may be very pleasing to Jehovah if that really is all his health allows him to do. (Compare Mark 12:41-44.) Hence, to determine what whole-souled service to God means for us personally, we need to make a frank appraisal of our abilities and circumstances. As followers of Christ, we also want to harmonize our viewpoint with his. (*Read Romans 15:5; 1 Cor. 2:16*) What did Jesus put foremost in his life? He told the crowds from Capernaum: "I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:

43; John 18:37) With Jesus' zeal for his ministry in mind, evaluate your circumstances to see if you could further expand your ministry.—1 Cor. 11:1.

¹⁴ A careful consideration of our circumstances may lead us to conclude that we could increase the amount of time we spend in the ministry. (Matt. 9:37, 38) For instance, many thousands of our young people who recently graduated from school have expanded their ministry and are now experiencing the joy that comes from zealously serving as pioneers. Would you like to taste that joy as well? Some brothers and sisters have considered their circumstances and decided that they could move to an area in their country, or even abroad, where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers. Still others have learned another language to help foreign-speaking people. While expanding our ministry can be challenging, it brings rich blessings, and we may help many others to “come to an accurate knowledge of truth.”—1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2 Cor. 9:6.

Bible Examples to Follow

¹⁵ How did some who became apostles respond when Christ called them to be his followers? Regarding Matthew, the account says: “Leaving everything behind he rose up and went following him.” (Luke 5:27, 28) About Peter and Andrew, who were fishing, we read: “At once abandoning the nets, they followed him.” Jesus next saw James and John, who were mending their nets along with their father. How did they react to Jesus' invitation? “At once leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.”—Matt. 4:18-22.

14. In what ways could we further expand our ministry?

15, 16. Whose examples can we imitate in being zealous followers of the Christ?

¹⁶ Another fine example is that of Saul, who became the apostle Paul. Although he had been a rabid persecutor of Christ's followers, he changed course and became “a chosen vessel” to bear Christ's name. “Immediately in the synagogues [Paul] began to preach Jesus, that this One is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:3-22) And despite his having to endure much hardship and persecution, Paul never lost his zeal.—2 Cor. 11:23-29; 12:15.

¹⁷ We surely want to imitate the fine examples of those disciples and respond eagerly and without reservation. (Heb. 6:11, 12) What blessings do we enjoy as we continue to strive to follow the Christ zealously and fully? We find genuine pleasure in doing the will of God and experience the satisfaction that comes from accepting additional privileges of service and responsibilities in the congregation. (Ps. 40:8; *read 1 Thessalonians 4:1.*) Yes, as we vigorously exert ourselves in following the Christ, we enjoy such rich and lasting blessings as peace of mind, satisfaction, contentment, God's approval, and the prospect of everlasting life.—1 Tim. 4:10.

17. (a) What is your desire in regard to following the Christ? (b) What blessings do we enjoy because of doing Jehovah's will with all our heart and strength?

Do You Recall?

- What important work have we been given, and how should we view it?
- What human tendency must we guard against, and why?
- What frank appraisal should we make?
- What will help us to keep following the Christ?