

No. 7      **Courage Weakens Versus Courage Strengtheners (Symposium)**  
            **—Despair Versus Hope**

[PLEASE NOTE: This symposium discusses Psalm 27. Discuss only the verses that are included in your outline. The talks include video dramatizations that feature the same family. In each talk, a member of the family is confronted with a challenge that tests his or her courage. This talk contains two videos. The first video presents the challenge; the second video demonstrates how the challenge can be overcome]

HOW CAN WE BUILD COURAGE? (2 min.)

Christian courage is different from a natural tendency to be bold  
It is deliberately built by learning to rely on Jehovah  
To face trials successfully, we need more than coping skills; we need absolute confidence that Jehovah is supporting us  
Lack of attention to spiritual priorities can undermine our confidence and weaken our courage  
Even Christians who have served faithfully for decades may need to develop greater courage in order to be "very strong" (Jos 1:7)  
Thus, whether you are a new or a longtime Witness, pay careful attention to every talk in this symposium

HOW THIS SYMPOSIUM WILL HELP US (2 min.)

In the 27th Psalm, David wrote about godly courage  
Using selected verses from this psalm, each speaker will answer three questions: (1) What weakens courage? (2) What strengthens it? (3) What can you do to strengthen your courage?  
Why concern ourselves with what *weakens* courage?  
To illustrate, a person working to improve his physical health would not succeed if he was eating foods that harmed his health; likewise, while strengthening our courage, we must avoid things that weaken it  
During this symposium, you will see video dramatizations featuring Brother Benjamin Matthews; his wife, Abby Matthews; and some members of their family  
All of them will be confronted with challenges that test their courage  
The first video will demonstrate the danger of despair; as you watch, notice the challenge that Benjamin and Abby's daughter, Leah, faces

VIDEO (2 min.)

HOW DESPAIR WEAKENS COURAGE (1 min.)

If you were facing the same problems as Leah, what would you do?  
All of us are disappointed at times, but prolonged or extreme discouragement can lead to despair, the feeling that all joy is gone with no prospects for improvement  
This could sap us of strength to continue serving Jehovah (Pr 18:14, ftn.; 24:10)  
Despair can be overcome by focusing on our hope

HOW HOPE STRENGTHENS COURAGE (3 min.)

Hope can change our outlook even if we cannot change our situation  
Our Christian hope is "an anchor for the soul," giving us courage to weather the storms of life (Heb 6:19)  
[Read and discuss Psalm 27:13, 14]  
David, though threatened by violent adversaries, expressed a hopeful outlook; his example encourages all to "hope in Jehovah"

Hope is better than desire, which may have no prospect of fulfillment

We do not merely wish; rather, we *confidently expect* that Jehovah will fulfill his promise to give us wisdom and make our trials bearable (1Co 10:13; Jas 1:5)

We have a solid basis for believing that he will bring the promised new world

Our confidence in Jehovah fills us with courage

As we watch the second part of the video, notice how Leah is helped to build courage by focusing on her hope

VIDEO (2 min.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO (3 min.)

Strengthen your hope by reading God's Word daily; focus on God's promises for the future (Ro 15:4; 2Co 4:17, 18; w06 10/1 27 ¶5-6)

Imagine yourself in God's new world (w06 10/1 28 ¶9)

Can the thoughts in God's Word really help you to overcome despair?

Yes! [Relate how Eusebio Morcillo used God's Word to combat feelings of guilt and a lack of self-worth. See the January 1, 2008, *Watchtower*, pages 29-30, subheading "Overcoming Destructive Feelings"]

By strengthening your hope, you can overcome despair and strengthen your courage

Brother \_\_\_\_\_ will now consider the next part of this symposium, "Courage Weakens Versus Courage Strengthens—Complaint Versus Thanksgiving"

TO BE COVERED IN 15 MINUTES