

- Song 79 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Encourage and Strengthen Others With Kind Words”:** (10 min.)
 Job 16:4, 5—A counselor’s words should strengthen others (w90 3/15 27 ¶1-2)
 Job 19:2—Bildad’s unkind words caused Job to cry out in distress (w06 3/15 15 ¶6; w94 10/1 32)
 Job 19:25—The resurrection hope sustained Job when he was pressed to the limit (w06 3/15 15 ¶5; it-2 735 ¶2-3)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Job 19:20—What did Job mean by the expression “I escape with the skin of my teeth”? (w06 3/15 15 ¶1; it-2 977 ¶1)

Job 19:26—How could Job “see God,” since no human can see Jehovah? (w94 11/15 19 ¶17)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

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

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month’s Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play each sample presentation video, and then discuss the highlights. Encourage publishers to build their own presentation.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 42
- **“New Feature for Starting Conversations”:** (10 min.) Discussion. Encourage all to use “What Does the Bible Say?” to start conversations that may lead to a Bible study.
- **Questions From Readers:** (5 min.) Talk by an elder based on the February 15, 2015, *Watchtower*, page 30, paragraphs 4-6.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** *ia* chap. 12 ¶¶13-25, review on p. 107 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 65 and Prayer

New Feature for Starting Conversations

Since January 2016, the back page of the public edition of *The Watchtower* has featured “What Does the Bible Say?” This new feature is designed to help us start conversations on Bible topics. The format is similar to that of our tracts. There is a viewpoint question followed by a Scriptural answer, as well as additional points for discussion.

Pleasant conversations on Scriptural topics often lead to Bible studies. Use this new feature to help many more to satisfy their spiritual hunger. —Mt 5:6.

HOW TO USE THE FEATURE:



- 1 **Ask** for the householder’s opinion on one of the questions
- 2 **Listen** to and acknowledge his answer
- 3 **Read** the scripture under the heading “What the Bible Says,” and ask for his thoughts on the verse. If he has time, continue the conversation, using a point under the heading “What Else Can We Learn From the Bible?”
- 4 **Offer** the magazine
- 5 **Arrange** to return and discuss the second question

The Power of Kindness (Ephesians 4:32)

1. We're grateful to know Jehovah, our God,
For in his Word we find:
Although he is great in wisdom and might,
Jehovah is loving and kind.
2. Christ Jesus invites the weary at heart
To leave their cares behind.
How kindly his yoke, how light is his load,
For he is refreshing and kind.
3. We see in our God and Jesus our Lord,
The persons we should be.
In all that we do, we want to reflect
Their kindness and true empathy.

35 They conceive trouble
and give birth to what
is wicked,
And their womb produces
deceit.”

16 Job said in reply:
2 “I have heard many
things like these before.
All of you are troublesome
comforters!^a

3 Is there an end to empty*
words?

What provokes you to
answer this way?

4 I could also speak as you do.
If you were in my place,*
I could make persuasive
speeches against you
And shake my head at you.^b

5 Instead, though, I would
strengthen you with the
words of my mouth,
And the consolation of my
lips would bring relief.^c

6 If I speak, my own pain is
not relieved,^d
And if I stop speaking, how
much is my pain reduced?

7 But now he has made me
weary;^e
He has devastated my whole
household.*

8 You also seize me, and it has
become a witness,
So that my own skinniness
rises up and testifies to my
face.

9 His anger has torn me to
pieces, and he harbors
animosity against me.^f
He grinds his teeth
against me.

My adversary pierces me
with his eyes.^g

10 They have opened their
mouth wide against me,^h
And they have scornfully
struck my cheeks;

CHAP. 16

a Job 13:4, 5
Job 19:2, 3

b Ps 109:25
Mt 27:39

c Pr 27:9
Mt 7:12
Ro 12:15
1Pe 3:8

d Job 2:13

e Job 7:3

f Job 10:16

g Job 33:8-10

h Ps 22:13

Second Col.

a Ps 35:15

b Ps 27:12

c Job 1:12, 17

d Job 7:20

e Ps 73:21

f 1Ki 21:27
2Ki 6:30

g Job 30:19
Ps 7:5

h Ps 6:6
Ps 31:9
La 1:16

i Ge 4:8, 10
Ps 72:14

j Job 12:4

k Ps 40:1
Ps 142:2

l Job 31:35

In large numbers they gather
against me.^a

11 God hands me over to young
boys,

And he thrusts me into the
hands of the wicked.^b

12 I was untroubled, but he
shattered me;^c

He grabbed me by the
back of the neck and
crushed me;

Then he set me up as his
target.

13 His archers surround me;^d
He pierces my kidneys^e and
feels no compassion;
He pours out my gall on the
earth.

14 He breaks through against
me with breach after
breach;
He rushes at me like
a warrior.

15 I have sewn sackcloth
together to cover my skin,^f
And I have buried my
dignity* in the dust.^g

16 My face is red from
weeping,^h
And on my eyelids is deep
shadow,*

17 Although my hands have
done no violence
And my prayer is pure.

18 O earth, do not cover
my blood!ⁱ
And let there be no resting-
place for my outcry!

19 Even now, my witness is
in the heavens;
The one who can testify
for me is in the heights.

20 My companions ridicule me^j
As my eye sheds tears*
to God.^k

21 Let someone arbitrate
between a man and God,
As one would between a man
and his fellow.^l

16:3 *Or “blustery.” 16:4 *Or “If your
soul were in place of my soul.” 16:7
*Or “those assembling with me.”

16:15 *Or “strength.” Lit., “horn.”
16:16 *Or “death’s shadow.” 16:20 *Or
possibly, “looks sleeplessly.”

- 22 For the years to come are few,
And I will go away on the path of no return.^a
- 17** "My spirit has been broken, my days have been extinguished;
The graveyard awaits me.^b
- 2 Mockers surround me,^c
And my eye must gaze at* their rebellious behavior.
- 3 Please accept my security, and keep it with you.
Who else will shake hands with me and pledge in my behalf?^d
- 4 For you have concealed discernment from their heart;^e
That is why you do not exalt them.
- 5 He may offer to share with his friends,
While the eyes of his children fail.
- 6 He has made me an object of scorn* among the peoples,^f
So that I became one in whose face they spit.^g
- 7 From anguish my eyes grow dim,^h
And all my limbs are but a shadow.
- 8 Upright people stare in amazement at this,
And the innocent one is disturbed over the goddess.*
- 9 The righteous one keeps holding fast to his way,ⁱ
And the one with clean hands grows stronger.^j
- 10 However, you may all come and resume your arguing,
For I have not found anyone wise among you.^k
- 11 My days are finished;^l
My plans, the desires of my heart, have been shattered.^m

17:2 *Or "dwell on." 17:6 *Lit., "a proverb; a byword." 17:8 *Or "the apostate."

CHAP. 16

a Job 7:9
Job 14:10
Ec 12:5

CHAP. 17

b Ps 88:3, 4
Isa 38:10

c Ps 35:16
Heb 11:36

d Pr 17:18

e 2Sa 17:14
Isa 6:10
Mt 11:25

f Ps 69:11, 12

g Job 30:9, 10

h Job 16:16
Ps 6:7
Ps 31:9

i Ps 119:165

j Ps 24:3, 4
Ps 84:5, 7

k Job 6:29

l Job 7:6
Job 9:25
Isa 38:10

m Jas 4:13, 14

Second Col.

a Ec 12:5, 7

b Job 10:21, 22

c Ps 49:7, 9
Ps 143:7

d Job 7:6
Job 14:19
Job 19:10

e Ge 3:19
Job 3:19

CHAP. 18

f Job 2:11
Job 8:1

g Ps 73:22

h Job 8:13, 14
Job 11:20

i Job 5:13

- 12 They keep turning night into day,
Saying, 'Light must be near because it is dark.'
- 13 If I wait, the Grave* will become my home;^a
I will spread out my bed in darkness.^b
- 14 I will call out to the pit,^{*c}
'You are my father!'
To the maggot, 'My mother and my sister!'
- 15 Where, then, is my hope?^d
Who can see hope for me?
- 16 It[#] will go down to the barred gates of the Grave*
When we all descend together into the dust."^e

18 Bil'dad^f the Shu'hite said in reply:

- 2 "How long before you stop making such speeches?
Show some understanding so that we may then speak.
- 3 Why should we be viewed as animals^g
And be considered stupid* in your eyes?
- 4 Even if you tear yourself* to pieces in your anger,
Will the earth be abandoned for your sake,
Or will the rock move away from its place?
- 5 Yes, the light of the wicked will be extinguished,
And the flame of his fire will not shine.^h
- 6 The light in his tent will certainly grow dark,
And the lamp over him will be extinguished.
- 7 His vigorous stride is shortened,
And his own counsel will make him fall.ⁱ

17:13, 16 *Or "Sheol," that is, the common grave of mankind. See Glossary.
17:14 *Or "grave." 17:16 #That is, my hope. 18:3 *Or possibly, "unclean."
18:4 *Or "your soul."

- 8** For his feet will lead him into a net,
And he will wander onto its mesh.
- 9** A trap will seize him by the heel;
A snare will catch him.^a
- 10** A rope is hidden for him on the ground,
And a trap lies in his path.
- 11** Terrors frighten him on all sides^b
And chase him at his feet.
- 12** His strength fails him,
And disaster^c will make him stagger.*
- 13** His skin is eaten away;
The most deadly disease* consumes his limbs.
- 14** He is torn away from the security of his tent^d
And marched to the king of terrors.*
- 15** Strangers* will live in his tent;
Sulfur will be scattered on his home.^e
- 16** His roots will dry up beneath him,
And his branches will wither above him.
- 17** The memory of him will fade from the earth,
And in the street his name will be unknown.*
- 18** He will be driven from the light into the darkness
And chased away from the productive land.
- 19** He will have no offspring and no descendants among his people,
And he will be without a survivor in the place where he lives.*

18:12 *Or "limp." **18:13** *Lit., "The firstborn of death." **18:14** *Or "a terrible death." **18:15** *Lit., "Something not his." **18:17** *Lit., "he will have no name." **18:19** *Or "the place of his temporary residence."

CHAP. 18

a Job 5:5
Job 22:5,10

b Job 15:21
Job 20:25

c Job 15:23

d Job 11:20

e De 29:22, 23

Second Col.

CHAP. 19

a Ps 42:10

b Ps 55:21
Pr 12:18

c Pr 18:24

d Ps 22:2
Hab 1:2

e Lu 18:7

f Job 3:23
Ps 88:8

g Job 13:24

- 20** When his day comes, the people in the West will be appalled
And the people in the East will be seized with horror.
- 21** This is what happens to the tents of a wrongdoer
And to the place of the one who has not known God."
- 19** Job said in reply:
2 "How long will you keep irritating my soul,^{*a}
Crushing me with words?^b
- 3** These ten times you have rebuked* me;
You are not ashamed to deal harshly with me.^c
- 4** And if indeed I made a mistake,
My error remains with me.
- 5** If you insist on exalting yourselves over me,
Claiming that the reproach against me is justified,
- 6** Know, then, that it is God who has misled me,
And he has caught me in his hunting net.
- 7** Look! I keep crying out, 'Violence!' but I get no answer;^d
I keep crying for help, but there is no justice.^e
- 8** My path he has blocked with a stone wall, and I cannot pass by;
He has covered my roadways with darkness.^f
- 9** He has stripped me of my glory
And removed the crown from my head.
- 10** He breaks me down on all sides until I perish;
My hope he uproots like a tree.
- 11** His anger burns against me,
And he views me as his enemy.^g

19:2 *Or "irritating me." See Glossary.
19:3 *Or "insulted."

- 12** His troops come together
and besiege me,
And they camp around my
tent.
- 13** My own brothers he has
driven far away from me,
And those who know
me have turned away
from me.^a
- 14** My close companions* are
gone,
And those whom I knew well
have forgotten me.^b
- 15** Guests in my house^c and
my slave girls consider me
a stranger;
I am a foreigner in their eyes.
- 16** I call for my servant, but
he does not respond;
With my mouth I beg him
for compassion.
- 17** My very breath has become
loathsome to my wife,^d
And I am a stench to my
own brothers.*
- 18** Even young children
despise me;
When I rise up, they begin
jeering at me.
- 19** All my close friends
detest me,^e
And those whom I loved have
turned against me.^f
- 20** My bones stick to my skin
and my flesh,^g
And I escape with the skin
of my teeth.
- 21** Show me mercy, my compan-
ions, show me mercy,
For God's own hand has
touched me.^h
- 22** Why do you keep persecut-
ing me as God does,ⁱ
Attacking me without letup?*
- 23** If only my words were
written down,
If only they could be
inscribed in a book!

19:14 *Or "My relatives." **19:17** *Lit., "the sons of my womb," that is, the womb that bore me (my mother's womb). **19:22** *Lit., "And not be satisfied with my flesh?"

CHAP. 19

a Ps 31:11
Ps 69:8

b Ps 38:11

c Job 31:32

d Job 2:9

e Job 17:6
Ps 88:8

f Ps 109:5

g Job 30:30
Ps 102:5

h Job 1:10-12
Ps 38:2

i Job 2:9, 10

j Ps 69:26

Second Col.

a Job 14:14
Ps 19:14
Ps 69:18
Ps 103:2, 4
Mt 20:28
Mr 10:45

b Ps 17:15

c Ps 69:26

d De 32:41

e Ps 58:11
Mt 7:1
Ro 14:4
Jas 4:12

CHAP. 20

f Job 2:11
Job 11:1

g Job 8:8

h Job 8:13, 19
Job 21:28

- 24** O that they were carved
forever in the rock,
With an iron stylus and lead!
- 25** For I well know that my
redeemer*^a is alive;
He will come later and rise
up over the earth.[#]
- 26** After my skin has thus been
destroyed,
While yet in my flesh, I will
see God,
- 27** Whom I will see for myself,
Whom my own eyes will see,
not someone else's.^b
But deep inside I feel
overwhelmed!*
- 28** For you say, 'In what way are
we persecuting him?'^c
Since the root of the problem
is with me.
- 29** Be in fear of the sword
yourselves,^d
For the sword brings punish-
ment against errors;
You should know that there
is a judge.^e

20 Zo'phar^f the Na'a-ma-thite
said in reply:

- 2** "This is why my own
troubling thoughts urge
me to answer
Because of the agitation
I feel.
- 3** I have heard a reproof that
insults me;
And my understanding*
impels me to reply.
- 4** Surely you must have always
known this,
For it has been so since man*
was put on the earth,^g
- 5** That the joyful cry of the
wicked is brief
And the rejoicing of the god-
less one* is for a moment.^h

19:25 *Or "repurchaser." #Lit., "over (upon) the dust." **19:27** *Or "My kidneys have failed within me." **20:3** *Lit., "a spirit from my understanding." **20:4** *Or "mankind; Adam." **20:5** *Or "the apostate."

- 6 Although his greatness ascends to heaven
And his head reaches to the clouds,
7 He will perish forever like his own dung;
Those who used to see him will say, 'Where is he?'
8 He will fly off like a dream, and they will not find him;
He will be chased away like a vision of the night.
9 The eye that once saw him will not do so again,
And his place will behold him no more.^a
10 His own children will seek the favor of the poor,
And his own hands will give back his wealth.^b
11 His bones were full of youthful vigor,
But it* will lie down with him in mere dust.
12 If what is bad tastes sweet in his mouth,
If he hides it under his tongue,
13 If he savors it and does not let it go
But keeps holding it in his mouth,
14 His food will turn sour inside him;
It will become like the poison* of cobras within him.
15 He has swallowed down wealth, but he will vomit it up;
God will empty it out of his belly.
16 The venom of cobras he will suck;
The fangs* of a viper will kill him.
17 He will never see the streams of water,
The torrents of honey and butter.

20:11 *That is, his vigor. 20:14 *Or "gall." 20:16 *Lit., "tongue."

CHAP. 20
a Job 8:13,18

b Job 20:18

Second Col.
a Job 20:10

b Job 15:21
Job 18:5,11

- 18 He will give back his goods without consuming them;*
He will not enjoy the wealth from his trade.^a
19 For he has crushed and abandoned the poor;
He has seized a house that he did not build.
20 But he will feel no peace within himself;
His wealth will not help him escape.
21 There is nothing left for him to devour;
That is why his prosperity will not last.
22 When his wealth reaches its peak, anxiety will overtake him;
The full force of misfortune will come against him.
23 As he fills his belly,
God* will send his burning anger upon him,
Raining it down upon him into his bowels.
24 When he flees from weapons of iron,
Arrows from a copper bow will pierce him.
25 He pulls an arrow from his back,
A glittering weapon from his gall,
And terror seizes him.^b
26 Total darkness awaits his treasures;
A fire that no one fanned will consume him;
Calamity awaits any survivors in his tent.
27 Heaven will uncover his error;
The earth will rise up against him.
28 A flood will sweep his house away;
It will be a heavy torrent on the day of God's* anger.

20:18 *Lit., "and he will not swallow."
20:23 *Lit., "He." 20:28 *Lit., "his."

- 29 This is the wicked man's share from God,
The inheritance that God has decreed for him."
- 21** Job said in reply:
2 "Listen carefully to what I say;
Let this be the consolation you give me.
- 3 Bear with me while I speak;
After I speak, you may then mock me.^a
- 4 Is my complaint directed toward a man?
If it were, would I* not lose patience?
- 5 Look at me and stare in amazement;
Put your hand over your mouth.
- 6 When I think about it,
I am disturbed,
And my whole body shudders.
- 7 Why do the wicked live on,^b
Grow old, and become wealthy?^{*c}
- 8 Their children are always in their presence,
And they get to see their descendants.
- 9 Their houses are secure,
they are free from fear,^d
And God does not punish them with his rod.
- 10 Their bulls breed without failure;
Their cows give birth and do not miscarry.
- 11 Their boys run outside just like a flock,
And their children skip about.
- 12 They sing accompanied by tambourine and harp
And rejoice at the sound of the flute.^{*e}
- 13 They spend their days in contentment

21:4 *Lit., "my spirit." 21:7 *Or "powerful." 21:12 *Or "pipe."

CHAP. 21

a Job 16:10, 20
Job 17:2
Heb 11:36

b Hab 1:3, 13

c Job 12:6
Ps 37:7
Ps 73:3
Ps 73:12
Jer 12:1

d Ps 73:3, 5

e Isa 5:12
Isa 22:13
Am 6:4, 5

Second Col.

a Ps 10:4, 11
Ps 73:3, 11

b Ex 5:2
Ps 10:4
Ho 13:6

c Mal 3:14

d Lu 12:19, 20

e Ps 1:1

f Pr 13:9
Pr 20:20
Pr 24:20

g Ps 11:6
Isa 26:11

h Ps 75:8
Isa 51:17
Jer 25:15
Re 14:10

i Ps 55:23

j Isa 40:13, 14
Ro 11:34
1Co 2:16

k Isa 40:23

And go down peacefully*
to the Grave.[#]

- 14 But they say to the true God,
'Leave us alone!
We have no desire to know
your ways.^a
- 15 Who is the Almighty, that
we should serve him?^b
What would we gain by being
acquainted with him?^{*c}
- 16 But I know that they
do not control their
own prosperity.^d
The thinking* of the wicked
is far from me.^e
- 17 How often is the lamp of the
wicked extinguished?^f
How often does disaster
come upon them?
How often does God deal out
destruction to them in his
anger?
- 18 Do they ever become like
straw before the wind
And like chaff that a storm
wind carries away?
- 19 God will store up a man's
punishment for his own
sons.
But may God repay him so
that he will know it.^g
- 20 May his own eyes see his
ruin,
And may he be the one to
drink from the rage of the
Almighty.^h
- 21 For what does he care about
what happens to his house
after him
If the number of his months
is cut short?^{*i}
- 22 Can anyone teach knowledge
to God,^{*j}
When He is the one who
judges even the highest
ones?^k
- 21:13 *Or "in a moment," that is, a quick and painless death. #Or "Sheol," that is, the common grave of mankind. See Glossary. 21:16 *Or "advice; scheming." 21:21 *Or "cut in two." 21:22 *Or "teach God anything."

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- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Encourage and Strengthen Others With Kind Words”:** (10 min.)
 Job 16:4, 5—A counselor’s words should strengthen others (w90 3/15 27 ¶1-2)
 Job 19:2—Bildad’s unkind words caused Job to cry out in distress (w06 3/15 15 ¶6; w94 10/1 32)
 Job 19:25—The resurrection hope sustained Job when he was pressed to the limit (w06 3/15 15 ¶5; it-2 735 ¶2-3)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Job 19:20—What did Job mean by the expression “I escape with the skin of my teeth”? (w06 3/15 15 ¶1; it-2 977 ¶1)

Job 19:26—How could Job “see God,” since no human can see Jehovah? (w94 11/15 19 ¶17)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

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

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month’s Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play each sample presentation video, and then discuss the highlights. Encourage publishers to build their own presentation.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 42
- **“New Feature for Starting Conversations”:** (10 min.) Discussion. Encourage all to use “What Does the Bible Say?” to start conversations that may lead to a Bible study.
- **Questions From Readers:** (5 min.) Talk by an elder based on the February 15, 2015, *Watchtower*, page 30, paragraphs 4-6.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** *ia* chap. 12 ¶¶13-25, review on p. 107 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
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New Feature for Starting Conversations

Since January 2016, the back page of the public edition of *The Watchtower* has featured “What Does the Bible Say?” This new feature is designed to help us start conversations on Bible topics. The format is similar to that of our tracts. There is a viewpoint question followed by a Scriptural answer, as well as additional points for discussion.

Pleasant conversations on Scriptural topics often lead to Bible studies. Use this new feature to help many more to satisfy their spiritual hunger. —Mt 5:6.

HOW TO USE THE FEATURE:



- 1 **Ask** for the householder’s opinion on one of the questions
- 2 **Listen** to and acknowledge his answer
- 3 **Read** the scripture under the heading “What the Bible Says,” and ask for his thoughts on the verse. If he has time, continue the conversation, using a point under the heading “What Else Can We Learn From the Bible?”
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JOB 16-20 | Encourage and Strengthen Others With Kind Words

16:4, 5

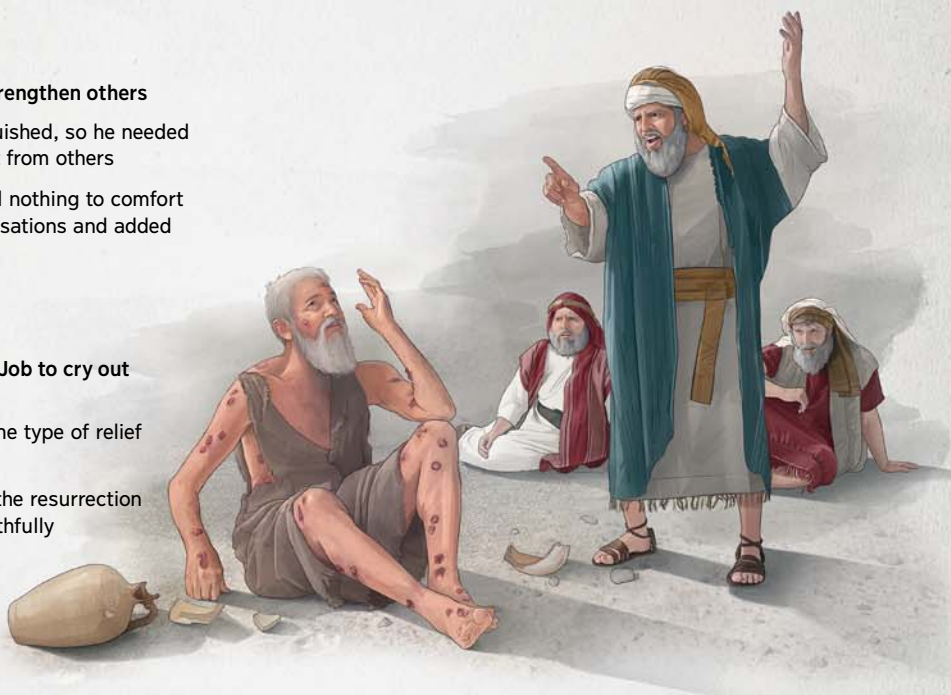
A counselor's words should strengthen others

- Job felt depressed and anguished, so he needed support and encouragement from others
- Job's three companions said nothing to comfort him. Rather, they made accusations and added to his anxiety

19:2, 25

Bildad's unkind words caused Job to cry out in distress

- Job cried out to God for some type of relief—even death
- Job focused on his hope in the resurrection and continued to endure faithfully

**JOB'S ACCUSERS****Eliphaz:**

- Possibly from Teman in the land of Edom. Teman is noted at Jeremiah 49:7 as a center of Edomite wisdom
- Likely the oldest and most influential of the "comforters," Eliphaz was the first to speak. He gave three speeches and spoke longer than the other two men

**Bildad:**

- A descendant of Shuah. He may have lived along the Euphrates River
- He was the second to speak. His three speeches were shorter and more hurtful than those of Eliphaz

**Zophar:**

- A Naamathite, possibly from northwest Arabia
- He was the third to speak and the harshest accuser. He gave only two speeches

False accusations:

- Ridiculed Job's integrity and claimed that God had no faith in his servants (Job 4, 5)
- Called Job presumptuous and wicked and claimed that Job had no fear of God (Job 15)
- Accused Job of greed and injustice and claimed that man is useless to God (Job 22)

False accusations:

- Implied that Job's sons had sinned and deserved the calamity that struck them and suggested that Job himself was godless (Job 8)
- Implied that Job was a wrongdoer (Job 18)
- Claimed that man's integrity is in vain (Job 25)

False accusations:

- Accused Job of empty talk and told him to put away his evil practices (Job 11)
- Implied that Job was wicked and enjoyed sin (Job 20)

w90 3/15 27 ¶1-2

A severely depressed person feels not simply sad but probably worthless and without hope. The Greek word translated “depressed souls” literally means “ones of little soul.” One Greek scholar defines the word in this way: “One who is labouring under such trouble, that his heart sinks within him.” Thus, his emotional resources have dried up, and his self-esteem has sagged.— Compare Proverbs 17:22.

The patriarch Job said: “I would strengthen you with the words of my mouth.” (Job 16:5) The Hebrew word for “strengthen” is sometimes rendered “fortify” or “reinforce.” It is used to describe how the temple was ‘made strong’ by means of structural repairs. (Isaiah 41:10; Nahum 2:1; 2 Chronicles 24:13) Your words must skillfully rebuild the depressed person’s self-esteem, brick by brick, as it were. Doing this requires that you appeal to his “power of reason.” (Romans 12:1) The 1903 issue of *The Watch Tower* cited earlier said regarding depressed ones: “Lacking . . . self-esteem, they need to be pushed to the front a little, in order to bring out what talents they really possess, for their own encouragement and for the blessing also of the entire household of faith.”

w06 3/15 15 ¶6

16:5; 19:2. Our words should encourage and strengthen others, not irritate them.—Proverbs 18:21.

w94 10/1 32

The Power of a Kind Word

A heart bowed down with anxiety, how a kind word can refresh it!”—Proverbs 12:25, Knox.

CHRISTIANS are not immune to adversity. At times they experience anxiety because of living in these “critical times hard to deal with.”—2 Timothy 3:1.

When suffering such calamity, what a blessing it is to hear kind words from a loyal friend! “A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress,” says the Bible. (Proverbs 17:17) The faithful man Job was known for being this type of friend. Even Eliphaz said of him: “When someone stumbled, weak and tired, your words encouraged him to stand.”—Job 4:4, *Today’s English Version*.

However, when Job himself needed encouragement, Eliphaz and his companions did not utter kind words.

They blamed Job for his adversity, implying that he must have had some secret fault. (Job 4:8) *The Interpreter's Bible* comments: "What Job needs is the compassion of a human heart. What he gets is a series of absolutely 'true' and absolutely beautiful religious clichés and moral platitudes." So distraught was Job at hearing the speech of Eliphaz and his companions that he was compelled to cry out: "How long will you men keep irritating my soul and keep crushing me with words?"—Job 19:2.

Never should we cause a fellow servant of God to cry out in distress because of our thoughtless, unkind words. (Compare Deuteronomy 24:15.) A Bible proverb warns: "What you say can preserve life or destroy it; so you must accept the consequences of your words."—Proverbs 18:21, *TEV*.

Recognizing the power of speech, let us follow the example of the apostle Paul. While in Macedonia, he was "encouraging the ones there with many a word."—Acts 20:2.

w06 3/15 15 ¶5

14:7, 13-15; 19:25; 33:24. During any test that Satan may thrust upon us, the resurrection hope can sustain us.

it-2 735 ¶2-3

God's 'repurchasing' likewise need not involve the payment of something tangible. When Jehovah repurchased the Israelites exiled in Babylon, Cyrus willingly liberated them, without tangible compensation in his lifetime. However, when redeeming his people from oppressor nations that had acted with malice against Israel, Jehovah exacted the price from the oppressors themselves, making them pay with their own lives. (Compare Ps 106:10, 11; Isa 41:11-14; 49:26.) When the people of the kingdom of Judah were "sold," or delivered over, to the Babylonians, Jehovah received no personal compensation. And the deported Jews did not pay money either to the Babylonians or to Jehovah to buy back their freedom. It was "for nothing" that they were sold and "without money" that they were repurchased. Jehovah therefore needed to make no payment to their captors to balance matters out. Instead, he effected the repurchase through the power of "his holy arm."—Isa 52:3-10; Ps 77:14, 15.

Jehovah's role of *Go·'e'l* thus embraced the avenging of wrongs done to his servants and resulted in the clearing of his own name of the charges raised by those who used Israel's distress as an excuse to reproach him. (Ps 78:35; Isa 59:15-20; 63:3-6, 9) As the Great Kinsman and Redeemer of both the nation

and its individuals, he conducted their “legal case” to effect justice.—Ps 119:153, 154; Jer 50:33, 34; La 3:58-60; compare Pr 23:10, 11.

w06 3/15 15 ¶1

19:20—What did Job mean by the expression “I escape with the skin of my teeth”? By saying that he escaped with the skin of something that apparently has no skin, Job might have been saying that he escaped with practically nothing.

it-2 977 ¶1

Job himself said: “I escape with the skin of my teeth.” (Job 19:20) Other readings of the above scripture have been proposed by translators, but these require adjustments in the Hebrew text. It does not seem to be necessary to endeavor to explain Job’s statement in the light of discoveries that scientists have made in recent times with the aid of microscopes. It seems that Job was simply saying that he had escaped with nothing or with next to nothing. He had escaped with the skin of his teeth, that is, with the “skin” of what apparently has no skin.

w94 11/15 19 ¶17

¹⁷ Completely humbled, Job acknowledged his wrong viewpoint and admitted that he had spoken without knowledge. Yet, he had expressed faith that he would “behold God.” (Job 19:25-27) How could that happen, since no human can see Jehovah and live on? (Exodus 33:20) Actually, Job saw the manifestation of divine power, heard God’s word, and had his eyes of understanding opened to see the truth about Jehovah. Job therefore ‘made a retraction and repented in dust and ashes.’ (Job 42:1-6) The many questions that he had been unable to answer had proved God’s supremacy and had shown the smallness of man, even one as devoted to Jehovah as Job was. This helps us to see that our interests are not to be put above the sanctification of Jehovah’s name and the vindication of his sovereignty. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Our prime concern should be maintaining integrity to Jehovah and honoring his name.

- Song 79 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Encourage and Strengthen Others With Kind Words”:** (10 min.)
 Job 16:4, 5—A counselor’s words should strengthen others (w90 3/15 27 ¶1-2)
 Job 19:2—Bildad’s unkind words caused Job to cry out in distress (w06 3/15 15 ¶6; w94 10/1 32)
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- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Job 19:20—What did Job mean by the expression “I escape with the skin of my teeth”? (w06 3/15 15 ¶1; it-2 977 ¶1)

Job 19:26—How could Job “see God,” since no human can see Jehovah? (w94 11/15 19 ¶17)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

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

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month’s Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play each sample presentation video, and then discuss the highlights. Encourage publishers to build their own presentation.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 42
- **“New Feature for Starting Conversations”:** (10 min.) Discussion. Encourage all to use “What Does the Bible Say?” to start conversations that may lead to a Bible study.
- **Questions From Readers:** (5 min.) Talk by an elder based on the February 15, 2015, *Watchtower*, page 30, paragraphs 4-6.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** *ia* chap. 12 ¶¶13-25, review on p. 107 (30 min.)
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Pleasant conversations on Scriptural topics often lead to Bible studies. Use this new feature to help many more to satisfy their spiritual hunger. —Mt 5:6.

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- 4 **Offer** the magazine
- 5 **Arrange** to return and discuss the second question



Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Presentations



AWAKE!

Offer: Here is your copy of the latest *Awake!*

Question: Notice the question here on page 2. May I ask your opinion?

Scripture: **Lu 7:35**

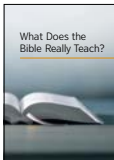
This article discusses how that principle applies to the Bible itself.

AWAKE!

Question: Would you agree that these are wise words to live by?

Scripture: **Mt 6:34**

Offer: [Open to the article “The Bible’s Viewpoint –Anxiety.”] This article shows how the Bible can help us deal with anxiety.



Bible Teach

Question: Many who believe in God would like to feel closer to him. Did you know that the Bible invites us to draw close to God?

Scripture: **Jas 4:8a**

Offer: This book is designed to help us learn more about God by means of the Bible. [Highlight chapter 1 of the *Bible Teach* book.]

BUILD YOUR OWN PRESENTATION

Question:

Scripture:

Offer:

42 *“Assist Those Who Are Weak”* (Acts 20:35)

1. Many are the weaknesses
 That we all possess.
 Still Jehovah cares for us,
 Loves us nonetheless.
He is so merciful;
 His love, so powerful.
 May we too display such love,
 Help those in distress.
2. ‘Who is weak, and I’m not weak?’
 Paul did empathize.
 With Christ’s blood we all were bought,
 Life to realize.
Weak ones to God belong,
 Hence he can make them strong.
 May we feel their pain and cares,
 Help them dry their eyes.
3. Rather than condemn the weak,
 We should bear in mind
 How much we can strengthen them
 By our being kind.
May we be diligent,
 Give them encouragement;
 As we lend our kind support,
 Comfort they will find.

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Is religion man-made?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that religion is a human invention; others think that God uses religion to help people draw close to him. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

There is a “religion that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father.” (James 1:27, footnote) Pure, or true, religion comes from God.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- To please God, a religion must be based on Bible truth.—John 4:23, 24.
- Religions based on human ideas are futile.—Mark 7:7, 8.

Is it necessary to belong to a religion?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking our meeting together.” (Hebrews 10:24, 25) God wants his worshippers to gather as an organized group.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- Those who worship God together should be united in belief.—1 Corinthians 1:10, 11.
- Members of the religion that God approves form a worldwide brotherhood.—1 Peter 2:17.



Please send me a copy of *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

For more information, see chapter 15 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

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Do secular sources support the existence of Pontius Pilate?

■ Pontius Pilate is known to Bible readers because of his role in Jesus' trial and execution. (Matt. 27:1, 2, 24-26) However, his name also appears a number of times in other contemporary historical records. According to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the dossier of secular historical references to him is "larger and more detailed than that of any other Roman governor of Judea."

Pilate's name appears most frequently in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, who chronicled three specific incidents relating to the difficulties Pilate experienced while governing Judea. A fourth incident was added by the Jewish historian Philo. The Roman writer Tacitus, who recorded the history of Rome's emperors, confirmed that Pontius Pilate ordered Jesus' execution during the reign of Tiberius.

In 1961, archaeologists working in the ancient Roman theater in Caesarea, Israel, found that a

reused stone slab clearly bore Pilate's name in Latin. The inscription (shown here) is fragmentary but is thought originally to have read: "To the honorable gods (this) Tiberieum Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judaea, had dedicated." The building referred to was likely a temple honoring the Roman Emperor Tiberius.



This stone slab was inscribed with Pilate's name in Latin

Photograph © Israel Museum, Jerusalem; courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority

Does a female Kingdom publisher need to wear a head covering if she conducts a Bible study in the presence of a male publisher?

■ In a "Questions From Readers" item published in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2002, it was stated that a sister should cover her head if she conducts a Bible study in the presence of a male publisher, whether he is baptized or not. Further consideration of the matter suggests that a modification to this direction is appropriate.

If the male publisher who accompanies the sister while she conducts an established Bible study is baptized, the sister would certainly want to wear a head covering. She thus shows respect for Jehovah's arrangement of headship within the

Christian congregation because she is fulfilling a role that would normally be the responsibility of the brother. (1 Cor. 11:5, 6, 10) Alternatively, she could ask the brother to conduct the study if he is qualified and able to do so.

On the other hand, if a sister is accompanied on an established Bible study by an *unbaptized* male publisher who is not her husband, she would not Scripturally be required to wear a head covering. Nevertheless, the conscience of some sisters may move them to wear a head covering even in such circumstances.

After all, Jehovah is “the God of all comfort.” (*Read 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.*) Did he comfort Elijah?

Jehovah Sustained His Prophet

¹³ How do you think Jehovah felt as he looked down from heaven and saw his beloved prophet lying under that tree in the wilderness and begging for death to take him? We do not have to guess. After Elijah sank into sleep, Jehovah sent an angel to him. The angel gently woke Elijah with a touch and said: “Rise up, eat.” Elijah did so, for the angel had kindly set out a simple meal for him—fresh, warm bread along with water. Did he even thank the angel? The record says only that the prophet ate and drank and went back to sleep. Was he too despondent to speak? At any rate, the angel woke him a second time, perhaps at dawn. Once more, he urged Elijah, “Rise up, eat,” and he added these remarkable words, “for the journey is too much for you.”—1 Ki. 19:5-7.

¹⁴ Thanks to God-given insight, the angel knew where Elijah was headed. He also knew that the jour-

13, 14. (a) How did Jehovah by means of an angel show loving concern for His troubled prophet? (b) Why is it comforting that Jehovah knows all about each one of us, including our limitations?

ney would be too much for Elijah to carry out in his own strength. What a comfort to serve a God who knows our goals and our limitations better than we do! (*Read Psalm 103:13, 14.*) How did Elijah benefit from that meal?

¹⁵ We read: “He rose up and ate and drank, and he kept going in the power of that nourishment for forty days and forty nights as far as the mountain of the true God, Horeb.” (1 Ki. 19:8) Like Moses some six centuries before him and Jesus nearly ten centuries after him, Elijah fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. (Ex. 34:28; Luke 4:1, 2) That one meal did not make all his problems go away, but it sustained him miraculously. Imagine that older man trudging through the trackless wilderness day after day, week after week, for nearly a month and a half!

¹⁶ Jehovah sustains his servants today as well, not with miraculous physical meals, but in a far more vital way. He provides for his servants spiritually. (Matt. 4:4) Learning about God from his Word and **15, 16. (a) What did nourishment from Jehovah enable Elijah to do? (b) Why should we appreciate the way that Jehovah sustains his servants today?**

from publications that are carefully based on the Bible sustains us spiritually. Taking in such spiritual nourishment may not make all our problems go away, but it can help us endure what might otherwise be unendurable. It also leads to “everlasting life.”—John 17:3.

¹⁷ Elijah walked nearly 200 miles until he finally reached Mount Horeb. It was a place of great significance, for there Jehovah God through an angel had long before appeared to Moses in the burning thornbush and there Jehovah had later made the Law covenant with Israel. Elijah found shelter in a cave.

How Jehovah Comforted and Strengthened His Prophet

¹⁸ At Horeb, Jehovah’s “word”—evidently delivered by a spirit messenger—posed this simple question: “What is your business here, Elijah?” The question was likely spoken in a gentle way, for Elijah took it as an invitation to pour out his feelings. And pour them out he did! He said: “I have been absolutely jealous for Jehovah the God of armies; for the sons

17. Where did Elijah go, and why was that place significant?

18, 19. (a) Jehovah’s spirit messenger posed what question, and how did Elijah respond? (b) Elijah revealed what three reasons for his low spirits?



Jehovah used his awesome power to comfort and encourage Elijah

of Israel have left your covenant, your altars they have torn down, and your prophets they have killed with the sword, so that I only am left; and they begin looking for my soul to take it away.” (1 Ki. 19:9, 10) Elijah’s words reveal at least three reasons for his low spirits.

¹⁹ First, Elijah felt that his work had been in vain. Despite years of being “absolutely jealous” in serving Jehovah, putting God’s sacred name and worship above all else, Elijah saw that conditions seemed only to have grown worse. The people were still faithless and rebellious, while false worship was running rampant. Second, Elijah felt alone. “I only am left,” he said, as if in that nation he were the last man who still served Jehovah. Third, Elijah was scared. Many of his fellow prophets had already been killed, and he was convinced that he was next. It may not have been easy for Elijah to admit to those feelings, but he did not let pride or embarrassment hold him back. By opening his heart to his God in prayer, he set a good example for all faithful people.—Ps. 62:8.

²⁰ How did Jehovah address Elijah’s fears and concerns? The angel told Elijah to stand at the mouth of the cave. He obeyed, not knowing what was in store. A mighty wind sprang up! It must have emitted a deafening roar, for it was so powerful that it tore mountains and crags apart. Picture Elijah trying to shield his eyes while clinging to his heavy, rustic garment of hair as the gusts whipped it about him. Then he had to struggle to keep his footing, for the very earth began to heave and toss—an earthquake shook the region! He had barely recovered when a great fire swept through, forcing him back into the cave to shield himself from the searing heat.—1 Ki. 19:11, 12.

²¹ In each case, the account reminds us that Jehovah was not to be found within these spectacular displays of nature’s power. Elijah knew that Jehovah was not some mythical nature god such as Baal, who was hailed by his deluded worshippers as “the rider of the clouds,” or bringer of rains. Jehovah is the real

20, 21. (a) Describe what Elijah witnessed from the mouth of the cave on Mount Horeb. (b) What did Jehovah’s displays of power teach Elijah?

Source of all the awesome power found in nature, but he is also vastly greater than anything he has made. Even the physical heavens cannot contain him! (1 Ki. 8:27) How did all of this help Elijah? Remember his fear. With a God like Jehovah on his side, a God who had all that overwhelming power at His disposal, Elijah had nothing to fear from Ahab and Jezebel!—*Read Psalm 118:6.*

²² After the fire was gone, a hush fell and Elijah heard “a calm, low voice.” It invited Elijah to express himself again, and he did so, pouring out his concerns a second time.* Perhaps that brought him further relief. Undoubtedly, though, Elijah found even more comfort in what the “calm, low voice” told him next. Jehovah reassured Elijah that he was far from

* The source of this “calm, low voice” may have been the same spirit who was used to deliver “Jehovah’s word” mentioned at 1 Kings 19:9. In verse 15, this spirit is referred to simply as “Jehovah.” We might be reminded of the spirit emissary whom Jehovah used to guide Israel in the wilderness and of whom God said: “My name is within him.” (Ex. 23:21) We cannot be dogmatic on this point, of course, but it is worth noting that in his prehuman existence, Jesus served as “the Word,” the special Spokesman to Jehovah’s servants.—John 1:1.

22. (a) How did the “calm, low voice” reassure Elijah that he was far from worthless? (b) Who might have been the source of the “calm, low voice”? (See footnote.)

worthless. How so? God revealed much of his long-range purpose regarding the war against Baal worship in Israel. Clearly, Elijah's work had not been in vain, for God's purpose was moving inexorably forward. Furthermore, Elijah still figured in that purpose, for Jehovah sent him back to work with some specific instructions.—1 Ki. 19:12-17.

²³ What about Elijah's feelings of loneliness? Jehovah did two things about that. First, he told Elijah to anoint Elisha as the prophet who would eventually succeed him. This younger man would become Elijah's companion and helper for a number of years. How practical that comfort was! Second, Jehovah revealed this thrilling news: "I have let seven thousand remain in Israel, all the knees that have not bent down to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Ki. 19:18) Elijah was far from alone. It must have warmed his heart to hear of those thousands of faithful people who refused to worship Baal. They needed Elijah to keep up his faithful service, to set an example of unshakable loyalty to Jehovah in
23. In what two ways did Jehovah address Elijah's feelings of loneliness?

those dark times. Elijah must have been deeply touched to hear those words through Jehovah's messenger, the "calm, low voice" of his God.

²⁴ Like Elijah, we may be awestruck by the immense natural forces evident in creation, and rightly so. Creation vividly reflects the power of the Creator. (Rom. 1:20) Jehovah still loves to use his limitless might to help his faithful servants. (2 Chron. 16:9) However, God speaks most fully to us through the pages of his Word, the Bible. (***Read Isaiah 30:21.***) In a sense, the Bible can be like that "calm, low voice" if we let it guide us today. In its precious pages, Jehovah corrects us, encourages us, and reassures us of his love.

²⁵ Did Elijah accept the comfort Jehovah gave him on Mount Horeb? Without a doubt! Soon he was back in action, once more the bold, faithful prophet who stood up against the wickedness of false worship. If we likewise take to heart the inspired words of God, "the comfort from the Scriptures," we will be able to imitate the faith of Elijah.—Rom. 15:4.

24, 25. (a) In what sense can we listen to Jehovah's "calm, low voice" today? (b) Why can we be sure that Elijah accepted the comfort Jehovah gave him?

TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- What events led Elijah to become very low in spirits?
- What feelings contributed to Elijah's discouragement?
- In what ways did Jehovah comfort Elijah?
- How will you imitate Elijah if you ever become discouraged?

"This Is the Way"

(Isaiah 30:20, 21)

1. There is a way of peace,
The way you've come to know.
It is the way you learned,
The way of long ago,
The way that Jesus taught you
When his voice you heard.
This is the way of peace,
Found in Jehovah's Word.

(CHORUS)

*This is the Way to life; This is the Way.
Don't look aside; Not for a moment stray!
God's voice is calling: 'This is the Way;
Do not look back, for yes, This is the Way.'*

2. There is a way of love,
No need to look around.
God's voice has shown the way
He lets himself be found.
His love is full and good;
His love is warm and true.
This is the way of love;
It touches all we do.

(Chorus)

3. There is a way of life,
No need to look behind.
Our God has promised us:
No better way we'll find,
No higher way to peace,
No finer way to love.
This is the way to life,
Thanks to our God above.

(Chorus)

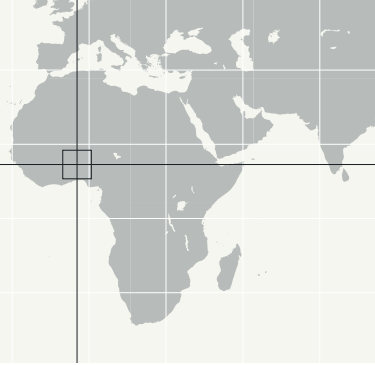
FEBRUARY 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 4–MAY 1, 2016



COVER IMAGE:

BENIN

In Hétin, a village in a marshy area, most houses are on stilts and pirogues are the main means of transportation. The 215 publishers and 28 pioneers in three congregations there were delighted that 1,600 attended the Memorial in 2014

POPULATION

10,703,000

PUBLISHERS

12,167

REGULAR PIONEERS

1,492

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in His Service

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Jehovah Called Him “My Friend”

13 WEEK OF APRIL 11-17
Imitate Jehovah’s Close Friends

These articles will help us to build a stronger friendship with Jehovah God. In the first article, we will focus on the example of Abraham. In the second, we will discuss the examples of Ruth, Hezekiah, and Jesus’ mother, Mary.

18 Keep On Serving Jehovah With Joy

21 WEEK OF APRIL 18-24
Prove Yourself Loyal to Jehovah

26 WEEK OF APRIL 25–MAY 1
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In these articles, we will examine Bible accounts of King David and his contemporaries. These narratives illustrate principles that can help us to prove loyal to Jehovah in the face of challenging circumstances.

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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91 *My Father, My God and Friend* (Hebrews 6:10)

1. Life in this world can be hard.

Life in this world can bring tears and pain.
Still ev'ry day I will say,
"My life is not in vain."

(CHORUS)

*For God is not unrighteous,
And he remembers the love I've shown.
So he is ever near me;
With Jehovah, I'm not alone.
Yes, God is my provider
and my protector down to the end.
Yes, Jehovah is my Father,
My God and Friend.*

2. Gone are the days of my youth;
Days of calamity now are here.
Still through the eyes of my faith,
My hope is bright and clear.

(Chorus)



Jehovah Called Him “My Friend”

“You, O Israel, are my servant, you, O Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham my friend.”—ISA. 41:8.

SONGS: 91, 22

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How did knowledge and experience strengthen Abraham’s faith?

What did Abraham do to strengthen his friendship with God?

How can you imitate Abraham in building a friendship with Jehovah?

FROM the cradle to the grave, our greatest need is love. Humans do need and crave love—and not just the romantic kind. We hunger for friendship and connection with others. But there is one kind of love that we need more than any other—Jehovah’s love. Many find it hard to imagine that humans could acquire a close, loving friendship with Almighty God, an invisible Spirit in heaven. Do we share such skepticism? Far from it!

² The Bible shows that imperfect humans have become friends with God. Their examples are worth contemplating, for building such a friendship is the most worthwhile goal we could pursue in life. An outstanding example of a man who cultivated such a friendship was Abraham. **(Read James 2: 23.)** How did Abraham draw so close to Jehovah? A key ingredient in that friendship was faith. In fact, the Bible calls

1, 2. (a) How do we know that humans can become God’s friends?
(b) What will we consider in this article?

Abraham “the father of all those having faith.” (Rom. 4:11) So let us see how Abraham’s faith led him to a close friendship with God. And each of us may well ask, ‘How can I imitate Abraham’s faith and strengthen my friendship with Jehovah?’

HOW DID ABRAHAM BECOME JEHOVAH’S FRIEND?

³ Picture an elderly man trudging up a mountainside. He is making what must be the hardest journey of his life. It is not his age that makes this trek so daunting. Abraham may be about 125 years old, but he is still vigorous.^[1] Following him is a younger man, perhaps 25 years of age. It is his son Isaac, who is carrying firewood. Abraham has a knife and the means to start a fire. Jehovah has asked him to sacrifice his own son!—Gen. 22:1-8.

⁴ Abraham was facing what was likely the greatest test of his faith. There are those who say that God was cruel for asking such a thing of Abraham, and some imply that Abraham’s obedience was blind and unfeeling. They take that position because they have neither the faith nor the understanding of how faith works. (1 Cor. 2:14-16) Abraham did not obey God blindly. Instead, he obeyed because he could see. With eyes of genuine faith, he saw that his heavenly Father, Jehovah, never asks His faithful servants to do anything that will result in their lasting harm. Abraham *knew* that if he obeyed Jehovah, his God would bless him and his beloved son. On what was that faith based? On knowledge and experience.

3, 4. (a) Describe what was likely Abraham’s greatest test of faith. (b) Why was Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac?

⁵ *Knowledge.* Though he grew up in Ur, a Chaldean city rife with idolatry, Abraham came to know about Jehovah. How did that happen, considering that his own father, Terah, was an idolater? (Josh. 24:2) The Bible does not say specifically, but it reveals that Abraham was of the ninth generation descended from Shem, one of Noah’s sons and a man of great faith. Shem lived until Abraham was about 150 years old. We do not know for certain if Abraham learned about Jehovah from Shem. However, it seems safe to assume that Shem passed on to his family what he knew about Jehovah. Somehow that knowledge reached Abraham and touched his heart. He came to love the God he learned about, and that knowledge helped him to build faith.

⁶ *Experience.* How did Abraham acquire experience that strengthened his faith in Jehovah? It has been said that thoughts lead to feelings and feelings lead to actions. What Abraham learned about God produced in him a profound awe and heartfelt respect for “Jehovah the Most High God, Maker of heaven and earth.” (Gen. 14:22) The Bible calls that feeling “godly fear,” and it is essential to building a close friendship with God. (Heb. 5:7; Ps. 25:14) Such godly fear moved Abraham to action.

⁷ God directed elderly Abraham and Sarah to leave Ur and move to a foreign land. They would live in tents for the rest of their days. By obeying, Abraham opened the way for Jehovah to bless and protect him. For example,

5. How may Abraham have learned about Jehovah, and how did that knowledge make him feel?

6, 7. How did Abraham’s experiences strengthen his faith?

ABRAHAM'S FRIENDSHIP WITH JEHOVAH

Abraham and Sarah come to know and worship Jehovah



Abraham obeys God and leaves Ur

Jehovah protects Abraham and Sarah during their journey

Abraham obediently circumcises all males of his household

WHILE LIVING IN UR

EN ROUTE TO CANAAN

Abraham feared that his beautiful wife, Sarah, would be taken away from him and that he would be killed. His fears were well-founded, but Abraham did not let such concerns sidetrack him from obeying Jehovah. More than once, Jehovah stepped in and protected Abraham and Sarah, even doing so miraculously. (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:2-7, 10-12, 17, 18) Those experiences strengthened Abraham's faith.

⁸ Can we build a friendship with Jehovah? We can indeed! The needed knowledge and experience are readily available. Abraham had only a fraction of the abundant riches of wisdom now contained in the Bible. (Dan. 12:4; Rom. 11:33) God's Word is full of treasures that can deepen our knowledge about the "Maker of heaven and earth" and help us to build respect and love for him. As such feelings move us to obey God, we gain experience because we see how obeying him works out. We find that his counsel protects us and that he blesses and strengthens us. We learn that wholehearted service to God brings fulfillment, peace, and joy. (Ps. 34:8; Prov. 10:22) As we grow in such knowledge and experience, our faith in Jehovah and our friendship with him grow as well.

8. How can we gain knowledge and experience that will strengthen our friendship with Jehovah?

HOW ABRAHAM MAINTAINED HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

⁹ A friendship can be a precious treasure. (**Read Proverbs 17:17.**) However, friendship is not like an inanimate thing that we might purchase and then store somewhere to gather dust. Friendship is more like a living thing that needs care and sustenance if it is to thrive and flourish. Abraham cherished and maintained his friendship with Jehovah. How did he do so?

¹⁰ Abraham never came to feel that his past record of godly fear and obedience was enough. As he and his large household traveled into Canaan, he continued to let Jehovah guide him in making decisions, from the small to the great. A year before Isaac was born, when Abraham was 99 years old, Jehovah required that all males of Abraham's household be circumcised. Did Abraham question that command or look for some way out of complying with it? No, he trusted in God and obeyed "on that very day."—Gen. 17:10-14, 23.

¹¹ Because he made it a practice to

9, 10. (a) What is needed for a friendship to become stronger? (b) What shows that Abraham cherished and strengthened his friendship with Jehovah?

11. Why was Abraham concerned about Sodom and Gomorrah, and how did Jehovah help him?

Jehovah patiently listens to Abraham's concerns regarding Sodom

Jehovah enables elderly Abraham and Sarah to have a son

Showing great faith, Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac

Abraham dies "at a good old age, old and satisfied"



WHILE LIVING IN CANAAN

obey Jehovah even in seemingly minor matters, Abraham kept his friendship with God healthy and flourishing. He felt free to open his heart to Jehovah, asking for help as he struggled with hard questions. For example, when he learned that God was going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham was concerned that righteous people might be swept away along with the wicked. Perhaps Abraham was worried about his nephew Lot and his family, who were then living in Sodom. Abraham asked his questions with great humility and trust in God, "the Judge of all the earth." Jehovah patiently taught Abraham how merciful He is, reading every heart and looking for righteous ones to preserve, even in times of judgment.—Gen. 18:22-33.

¹² No doubt, every bit of knowledge and experience helped Abraham maintain his close friendship with Jehovah. Later, when he faced a challenging test—Jehovah's request that he sacrifice his son Isaac—Abraham was able to reflect on the kind of Person he knew his heavenly Friend to be. So let us return to that faithful man as he trudged up the slope in the land of Moriah. Did he believe that Jehovah would suddenly change

and become harsh and merciless? To Abraham, that was inconceivable! How do we know?

¹³ Before parting from the servants who accompanied them, Abraham said: "You stay here with the donkey, but *the boy and I* will go over there and worship and *return to you*." (Gen. 22:5) What did Abraham mean? Was he lying to his servants, telling them that Isaac would return when Abraham knew that Isaac was to be sacrificed? No. The Bible gives us some insight into what Abraham was thinking. **(Read Hebrews 11:19.)** Abraham "reasoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead." Yes, Abraham believed in the resurrection. He knew that Jehovah had revived his reproductive powers and those of Sarah in their old age. (Heb. 11:11, 12, 18) Abraham realized that nothing was impossible for Jehovah. So he was confident that whatever happened on that challenging day, his beloved son would be restored to him so that all of Jehovah's promises could be fulfilled. No wonder Abraham is called "the father of all those having faith"!

¹⁴ What about us? True, God does not make such requests of us today. But he does ask us to obey him even

12, 13. (a) How did Abraham's knowledge and experience help him later? (b) What shows that Abraham had confidence in Jehovah?

14. What challenges do you face in serving Jehovah, and how may Abraham's example help you?

when his commands are hard for us to comply with or we cannot comprehend the reasons for them. Can you think of something that God asks of you that you find difficult to do? For some, it may be the preaching work. Perhaps they struggle with shyness, making it hard for them to approach strangers with the good news. For others, it may be the challenge of standing out as different, perhaps at school or in the workplace. (Ex. 23:2; 1 Thess. 2:2) Do you ever feel like Abraham, as if you are trudging up that slope in Moriah, facing a task that seems beyond you? If you do, take courage from Abraham and his faith! Meditating on examples of faithful men and women can move us to imitate them and draw close to Jehovah as our Friend.—Heb. 12:1, 2.

A FRIENDSHIP THAT BRINGS BLESSINGS

¹⁵ Do you think that Abraham ever regretted his loyal obedience to Jehovah? Note how the Bible describes the end of his life: “Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, old and satisfied.” (Gen. 25:8) When Abraham was 175 years of age, his strength finally failed him, but he was able to look back with satisfaction on a life well lived. It was a life that remained centered on his friendship with Jehovah God. However, when we read that Abraham was “old and satisfied,” let us not conclude that he had had his fill of life, so to speak, and had no desire to live in the future.

¹⁶ The Bible says of Abraham: “He was awaiting the city having real founda-

15. Why may we be sure that Abraham never regretted his loyal obedience to Jehovah?

16. What joys will Abraham experience in Paradise?

tions, whose designer and builder is God.” (Heb. 11:10) Abraham believed that one day he would see that city, the Kingdom of God, ruling over this earth—and he will! Can you imagine how thrilled Abraham will be to live in the earthly Paradise and go on strengthening his friendship with Jehovah? How touched he will be to learn that his example of faith helped Jehovah’s servants throughout thousands of years after his death! In Paradise he will even learn that the way Isaac was restored to him was “illustrative” of something far greater. (Heb. 11:19) And he will learn that the pain he suffered as he prepared to sacrifice Isaac has helped millions of faithful people to imagine Jehovah’s own pain as he provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as the ransom. (John 3:16) Abraham’s example has helped us all to have even more appreciation for the ransom, the greatest act of love ever performed in all history!

¹⁷ May each of us be determined to imitate the faith of Abraham. As we continue to get to know Jehovah better, we establish a record of integrity with him and gain more experience with respect to the rewards of loyal service to him. **(Read Hebrews 6:10-12.)** May Jehovah be our Friend forever! In the following article, we will consider three more examples of faithful ones who became close friends of God.

17. What is your determination, and what will we consider in the following article?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 3) This man and his wife were originally called Abram and Sarai, but in this article we will refer to them by the names Jehovah later gave them—Abraham and Sarah.

1. Jehovah God is my Shepherd;
So why should I fear or fret?
For he who cares for his sheep so much
Will none of his own forget.
By quiet waters he leads me,
My soul does restore and bless.
He guides my steps for his own name's sake
In pathways of righteousness.
He guides my steps for his own name's sake
In pathways of righteousness.
2. Alone in depths of deep shadow,
I walk, yet I fear no harm.
For my Great Shepherd is always near;
His staff keeps me from alarm.
My head with oil he refreshes;
My cup he has filled up well.
His loving-kindness will follow me,
And there in his house I'll dwell.
His loving-kindness will follow me,
And there in his house I'll dwell.
3. How wise and loving my Shepherd!
His praises with joy I sing.
The cheering news of his tender care
To sheeplike ones I will bring.
His Word I'll faithfully follow,
Walk carefully in his way.
My glorious treasure of serving him,
I'll gratefully use each day.
My glorious treasure of serving him,
I'll gratefully use each day.