

- Song 67 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Will Not Reject a Broken Heart”:** (10 min.)
Ps 51:1-4—David deeply regretted that he had sinned against Jehovah (w93 3/15 10-11 ¶9-13)
Ps 51:7-9—David needed Jehovah’s forgiveness to regain his joy (w93 3/15 12-13 ¶18-20)
Ps 51:10-17—David knew that Jehovah would forgive a truly repentant person (w15 6/15 14 ¶6; w93 3/15 14-17 ¶4-16)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Ps 45:4—What is the greatest truth that must be defended? (w14 2/15 5 ¶11)

Ps 48:12, 13—What obligation do these verses place on us? (w15 7/15 9 ¶13)

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:** (4 min. or less) Ps 49:10–50:6

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) g16.3 10-11
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) g16.3 10-11
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) fg lesson 3 ¶1
—Conclude by introducing the jw.org video *Who Is the Author of the Bible?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 98
- **“The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting”:** (15 min.)
Questions and answers. Begin by playing the jw.org video *The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting* up to the section “An Education in One Day.” (Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) ia chap. 18 ¶1-13
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 109 and Prayer

PSALMS 45-51 | Jehovah Will Not Reject a Broken Heart

Psalm 51 was written by David after the prophet Nathan called attention to David’s grave sin with Bath-sheba. David’s conscience struck him, and he humbly confessed.—2Sa 12:1-14.

51:3, 4, 8-12, 17

David had sinned but spiritual recovery was still possible

- Before he repented and confessed, his conscience made him miserable
- He suffered such agony over God’s disapproval that he felt like a man whose bones were crushed
- He longed for forgiveness, spiritual recovery, and the joy that he had previously experienced
- He humbly begged Jehovah to help him develop a willingness to obey
- He was confident of Jehovah’s forgiveness



Pray to Jehovah Each Day

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

E♭ Eb/G A♭6 B♭7 E♭ma7 E♭ G/D C♯m

Pray to Je - ho - vah, the Hear - er of prayer. This is our
 Pray to Je - ho - vah, give thanks that we live, Ask - ing for -
 Pray to Je - ho - vah when trou - bles ap - pear. He is our

F♯m/A♭ B♭7 E♭ A♭ B♭7/A♭ G♯m7 E♭/G G7/B

priv - lege, for his name we bear. O - pen your heart as you
 give - ness as we do for - give. May we con - fess to our
 Fa - ther and ev - er so near. Seek his pro - tec - tion, and

C♯m B♭/F F7 B♭7 F♯m7/C B♭7/D E♭ E♭/G A♭6 B♭7

would to a friend, Trust that on Him you can al - ways de -
 God whom we trust. He is our Mak - er and knows we are
 look for his aid; Al - ways be trust - ing and nev - er a -

B♭m6/Db C7 F♯m C7+5/F F♯m7 B♭7 E♭sus4 E♭ B♭7sus4 E♭

pend. Pray to Je - ho - vah each day.
 dust. Pray to Je - ho - vah each day.
 fraid. Pray to Je - ho - vah each day.

23 Rouse yourself. Why do you keep sleeping, O Jehovah?^a Awake! Do not keep casting us off forever.^b

24 Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and our oppression?

25 For we^{*} have been brought down to the dust; Our bodies are pressed to the ground.^c

26 Rise up as our helper!^d Rescue^{*} us because of your loyal love.^e

To the director; set to "The Lilies." Of the sons of Kor'ah.^f Mas'kil.^{*} A song of love.

45 My heart is stirred by something good.

I say: "My song is^{*} about a king."^g

May my tongue be the stylus^h of a skilled copyist.^{ai}

2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Gracious speech flows from your lips.^j

That is why God has blessed you forever.^k

3 Strap your sword^l on your side, O mighty one,^m In your dignity and your splendor.ⁿ

4 And in your splendor go on to victory;^o Ride in the cause of truth and humility and righteousness.^p

And your right hand will accomplish^q awe-inspiring things.

5 Your arrows are sharp, making peoples fall before you;^q They pierce the hearts of the king's enemies.^r

44:25 *Or "our souls." **44:26** *Lit., "Redeem." **45:Sup** *See Glossary. **45:1** *Lit., "My works are." *Or "pen." [^]Or "scribe." **45:4** *Or "success." #Lit., "teach you."

CHAP. 44

a Ps 7:6
Ps 78:65, 66

b Job 13:24
Ps 13:1
Ps 88:14

c Ps 119:25

d Ps 33:20

e Ps 130:7

CHAP. 45

f 2Ch 20:19

g Ps 2:6

h Isa 8:1

i 2Sa 23:2
Ezr 7:6

j Joh 7:46

k Ps 72:17

l Re 1:16
Re 19:15

m Isa 9:6

n Heb 1:3

o Re 6:2

p Re 19:11

q Ps 2:9
2Th 1:7, 8

r Re 17:14
Re 19:19

Second Col.

a Ps 89:29, 36

b Isa 11:4
Jer 33:15
Heb 1:8, 9

c Heb 7:26

d Mt 7:23

e Isa 61:1
Ac 10:38

f Ps 21:6

g Isa 13:12

6 God is your throne forever and ever;^a

The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.^{*b}

7 You loved righteousness,^c and you hated wickedness.^d

That is why God, your God, has anointed you^e with the oil of exaltation^f more than your companions.

8 All your garments are scented with myrrh and aloeswood and cassia;

From the grand ivory palace, stringed instruments make you rejoice.

9 The daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor.

The royal consort^{*} has taken her stand at your right hand, adorned in gold of O'phir.^g

10 Listen, O daughter, pay attention and incline your ear;

Forget your people and your father's house.

11 And the king will long for your beauty,

For he is your lord, So bow down to him.

12 The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift;

The wealthiest of men will seek your favor.^{*}

13 Inside the palace^{*} the king's daughter is absolutely magnificent;

Her clothing is adorned with[#] gold.

14 She will be brought to the king in richly woven garments.^{*}

45:6 *Or "justice." **45:9** *Or "The queen." **45:12** *Or "soften your face." **45:13** *Lit., "house." #Lit., "with settings of." **45:14** *Or possibly, "in embroidered robes."

The virgin companions following her are brought in before you.

15 They will be brought with rejoicing and joy; they will enter into the king's palace.

16 Your sons will take the place of your forefathers. You will appoint them as princes in all the earth.^a

17 I will make your name known throughout all generations to come.^b

That is why peoples will praise you forever and ever.

To the director.
Of the sons of Kor'ah.^c
According to the Al'a-moth style.*
A song.

46 God is our refuge and strength,^d

A help that is readily found in times of distress.^e

2 That is why we will not fear, though the earth undergoes change,

Though the mountains topple into the depths of the sea,^f

3 Though its waters roar and foam over,^g

Though the mountains rock on account of its turbulence. (*Selah*)

4 There is a river the streams of which make the city of God rejoice,^h

The holy grand tabernacle of the Most High.

5 God is in the city;ⁱ it cannot be overthrown.

God will come to its aid at the break of dawn.^j

6 The nations were in an uproar, the kingdoms were overthrown;

He raised his voice, and the earth melted.^k

7 Jehovah of armies is with us;^l

46:Sup * See Glossary.

CHAP. 45

a Isa 32:1

b Ps 72:17

CHAP. 46

c 2Ch 20:19

d Pr 14:26
Isa 25:4

e De 4:7
Ps 145:18, 19
Na 1:7

f Isa 54:10

g Ps 93:4
Jer 5:22

h 2Ch 6:6

i De 23:14
Ps 132:13
Isa 12:6

j Ex 14:24

k Jos 2:24

l Jos 1:9
Jer 1:19
Ro 8:31

Second Col.

a Isa 11:9
Mic 4:3

b Isa 2:11

c 1Ch 29:11

d 2Ch 20:17

e Ps 48:3
Ps 125:2

CHAP. 47

f 2Ch 20:19

g Ps 76:12

h Ps 22:28

i De 33:29

j De 9:5

k De 7:6
Mal 1:2

The God of Jacob is our secure refuge.* (*Selah*)

8 Come and witness the activities of Jehovah, How he has done astonishing things on the earth.

9 He is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth.^a He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the military wagons* with fire.

10 "Give in and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations;^b

I will be exalted in the earth."^c

11 Jehovah of armies is with us;^d

The God of Jacob is a secure refuge for us.^e (*Selah*)

To the director.
Of the sons of Kor'ah.^f A melody.

47 All you peoples, clap your hands.

Shout in triumph to God with joyful cries.

2 For Jehovah the Most High is awe-inspiring;^g

He is the great King over all the earth.^h

3 He subdues peoples under us;

He puts nations under our feet.ⁱ

4 He chooses our inheritance for us,^j

The pride of Jacob, whom he loves.^k (*Selah*)

5 God has ascended amid joyful shouting;

Jehovah, amid the sound of the horn.*

6 Sing praises* to God, sing praises.

Sing praises to our King, sing praises.

46:7 *Or "secure height." **46:9** *Or possibly, "the shields." **47:5** *Or "ram's horn; trumpet." **47:6** *Or "Make music."

- 7 For God is King of all the earth;^a
Sing praises, and show insight.
- 8 God has become King over the nations.^b
God sits on his holy throne.
- 9 The leaders of the peoples have gathered together
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For the rulers* of the earth belong to God.
He is highly exalted.^c

A song.

A melody of the sons of Kor'ah.^d

48 Jehovah is great and most worthy of praise

In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.

- 2 Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth,^e
Is Mount Zion in the far north,
The city of the Grand King.^f
- 3 In her fortified towers,
God has made known that he is a secure refuge.^g
- 4 For look! kings have assembled;*
Together they have advanced.
- 5 When they saw it, they were amazed.
They panicked and fled in terror.
- 6 Trembling seized them there,
Anguish like that of a woman giving birth.
- 7 With an east wind you wreck the ships of Tar'shish.
- 8 What we heard about, we have now seen for ourselves
In the city of Jehovah of armies, in the city of our God.
God will firmly establish it forever.^h (*Selah*)

47:9 *Lit., "shields." 48:3 *Or "secure height." 48:4 *Or "met by appointment."

CHAP. 47

a Jer 10:7
Zec 14:9

b 1Ch 16:31
Ps 96:10
Ps 97:1
Re 19:6

c Ps 97:9

CHAP. 48

d 2Ch 20:19

e La 2:15

f Ps 47:8
Ps 135:21
Mt 5:34, 35

g Ps 125:1

h Ps 87:5
Isa 2:2
Mic 4:1

Second Col.

a Ps 26:3
Ps 40:10
Ps 63:3

b Ps 113:3

c Ps 17:7
Ps 60:5
Ps 98:2

d Ps 78:68

e Ps 97:8

f Ne 12:38, 39

g Isa 26:1

h Ps 31:14

i Isa 58:11

CHAP. 49

j 2Ch 20:19

k Ps 143:5

l Ps 27:1

- 9 We ponder your loyal love,
O God,^a
Within your temple.
- 10 Like your name, O God, your praise
Reaches to the ends of the earth.^b
Your right hand is filled with righteousness.^c
- 11 May Mount Zion^d rejoice,
May the towns* of Judah
be joyful, because of your judgments.^e
- 12 March around Zion; go all around it;
Count its towers.^f
- 13 Set your hearts upon its ramparts.*^g
Inspect its fortified towers,
So that you may tell about it to future generations.
- 14 For this God is our God^h forever and ever.
He will guide us forevermore.*ⁱ

To the director.
Of the sons of Kor'ah. / A melody.

49 Hear this, all you peoples.
Pay attention, all you inhabitants of the world,*

- 2 Both small and great,*
Rich and poor alike.
- 3 My own mouth will speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart^k will show understanding.
- 4 I will pay attention to a proverb;
I will expound my riddle with the harp.
- 5 Why should I fear during times of trouble,^l
When I am surrounded by the evil* of those trying to overthrow me?

48:11 *Lit., "daughters." 48:13 *Or "fortified walls." 48:14 *Or possibly, "until we die." 49:1 *Or "system of things." 49:2 *Lit., "both sons of humankind as well as sons of man." 49:5 *Lit., "error."

- 6 Those who are trusting in their wealth^a
And who boast about their great riches,^b
- 7 None of them can ever redeem a brother
Or give to God a ransom for him,^c
- 8 (The ransom* price for their life[#] is so precious
That it is always beyond their reach);
- 9 That he should live forever and not see the pit.^{*d}
- 10 He sees that even wise people die;
The stupid and the unreasoning perish together,^e
And they must leave their wealth to others.^f
- 11 Their inner wish is that their houses will last forever,
Their tents to generation after generation.
They have named their estates after themselves.
- 12 But man, although honored, will not remain;^g
He is no better than the beasts that perish.^h
- 13 This is the way of the stupid onesⁱ
And of those who follow them, who take pleasure in their empty words. (*Selah*)
- 14 They are assigned like sheep to the Grave.*
Death will shepherd them;
The upright will rule over them^j in the morning.
Every trace of them will fade away;^k
The Grave^{*l} rather than a palace will be their home.^m
- 15 But God will redeem me[#] from the power[^] of the Grave,^{*n}

49:8 *Or "redemption." #Or "soul."
49:9 *Or "grave." 49:14, 15 *Or "Sheol," that is, the common grave of mankind. See Glossary. 49:15 #Or "my soul." ^Lit., "hand."

CHAP. 49

- a De 8:17, 18
Pr 18:11
- b Jer 9:23
1Ti 6:17
- c Pr 11:4
Mt 16:26
- d Ps 89:48
- e Ec 2:16
Ro 5:12
- f Ps 39:6
Pr 11:4
Pr 23:4
Ec 2:18
Lu 12:19, 20
- g Ps 39:5
Jas 1:11
- h Ps 49:20
- i Lu 12:19, 20
- j Mal 4:3
- k Ps 39:11
- l Job 24:19
- m 1Sa 2:6
Job 7:9
- n Job 33:28
Ps 16:10
Ps 30:3
Ps 86:13

Second Col.

- a Job 1:21
Ec 5:15
1Ti 6:17
- b Isa 10:3
- c Lu 12:19
- d Pr 14:20
- e Ps 49:12

CHAP. 50

- f 1Ch 25:1
- g Ps 95:3
- h Ps 48:2
La 2:15
- i Isa 65:6
- j Ex 19:18
Da 7:9, 10
Heb 12:29
- k Ps 97:3, 4
- l De 30:19
De 32:1
Isa 1:2
- m Mic 6:2
- n Ex 24:8
- o Ps 75:7

For he will take hold of me.
(*Selah*)

- 16 Do not be afraid because a man becomes rich,
Because the splendor of his house increases,
- 17 For when he dies he can take nothing with him;^a
His splendor will not go down with him.^b
- 18 For during his lifetime he congratulates himself.^{*c}
(People praise you when you prosper.)^d
- 19 But he finally joins the generation of his forefathers.
They will never again see the light.
- 20 A man who does not understand this, although honored,^e
Is no better than the beasts that perish.

A melody of A'saph.^f

- 50** The God of gods,
Jehovah,^{*g} has spoken;
He summons the earth
From the rising of the sun
until its setting.[#]
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,^h God shines forth.
- 3 Our God will come and cannot remain silent.ⁱ
Before him is a consuming fire,^j
And a great storm rages all around him.^k
- 4 He summons the heavens above and the earth,^l
So as to judge his people:^m
- 5 "Gather to me my loyal ones,
Those making a covenant with me over sacrifice."ⁿ
- 6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
For God himself is Judge.^o
(*Selah*)

49:18 *Or "his soul." 50:1 *Or "The Divine One, God, Jehovah." #Or "From east to west."

- 7 "Listen, O my people, and I will speak;
Israel, I will bear witness against you.^a
I am God, your God.^b
- 8 I do not reprove you because of your sacrifices,
Nor because of your whole burnt offerings that are constantly before me.^c
- 9 I do not need to take a bull from your house,
Nor goats* from your pens.^d
- 10 For every wild animal of the forest is mine,^e
Even the beasts upon a thousand mountains.
- 11 I know every bird of the mountains;^f
The countless animals of the field are mine.
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
For the productive land and everything in it is mine.^g
- 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls
And drink the blood of goats?^h
- 14 Offer thanksgiving as your sacrifice to God,ⁱ
And pay your vows to the Most High;^j
- 15 Call on me in the time of distress.^k
I will rescue you, and you will glorify me."^l
- 16 But God will say to the wicked:
"What right do you have to relate my regulations^m
Or to speak about my covenant?ⁿ
- 17 For you hate discipline,^{*}
And you keep turning your back on my words."^o
- 18 When you see a thief, you approve of him,^{*p}

50:9 *Lit., "male goats." 50:17 *Or "instruction." ^aLit., "throwing my words behind you." 50:18 *Or possibly, "you join him."

CHAP. 50

- a Ne 9:30
Ps 81:8
b Ex 20:2
c 1Sa 15:22
Isa 1:11
Jer 7:22, 23
Ho 6:6
d Mic 6:7
e 1Ch 29:14
Ac 17:24
f Job 38:41
g De 10:14
Job 41:11
1Co 10:26
h Mic 6:6-8
i Ps 69:30, 31
Pr 21:3
Ho 6:6
Heb 13:15
j De 23:21
Ps 76:11
Ec 5:4
k 2Ch 33:12, 13
Ps 91:15
l Ps 22:21-23
Ps 50:23
m Jer 7:4
Mt 7:22, 23
Ro 2:21
n De 31:20
Heb 8:9
o Ne 9:26
Isa 5:24
p Isa 5:22, 23

Second Col.

- a Jer 9:5
b Le 19:16
c Ps 50:4
Ec 12:14
d Ps 9:17
Jer 2:32
Ho 4:6
e 1Th 5:18
Heb 13:15
f Mic 6:8

CHAP. 51

- g 2Sa 11:3
h Nu 14:18
Ps 25:7
Ps 41:4
i Ps 103:13
Pr 28:13
Isa 43:25
Isa 44:22
j Isa 1:18
1Co 6:11
k Heb 9:13, 14
1Jo 1:7
l Ps 32:5
Ps 40:12
m Ge 39:9
2Sa 12:13
n 2Sa 12:9
Ps 38:18

And you keep company with adulterers.

- 19 You use your mouth to spread what is bad,
And deception is attached to your tongue.^a
- 20 You sit and speak against your own brother;^b
You reveal the faults of* your own mother's son.
- 21 When you did these things, I remained silent,
So you thought that I would be just like you.
But now I will reprove you,
And I will state my case against you.^c
- 22 Please consider this, you who forget God,^d
So that I may not tear you to pieces with no one to rescue you.
- 23 The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me,^e
And as for the one who follows a set course,
I will cause him to see salvation by God."^f

To the director. A melody of David, when Nathan the prophet came in to him after David had relations with Bath-she'ba.^g

51 Show me favor, O God, according to your loyal love.^h

Blot out my transgressions according to your great mercy.ⁱ

- 2 Thoroughly wash me from my error,^j
And cleanse me from my sin.^k
- 3 For I am well-aware of my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.^{*l}
- 4 Against you—you above all*—I have sinned,^m
What is bad in your eyes I have done.ⁿ

50:20 *Or "defame." 51:3 *Or "on my mind." 51:4 *Lit., "only you."

So that you might prove righteous when you speak
And be right in your judgment.^a

- 5** Look! I was born guilty of error,
And my mother conceived me in sin.^{*b}
- 6** Look! You find pleasure in truth in the inner person;^c
Teach my innermost self* true wisdom.
- 7** Purify me from my sin with hyssop, so that I will be clean;^d
Wash me, so that I will be whiter than snow.^e
- 8** Let me hear sounds of joy and rejoicing,
So that the bones you crushed will rejoice.^f
- 9** Turn your face away* from my sins,^g
And wipe away# all my errors.^h
- 10** Create in me a pure heart,
O God,ⁱ
And put within me a new spirit,^j a steadfast one.
- 11** Do not cast me out from your presence;
And do not take your holy spirit away from me.
- 12** Restore to me the joy of your salvation;^k
Stir within me a willingness to obey you.*
- 13** I will teach transgressors your ways,^l
So that sinners will return to you.
- 14** Save me from bloodguilt,^m
O God, the God of my salvation,ⁿ
So that my tongue may joyfully declare your righteousness.^o

51:5 *Or "And sinful from the moment my mother conceived me." **51:6** *Or "my secret self." **51:9** *Or "Hide your face." #Or "blot out." **51:12** *Lit., "May you support me with a willing spirit."

CHAP. 51

- a Ro 3:4
b Job 34:2
Ro 3:23
Ro 5:12
c 1Sa 16:7
2Ki 20:3
1Ch 29:17
d Le 14:3, 4
Heb 9:13, 14
e Isa 1:18
f Ps 6:2
Ps 38:3
Isa 57:15
g Ps 103:12
Isa 38:17
h Mic 7:19
i Jer 32:39
j Eze 11:19
Eph 4:23
k Ps 21:1
l Ac 2:38
m Ge 9:6
n Ps 38:22
Isa 12:2
Re 7:10
o Ne 9:33
Ps 35:28
Ps 59:16
Da 9:7

Second Col.

- a Ps 34:1
Ps 109:30
Heb 13:15
b Pr 21:3
c 1Sa 15:22
Ps 40:6
Ho 6:6
d 2Ki 22:18, 19
2Ch 33:13
Ps 22:24
Ps 34:18
Pr 28:13
Isa 57:15
Lu 15:22-24
Lu 18:13, 14
e Ho 14:2

CHAP. 52

- f 1Sa 22:9
g 1Sa 21:7
Ps 94:3, 4
h Ps 103:17
i Ps 57:4
Ps 59:7
j 1Sa 22:9, 18
Ps 109:2
k Pr 12:19
Pr 19:9
l Ps 37:9

- 15** O Jehovah, open my lips,
So that my mouth may declare your praise.^a
- 16** For you do not want a sacrifice—otherwise I would give it;^b
You do not find delight in a whole burnt offering.^c
- 17** The sacrifices pleasing to God are a broken spirit;
A heart broken and crushed,
O God, you will not reject.^{*d}
- 18** In your goodwill do what is good for Zion;
Build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19** Then you will take delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,
The burnt sacrifices and the whole offerings;
Then bulls will be offered up on your altar.^e

To the director. Mas'kil.* Of David, when Do'eg the E'dom-ite came and told Saul that David had come to the house of Ahim'e-lech.^f

- 52** Why do you boast about your evil acts, you mighty one?^g
The loyal love of God lasts all day long.^h
- 2** Your tongue, as sharp as a razor,ⁱ
Schemes harm and works deceitfully.^j
- 3** You love evil more than what is good,
Lying more than speaking what is right. (*Selah*)
- 4** You love every harmful word,
O you deceitful tongue!
- 5** That is why God will pull you down once and for all;^k
He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent;^l

51:17 *Or "despise." **52:Sup** *See Glossary.

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

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 98
- **“The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting”:** (15 min.)
Questions and answers. Begin by playing the jw.org video *The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting* up to the section “An Education in One Day.” (Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) ia chap. 18 ¶1-13
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 109 and Prayer

PSALMS 45-51 | **Jehovah Will Not Reject a Broken Heart**

Psalm 51 was written by David after the prophet Nathan called attention to David’s grave sin with Bath-sheba. David’s conscience struck him, and he humbly confessed.—2Sa 12:1-14.

51:3, 4, 8-12, 17

David had sinned but spiritual recovery was still possible

- Before he repented and confessed, his conscience made him miserable
- He suffered such agony over God’s disapproval that he felt like a man whose bones were crushed
- He longed for forgiveness, spiritual recovery, and the joy that he had previously experienced
- He humbly begged Jehovah to help him develop a willingness to obey
- He was confident of Jehovah’s forgiveness



(w93 3/15 10-11 ¶9-13)

⁹ David and Bath-sheba were accountable to Jehovah God for their wrongdoing. Though they could have been put to death for their sins, God had mercy on them. Especially was he merciful to David because of the Kingdom covenant. (2 Samuel 7:11-16) David's repentant attitude toward his sins involving Bath-sheba is seen in Psalm 51. This touching psalm was composed by the penitent king after the prophet Nathan awakened his conscience to the enormity of his transgressions of divine law. It took courage for Nathan to call David's sins to his attention, even as appointed Christian elders must be courageous in order to do such things today. Instead of denying the charge and ordering Nathan's execution, the king humbly confessed. (2 Samuel 12:1-14) Psalm 51 shows what he said to God in prayer regarding the sordid affair and is well suited for prayerful meditation, particularly if we have erred and yearn for Jehovah's mercy.

We Are Accountable to God

¹⁰ David did not seek to excuse his sin but begged: "Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions." (Psalm 51:1) By transgressing, David had overstepped the boundaries of God's Law. There was hope for his spiritual recovery, however, if God showed him favor according to His loving-kindness, or loyal love. The abundance of God's past mercies gave the repentant king a basis for faith that his Maker would wipe out his transgressions.

¹¹ Through the prophetic shadows of Atonement Day sacrifices, Jehovah intimated that he had a way to cleanse repentant ones from their sin. We now know that his mercy and forgiveness are extended to us on the basis of our faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If David, with only types and shadows of this sacrifice in mind, could trust in Jehovah's loving-kindness and mercies, how much more should God's present-day servants exercise faith in the ransom provided for their salvation!—Romans 5:8; Hebrews 10:1.

¹² In pleading with God, David added: "Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I myself know, and my sin is in front of me constantly." (Psalm 51:2, 3) To sin is to miss the mark as regards Jehovah's standards. David had certainly done that. Yet, he was not like a murderer or an adulterer who is unconcerned about his offense, merely being distressed over his punishment or the possibility of contracting a disease. As a lover of Jehovah, David hated what was bad. (Psalm 97:10) He was sick of his sin itself and wanted God to cleanse him of it completely. David was fully aware of his transgressions and was deeply sorry that he had let his sinful desire overpower him. His sin was before him constantly, for a God-fearing person's guilty conscience is never eased until there is repentance, confession, and Jehovah's forgiveness.

¹³ Acknowledging his accountability to Jehovah, David said: "Against you, you alone, I have sinned, and what is bad in your eyes I have done, in order that you may prove to be righteous when you speak, that you may be in the clear when you judge." (Psalm 51:4) David had broken God's laws, dishonored the kingly office, and "unquestionably treated Jehovah with disrespect," exposing Him to reproach. (2 Samuel 12:14; Exodus 20:13, 14, 17) David's sinful acts were offenses also against Israelite society and members of his family, just as a baptized wrongdoer today causes sadness or distress in the Christian congregation and among loved ones. Though the repentant king knew that he had sinned against such fellow humans as Uriah, he recognized a higher responsibility to Jehovah. (Compare Genesis 39:7-9.) David acknowledged that the judgment of Jehovah would be righteous. (Romans 3:4) Christians who have sinned need to have the same viewpoint.

(w93 3/15 12-13 ¶18-20)

Plea for Restoration

¹⁸ Any Christian who has ever suffered with a guilty conscience can understand David's words: "May you [Jehovah] cause me to hear exultation and rejoicing, that the bones that you have crushed may be joyful." (Psalm 51:8) Before David repented and confessed his sins, his troubled conscience made him miserable. He did not even find pleasure in songs of exultation and rejoicing presented by fine singers and skillful musicians. So great was sinful David's agony over God's disapproval that he was like a man whose bones had been painfully crushed. He longed for forgiveness, spiritual recovery, and restoration of the joy he had previously experienced. A repentant wrongdoer today also needs Jehovah's forgiveness so as to regain the joy he had before he did something imperiling his relationship with God. Restoration of "joy of holy spirit" to a repentant person shows that Jehovah has forgiven him and loves him. (1 Thessalonians 1:6) What comfort that brings!

¹⁹ David further prayed: "Conceal your face from my sins, and wipe out even all my errors." (Psalm 51:9) Jehovah could not be expected to look upon sin with approval. Hence, he was asked to conceal his face from David's sins. The king also pleaded that God wipe out all his errors, blot out all his unrighteousness. If only Jehovah would do that! It would lift David's spirits, remove the burden of a troubled conscience, and let the now repentant king know that he had been forgiven by his loving God.

What If You Have Sinned?

²⁰ Psalm 51 indicates that any of Jehovah's dedicated servants who have sinned seriously but who are repentant can confidently ask him to show them favor and cleanse them from their sin. If you are a Christian who has erred in such a way, why not seek our heavenly Father's forgiveness in humble prayer? Acknowledge your need for God's help so as to stand approved before him, and ask that he restore your former joy. Repentant Christians can confidently go to Jehovah in prayer with such requests, for "he will forgive in a large way." (Isaiah 55:7; Psalm 103:10-14) Of course, congregation elders should be called upon so that they can render needed spiritual assistance.—James 5:13-15.

(w15 6/15 14 ¶6)

⁶ Our upbringing or our past conduct may have developed in us a liking for practices that Jehovah condemns. Even then, he can help us to bring about necessary changes so that we can continue to serve him acceptably. King David recognized this. After he had committed adultery with Bath-sheba, David implored Jehovah: "Create in me a pure heart, . . . and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Ps. 51:10, 12) Sinful conduct may strongly appeal to our fallen flesh, but Jehovah can stir within us a willing spirit, the desire to obey him. Even if wrong desires are deeply rooted and tend to crowd out our chaste thoughts, Jehovah can guide our steps so that we can obey his commandments and succeed in living by them. He can prevent anything harmful from dominating us.—Ps. 119:133.

(w93 3/15 14-17 ¶4-16)

A Pure Heart Needed

⁴ If a dedicated Christian is in a bad spiritual state because of sin, what may he need besides Jehovah's mercy and forgiveness? Well, David pleaded: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) Apparently, David made this request because he realized that the propensity for gross sin was still in his heart. We may not have been involved in the kinds of sin that ensnared David in connection with Bath-sheba and Uriah, but we need Jehovah's help to avoid yielding to temptation to engage in any gravely sinful conduct. For that

matter, we may personally need divine help to remove from our heart such sinful traits as covetousness and hatred—crimes akin to theft and murder.—Colossians 3:5, 6; 1 John 3:15.

⁵ Jehovah requires that his servants have “a pure heart,” that is, purity of motive or intention. Realizing that he had not displayed such purity, David prayed that God cleanse his heart and bring it into harmony with divine standards. The psalmist also wanted a new, upright spirit, or mental inclination. He needed a spirit that would help him to resist temptation and stick firmly to Jehovah’s laws and principles.

Holy Spirit Vital

⁶ When in despair over our mistakes or wrongdoing, we could feel that God is about to cast us aside and withdraw from us his holy spirit, or active force. David felt that way, for he begged Jehovah: “Do not throw me away from before your face; and your holy spirit O do not take away from me.” (Psalm 51:11) Contrite and humble David felt that his sins had made him unworthy to serve Jehovah. To be thrown away from before God’s face would mean to lose his favor, comfort, and blessing. If David was to be restored spiritually, he needed Jehovah’s holy spirit. With it resting upon him, the king could prayerfully seek divine direction so as to please Jehovah, could avoid sin, and could rule with wisdom. Aware of his sins against the Giver of holy spirit, David fittingly pleaded that Jehovah not take it away from him.

⁷ What about us? We should pray for holy spirit and must guard against grieving it by failing to follow its direction. (Luke 11:13; Ephesians 4:30) Otherwise, we could lose the spirit and would be unable to display its God-given fruitage of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. Jehovah God would especially take his holy spirit away from us if we unrepentantly kept sinning against him.

Exultation of Salvation

⁸ A repentant sinner who experiences spiritual restoration can again rejoice in Jehovah’s provision of salvation. Yearning for this, David petitioned God: “Do restore to me the exultation of salvation by you, and may you support me even with a willing spirit.” (Psalm 51:12) How wonderful it was to exult in the sure hope of salvation by Jehovah God! (Psalm 3:8) After sinning against God, David sought a restoration of the joy of salvation by Him. In later times, Jehovah provided for salvation by means of the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. If we as God’s dedicated servants sin gravely but want to have the joy of salvation restored to us, we need to have a repentant attitude so as to avoid sinning against the holy spirit.—Matthew 12:31, 32; Hebrews 6:4-6.

⁹ David asked that Jehovah support him “even with a willing spirit.” Apparently, this refers, not to God’s willingness to be helpful or to his holy spirit, but to David’s impelling mental inclination. David wanted God to support him by imparting to him a spirit of willingness to do what was right and not fall into sin once again. Jehovah God continuously supports his servants and raises up those bowed down by various trials. (Psalm 145:14) How comforting it is to realize this, especially if we have erred but are contrite and wish to serve Jehovah faithfully evermore!

Teach Transgressors What?

¹⁰ If God would permit it, David unselfishly wanted to do something that would show his appreciation for Jehovah’s mercy and would help others. With prayerful sentiments directed to Jehovah, the repentant king next declared: “I will teach transgressors your ways, that sinners themselves may turn right back to you.” (Psalm 51:13) How could sinful David teach transgressors of God’s Law? What might he tell them? And what good could this accomplish?

¹¹ When showing Israelite transgressors Jehovah’s ways in the hope of turning them from a wicked path, David could point out how evil sin is, what repentance means, and how to receive God’s mercy. Having felt the agony of Jehovah’s disfavor and a guilty conscience, David would undoubtedly be a compassionate instructor of repentant, heartbroken sinners. Of course, he could use his example to

teach others only after he himself had accepted Jehovah's standards and received His forgiveness, for those refusing to submit to divine requirements have no right to 'enumerate God's regulations.'—Psalm 50:16, 17.

¹² Repeating his intentions in another form, David said: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God the God of my salvation, that my tongue may joyfully tell about your righteousness." (Psalm 51:14) Bloodguiltiness brought with it condemnation to death. (Genesis 9:5, 6) So knowledge that the God of his salvation had delivered him from bloodguiltiness in connection with Uriah would give David peace of heart and mind. His tongue could then sing joyfully about God's righteousness, not his own. (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10) David could not blot out his immorality or bring Uriah back from the grave, even as a present-day human cannot restore the chastity of a person he has seduced or resurrect someone he has killed. Should we not think about that when we are tempted? And how much we should appreciate Jehovah's mercy shown toward us in righteousness! In fact, appreciation should impel us to direct others to this Fountainhead of righteousness and forgiveness.

¹³ No sinner can have a proper opening of his lips to praise Jehovah unless God mercifully opens them, as it were, to speak His truths. David therefore sang: "O Jehovah, may you open these lips of mine, that my own mouth may tell forth your praise." (Psalm 51:15) With his conscience relieved because of God's forgiveness, David would be impelled to teach transgressors the ways of Jehovah, and he could freely extol Him. All who have been forgiven of their sins as David was should appreciate Jehovah's undeserved kindness toward them, and they ought to take advantage of every opportunity to declare God's truth and 'tell forth his praise.'—Psalm 43:3.

Acceptable Sacrifices to God

¹⁴ David had acquired deep insight that made him say: "For you [Jehovah] do not take delight in sacrifice—otherwise I would give it; in whole burnt offering you do not find pleasure." (Psalm 51:16) The Law covenant required that animal sacrifices be offered to God. But David's sins of adultery and murder, punishable by death, could not be expiated by such sacrifices. Otherwise, he would have spared no expense to offer animal sacrifices to Jehovah. Without heartfelt repentance, sacrifices are valueless. It would therefore be wrong to think that we could compensate for continued wrongdoing by doing some good things.

¹⁵ David added: "The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17) In the case of a repentant sinner, acceptable "sacrifices to God are a broken spirit." Such a person does not have a belligerent attitude. The heart of a dedicated person having a broken spirit is deeply grieved over his sin, is humbled because of sensing God's disapproval, and is willing to do anything to regain divine favor. We can offer God nothing of value until we repent of our sins and give him our hearts in exclusive devotion.—Nahum 1:2.

¹⁶ God does not reject a sacrifice such as a broken and crushed heart. Despite any difficulty we encounter as his people, therefore, let us not yield to despair. If we have stumbled along life's pathway in some manner that makes our heart cry out for divine mercy, all is not lost. Even if we have sinned grievously but are repentant, Jehovah will not spurn our broken heart. He will forgive us on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice and will restore us to His favor. (Isaiah 57:15; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1) Like David, however, our prayers should be for a restoration of divine favor and not for escape from needed reproof or correction. God forgave David, but he also chastened him.—2 Samuel 12:11-14.

(w14 2/15 5 ¶11)

¹¹ **Read Psalm 45:4.** The Warrior-King does not wage a war of conquest in order to occupy territories and subjugate peoples. He wages a righteous war with noble objectives. He rides “in the cause of truth and humility and righteousness.” The greatest truth that must be defended is that of Jehovah’s universal sovereignty. Satan challenged the legitimacy of Jehovah’s rulership when he rebelled against Him. Since then, that fundamental truth has been disputed by both demons and humans. Now the time has come for Jehovah’s anointed King to ride forth to establish the truth of Jehovah’s sovereignty once and for all.

(w15 7/15 9 ¶13)

¹³ Regardless of how long we have been in the truth, we must tell others about Jehovah’s organization. The existence of a spiritual paradise in the midst of a wicked, corrupt, and loveless world is a modern-day miracle! The wonders about Jehovah’s organization, or “Zion,” and the truth about the spiritual paradise must be joyfully passed on “to future generations.”—**Read Psalm 48:12-14.**

- Song 67 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Will Not Reject a Broken Heart”:** (10 min.)
Ps 51:1-4—David deeply regretted that he had sinned against Jehovah (w93 3/15 10-11 ¶9-13)
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How to Discuss Problems



THE CHALLENGE

When you and your spouse discuss a problem, do you seem to end up further apart than when you started the conversation? If so, you can improve the situation. First, though, there are a few things you should know about the different communication styles of men and women.*

* The characteristics we will describe may not apply to every husband and wife. Nevertheless, the principles discussed in this article can help any married person understand and communicate better with his or her spouse.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Women usually prefer to talk out a problem before hearing a solution. In fact, sometimes talking is the solution.

*“I feel better when I have expressed my feelings and know that my husband understands me. After I talk about it, I’m over it—usually within just minutes after the conversation.”—Sirppa.**

“I can’t move on if I don’t have a chance to explain to my husband exactly how I feel. Talking it out is a form of closure for me.”—Ae-Jin.

*“It’s like detective work. As I talk, I’m analyzing each step of the problem and trying to get to the root of it.”
—Lurdes.*

Men tend to think in terms of solutions. That is understandable because fixing things makes a man feel useful. Offering solutions is his way of showing his wife that she can rely on him for help. So husbands are baffled when their solutions are not readily accepted. “I can’t understand why you would talk about a problem if you didn’t want a solution!” says a husband named Kirk.

But “understanding must precede advice,” warns the book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. “You have to let your partner know that you fully

* Names in this article have been changed.



understand and empathize with the dilemma before you suggest a solution. Oftentimes your spouse isn't asking you to come up with a solution at all—just to be a good listener.”

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For husbands: Practice empathetic listening. A husband named Tomás says: “Sometimes after listening I think to myself, ‘That didn’t accomplish anything.’ But often that’s all my wife needs—a listening ear.” A husband named Stephen would agree. “I find it best to let my wife express herself without interrupting,” he says. “More often than not, she finishes and tells me she feels a lot better.”

Try this: The next time you discuss a problem with your wife, resist the urge to give unsolicited advice. Make eye contact, and focus on what she is saying. Nod in agreement. Repeat the gist of what she says to show that you get the point. “Sometimes my wife just needs to know that I understand her and that I’m on her side,” says a husband named Charles.—*Bible principle: James 1:19.*

For wives: Say what you need. “We might expect our spouse to know just what we need,” says a wife named Eleni, “but sometimes we do have to spell it out.” A wife named Ynez suggests this approach: “I could say, ‘Something is bothering me, and I would like you to hear me out. I don’t need you to fix it, but I would like you to understand how I feel.’”

Try this: If your husband prematurely offers solutions, do not conclude that he is being insensitive. Likely he is trying to lighten your load. “Instead of getting annoyed,” says a wife named Ester, “I try to realize that my husband does care and wants to listen but that he also just wants to help.”—*Bible principle: Romans 12:10.*

For both: We tend to treat others the way we want to be treated. However, to discuss problems effectively, you need to consider how *your spouse* would like to be treated. (1 Corinthians 10:24) A husband named Miguel puts it this way: “If you are a husband, be willing to listen. If you are a wife, be willing to hear solutions once in a while. When you meet in the middle, both spouses benefit.”
—*Bible principle: 1 Peter 3:8.* ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak.”
—James 1:19.

“In showing honor to one another,
take the lead.”—Romans 12:10.

“Have unity of mind, fellow feeling.”
—1 Peter 3:8.

THE RIGHT TIME?

The Bible says: “A word spoken at the right time—how good it is!” (Proverbs 15:23) Of course, the opposite is also true.

“There is a direct link between bad timing and bad conversations.”
—Sirppa.

“Hungry and tired are two big no-no’s for serious discussions.”
—Julia.

“One time I started to vent as soon as my husband came home. Then I stopped myself mid-sentence and realized how annoying and exhausting I must have been! I told my husband that I would finish after we ate dinner. He thanked me, and by the time we continued our conversation, we were both more reasonable and calm.”—Lurdes.

3

Is the Good News Really From God?

1. Who is the Author of the Bible?

The good news that people will live forever on earth is written in the Bible. (Psalm 37:29) The Bible is made up of 66 smaller books. God used about 40 faithful men to write them. The first five books were written by Moses about 3,500 years ago. The last book was written by the apostle John over 1,900 years ago. Whose ideas did Bible writers present? God communicated with the Bible writers by means of his holy spirit. (2 Samuel 23:2) They wrote down the thoughts of God, not their own thoughts. So Jehovah is the Author of the Bible.

 Read 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

2. How can we be sure the Bible is true?

We know that the Bible is from God because it accurately foretells the future in detail. No man can do that. (Joshua 23:14) Only Almighty God can accurately foresee mankind's future.  Read Isaiah 42:9; 46:10.

We would expect a book from God to be unique, and it is. Billions of copies of the Bible have been distributed in hundreds of languages. Though ancient, the Bible is in harmony with proved science. Also, its 40 writers did not contradict one another.* Furthermore, the Bible bears the unmistakable stamp of God's love, and it still has the power to change people's lives for the better. These facts convince millions that the Bible is God's Word.

 Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

* See the brochure *A Book for All People*.



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- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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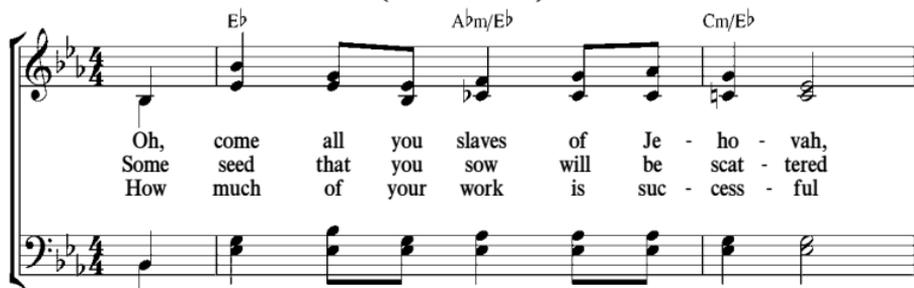
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Sowing Kingdom Seed

(Matthew 13:4-8)

Oh, come all you slaves of Je - ho - vah,
Some seed that you sow will be scat - tered
How much of your work is suc - cess - ful



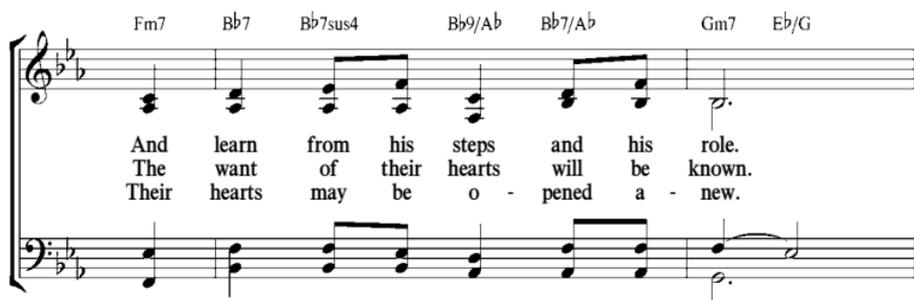
Who've giv - en your heart and your soul.
On hearts as re - sis - tant as stone.
May of - ten de - pend much on you.



Come out to the work of our Mas - ter,
Though these may re - spond for a sea - son,
With pa - tience and love for your neigh - bors,



And learn from his steps and his role.
The want of their hearts will be known.
Their hearts may be o - pened a - new.



Sowing Kingdom Seed

Bb7/F Eb Eb+5 Cm/Eb Eb7

The seed of the truth, you sow with - out fear
 When thorns choke the word, then greed fills their hearts;
 By be - ing a - lert you'll ward off their fears,

Ab Ab/G Fm Ab/Eb Bb7/D Ab2/C Bb7

On hearts that are a - ble to yield
 The things of the world they pre - fer.
 With mea - sures some gen - tle some bold.

Bb7/D Eb Abm/Eb Eb Eb/D Ab/C

Fine fruit to God's praise as you faith - ful - ly work,
 Yet, some seed may pros - per; you will see re - sults
 And thus with re - joic - ing you can hope to reap

Abm/Cb Eb/Bb Bb7sus4 Bb7 Eb

And you do your full share in the field.
 From the ground that is good, fine, and pure.
 At least thir - ty if not hun - dred - fold.

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- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Ps 49:10–50:6

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) *g16.3 10-11*
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) *g16.3 10-11*
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *fg lesson 3 ¶1*
—Conclude by introducing the *jw.org* video *Who Is the Author of the Bible?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 98
- **“The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting”:** (15 min.)
Questions and answers. Begin by playing the *jw.org* video *The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting* up to the section “An Education in One Day.” (Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *ia chap. 18 ¶1-13*
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 109 and Prayer

PSALMS 45-51 | Jehovah Will Not Reject a Broken Heart

Psalm 51 was written by David after the prophet Nathan called attention to David’s grave sin with Bath-sheba. David’s conscience struck him, and he humbly confessed.—2Sa 12:1-14.

51:3, 4, 8-12, 17

David had sinned but spiritual recovery was still possible

- Before he repented and confessed, his conscience made him miserable
- He suffered such agony over God’s disapproval that he felt like a man whose bones were crushed
- He longed for forgiveness, spiritual recovery, and the joy that he had previously experienced
- He humbly begged Jehovah to help him develop a willingness to obey
- He was confident of Jehovah’s forgiveness



The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting

Those desiring to be citizens of God’s Kingdom should learn all they can about the Kingdom and what it has accomplished. Why? This will not only strengthen their faith that God’s Kingdom rules but also stir their hearts to tell others the good news of God’s Kingdom. (Ps 45:1; 49:3) As you watch the video *The Kingdom—100 Years and Counting*, find answers to the following questions:

1. Why was the “Photo-Drama of Creation” a blessing to those who saw it?

2. How was radio used to reach people with the good news?

3. What other methods were used to preach the good news, and with what effect?

4. How has training for the ministry improved over the years?

5. What practical training was provided to students of Gilead School?

6. What role have conventions played in educating Jehovah’s people?

7. What proves to you that God’s Kingdom is ruling?

8. How do we show our support for God’s Kingdom?

The book *God’s Kingdom Rules!* will be considered during the Congregation Bible Study beginning the week of September 19, 2016



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She Drew “Conclusions in Her Heart”

MARY shifted her weight uncomfortably atop the little beast of burden. She had been riding for hours. Just ahead, Joseph walked steadily onward, leading the way along the road toward distant Bethlehem. Mary once again felt the stirring of life within her.

² Mary was well along in her pregnancy; the Bible describes her at this time with the expressive phrase “heavy with child.” (Luke 2:5) As the couple passed by one field after another, perhaps some of the farmers looked up from their plowing or sowing and wondered why a woman in such a condition would go on a journey. What had led Mary so far from her home in Nazareth?

³ It all began months earlier when this young Jewish woman received an assignment that was unique in all human history. She was to give birth to the child who would become the Messiah, the Son of God! (Luke 1:35) As the time to give birth approached, the need to take this journey arose. In the process, Mary faced a number of challenges to her faith. Let us see what helped her to stay spiritually strong.

The Trip to Bethlehem

⁴ Joseph and Mary were not the only ones on the move. Caesar Augustus had recently decreed that a registration be carried out in the land, and people had to travel to their town of origin in order to comply. How did Joseph respond? The account reads: “Of course, Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David’s city, which is called Bethlehem,

- 1, 2. Describe Mary’s journey, and explain what made it uncomfortable for her.
3. What assignment had Mary received, and what will we seek to learn about her?
- 4, 5. (a) Why were Joseph and Mary heading to Bethlehem? (b) Caesar’s decree led to the fulfillment of what prophecy?

because of his being a member of the house and family of David.”—Luke 2:1-4.

⁵ It was no coincidence that Caesar issued his decree at this time. A prophecy written down some seven centuries earlier foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Now, it so happened that there was a town named Bethlehem a mere seven miles from Nazareth. However, the prophecy specified that it was “Bethlehem Ephrathah” that would produce the Messiah. (*Read Micah 5:2.*) To reach that little village from Nazareth, travelers covered some 80 hilly miles via Samaria. That was the Bethlehem to which Joseph was summoned, for it was the ancestral home of the family of King David—the family to which both Joseph and his bride belonged.

⁶ Would Mary support Joseph in his decision to comply? After all, the trip would be hard on her. It was likely early in the autumn of the year, so light rains were possible as the dry season gradually ended. What is more, the phrase “went *up* from Galilee” is appropriate, for Bethlehem was perched at a lofty altitude of over 2,500 feet—quite a climb, an arduous end to a trek of several days. Perhaps it would take longer than usual, for

6, 7. (a) Why might a journey to Bethlehem have presented challenges to Mary? (b) Being the wife of Joseph made what difference in Mary’s decisions? (See also footnote.)



Mary’s condition might require numerous periods of rest. Now, of all times, a young woman might yearn to stay close to home, where she had family and friends who were ready to help when her birth pangs began. Without a doubt, she needed to have courage to take this trip.

⁷ Nonetheless, Luke writes that Joseph went “to get registered with Mary.” He also notes that Mary “had been given [to Joseph] in marriage as promised.” (Luke 2:4, 5) Being Joseph’s wife made a great deal of difference in Mary’s decisions. She viewed her husband as her spiritual head, embracing her God-given role as his helper by supporting him in his decisions.* So she met this potential challenge to her faith with simple obedience.

⁸ What else may have motivated Mary to obey? Did she know of the prophecy about Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah? The Bible does not say. We cannot rule out the possibility, for the fact was evidently common knowledge among religious leaders and even people in general. (Matt. 2:1-7; John 7:

* Note the contrast between this passage and the description of an earlier trip: “Mary rose . . . and went” to visit Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39) At that time, as an engaged but unwed woman, Mary may have acted without consulting Joseph. After the couple were married, the action of their trip together is ascribed to Joseph, not Mary.

8. (a) What else may have motivated Mary to go to Bethlehem with Joseph?
(b) In what way is Mary’s example a beacon for faithful people?

The journey to Bethlehem was not an easy one



40-42) When it came to the Scriptures, Mary was far from an ignorant girl. (Luke 1:46-55) At any rate, whether Mary decided to travel in order to obey her husband, a secular decree, or Jehovah’s own prophecy—or because of a combination of factors—she set a splendid example. Jehovah greatly values a humble, obedient spirit in both men and women. In our age, when submission often seems to be among the most disregarded of virtues, Mary’s example stands as a beacon for faithful people everywhere.

The Birth of Christ

⁹ Mary must have breathed a sigh of relief when she first caught sight of Bethlehem. As they mounted the hillsides, passing by olive groves—among the last of the crops to be harvested—Mary and Joseph may well have thought about the history of this little village. It was too insignificant to be numbered among Judah’s cities, just as Micah the prophet had said; yet it was the birthplace of Boaz, Naomi, and later David, all more than a thousand years earlier.

¹⁰ Mary and Joseph found the village to be crowded. Others had arrived to register before them, so there was no space for them at the lodging room.* They had no choice but to settle down for the night in a stable. We can just imagine Joseph’s concern as he saw his wife suffering a sharp discomfort she had never known, which then intensified. Here, of all places, her birth pangs had begun.

¹¹ Women everywhere can empathize with Mary. Some 4,000 years earlier, Jehovah had foretold that it would be the common lot of women to suffer pain during childbirth because of inherited sin. (Gen. 3:16) There is no evidence to suggest that Mary was any exception. Luke’s account draws a discreet curtain of privacy around the scene, saying simply: “She gave birth to her son, the firstborn.” (Luke 2:7) Yes, her “firstborn” had arrived—the first of Mary’s many children, at least seven in all. (Mark 6:3) This one, though, would ever stand apart. Not only was he *her* firstborn but he was Jehovah’s own “firstborn of all creation,” the only-begotten Son of God!—Col. 1:15.

* It was the practice of the day for towns to provide a common room to shelter travelers and passing caravans.

9, 10. (a) What might Mary and Joseph have thought about while approaching Bethlehem? (b) Why did Joseph and Mary lodge where they did?

11. (a) Why can women everywhere empathize with Mary? (b) In what ways was Jesus a “firstborn”?

¹² It is at this point that the account adds a famous detail: “She bound him with cloth bands and laid him in a manger.” (Luke 2:7) Nativity plays, paintings, and scenes around the world sentimentalize this setting. Consider, though, the reality. A manger is a feeding trough, a bin from which farm animals eat. Remember, the family was lodging in a stable, hardly a place to be noted for good air or hygiene—then or now. Really, what parents would choose such a spot for childbirth if there were any other options? Most parents want the best for their children. How much more so did Mary and Joseph want to provide the best for the Son of God!

¹³ However, they did not let their limitations embitter them; they simply did the best they could with what they had. Notice, for instance, that Mary herself cared for the infant, wrapping him up snugly in cloth bands, then laying him carefully in the manger to sleep, ensuring that he would be warm and safe. Mary was not about to let anxiety over her present circumstances distract her from providing the best that she could. She and Joseph both knew, too, that caring spiritually for this child would be the most important thing they could do for him. (*Read Deuteronomy 6: 6-8.*) Today, wise parents cultivate similar priorities as they bring their children up in this spiritually impoverished world.

A Visit Brings Encouragement

¹⁴ A sudden commotion disturbed the peaceful scene. Shepherds rushed into the stable, eager to see the family and the child in particular. These men were bubbling over with excitement, their faces radiating joy. They had hurried in from the hillsides where they were living with their flocks.* They told the wondering parents about a marvelous experience they had just had. On the hillside during the night watch, an angel had suddenly appeared to them. Jehovah’s glory had gleamed all around, and the

* That these shepherds at the time were living out-of-doors with their flocks confirms what Bible chronology indicates: The birth of Christ did not occur in December when the flocks would have been sheltered closer to home but, rather, sometime in early October.

12. Where did Mary lay the baby, and how was the reality different from nativity plays, paintings, and scenes?

13. (a) In what way did Mary and Joseph do their best with what they had? (b) How can wise parents today cultivate priorities similar to those of Joseph and Mary?

14, 15. (a) Why were the shepherds eager to see the child? (b) What did the shepherds do about what they had seen in the stable?

Hail Jehovah's Firstborn!

(Hebrews 1:6)

E \flat Gm7/D Cm7 Cm Cm7/B \flat A \flat E \flat /G Fm A \flat m7/E \flat

Hail Je - ho - vah's First - born, God's du - ly ap - point - ed
Hail Je - ho - vah's First - born, Who died so that we may

B \flat /D Cm11 B \flat B \flat 7 E \flat Gm7/D Cm7 Cm Cm7/B \flat

King. He reigns for truth and jus - tice; Rich
live. He hum - bly paid the ran - som; Our

A \flat E \flat /G Fm7 B \flat 7 E \flat E \flat /G B \flat B \flat sus4/C B \flat /D B \flat 7

bles - sings his rule will bring. With dig - ni - ty and
sins God can now for - give. The bride of Christ a -

E \flat D Dsus4/E D/F \sharp D7 Gm

splen - dor And love for God's great name, He'll
waits him, A - dorned for him in white. This

Hail Jehovah's Firstborn!

F Fsus4/G F7/A F7 B♭ B♭/D Cm Cm/B♭ F2/A F

vin - di - cate Je - ho - vah, His sov - 'reign - ty pro -
mar - riage in the heav - ens Will prove God's rule is

Chorus
B♭ E♭ Gm7/D Cm7 Cm Cm7/B♭

claim. Hail Je - ho - vah's First - born! All
right.

A♭ E♭/G Fm A♭ma7/E♭ B♭/D Cm11 B♭ B♭7 E♭ Gm7/D

praise God's a - noint - ed Son. In - stalled up - on Mount

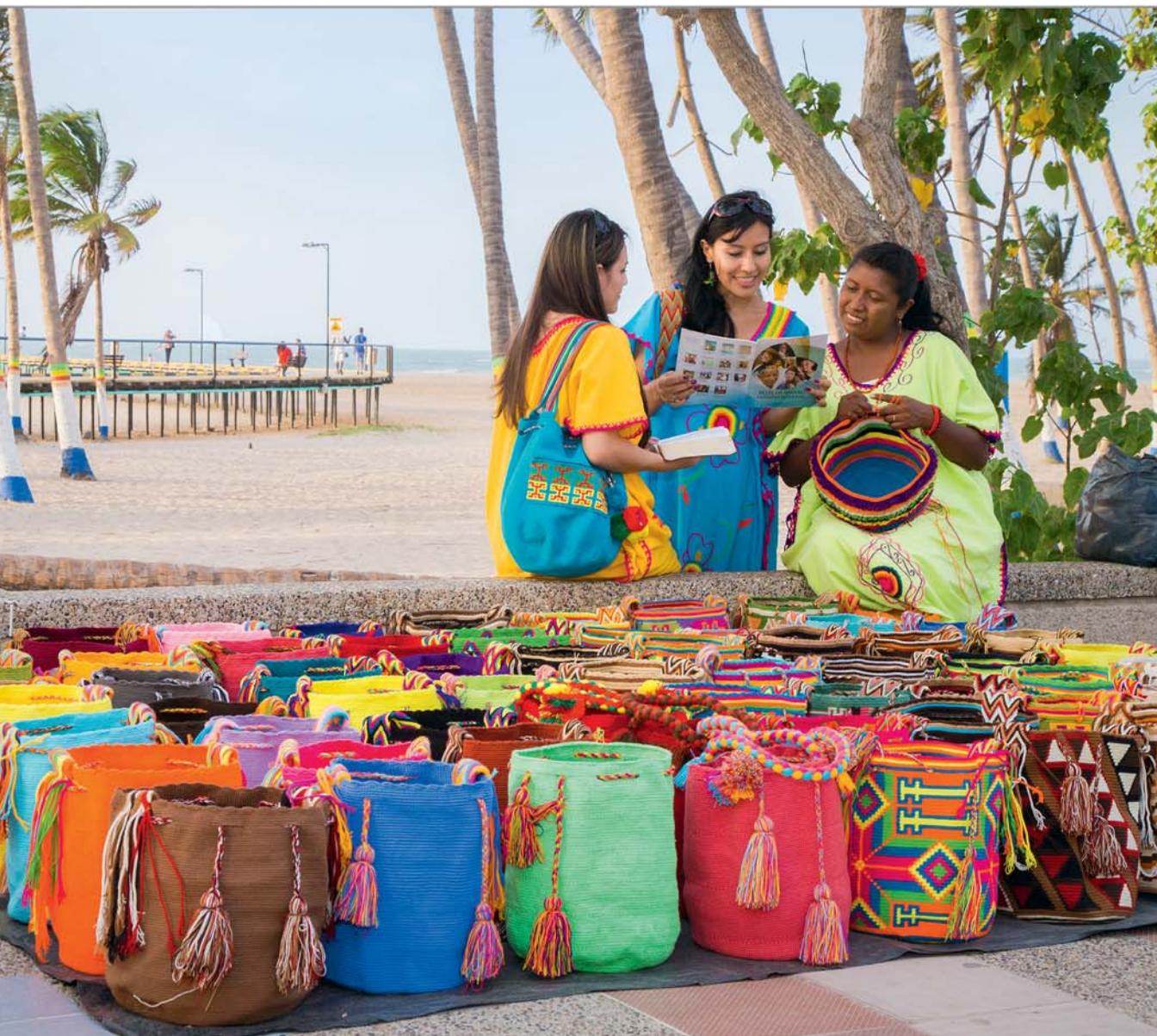
Cm7 Cm Cm7/B♭ A♭ E♭/G Fm7 B♭7 E♭

Zi - on, His King - ship has now be - gun!

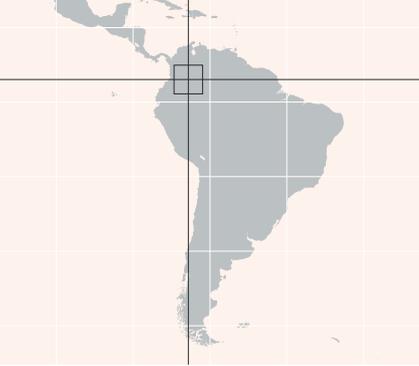
APRIL 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
MAY 30–JUNE 26, 2016



COVER IMAGE:
COLOMBIA

The Wayuu people like to talk about God. Many efforts are made to reach them with the good news. They are skilled artisans who usually sell their products in the city. There they hear the good news through public witnessing

PUBLISHERS
166,049

BIBLE STUDIES
229,723

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)
510,952

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Is Your Ministry Like the Dew?

5 WEEK OF MAY 30–JUNE 5 Being Faithful Leads to God’s Approval

This article highlights what moved Jephthah and his daughter to live by divine principles despite challenging circumstances. We learn why gaining God’s approval is worth any sacrifice.

10 Are You Using Your Imagination Wisely?

13 WEEK OF JUNE 6-12 “Let Endurance Complete Its Work”

To receive the gift of eternal life, we must endure to the end. This article reviews four things that will help us to endure and three examples of steadfast endurance. It also explains the work that endurance must complete in each of us.

18 WEEK OF JUNE 13-19 Why Should We Meet Together for Worship?

All Christians face obstacles that can make it difficult to attend congregation meetings. To motivate us to overcome these obstacles, this article considers how our attending meetings affects us and others and what it means to Jehovah God.

23 LIFE STORY Former Nuns Become True Spiritual Sisters

27 WEEK OF JUNE 20-26 Maintain Your Neutrality in a Divided World

As human governments near their end, we can expect them to become less and less tolerant of our neutral stand. This article identifies four keys to maintaining our neutrality and avoiding compromise.

32 QUESTIONS FROM READERS

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Issue 6 April 2016 is published monthly with an additional issue published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2016 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

April 2016
Vol. 137, No. 6 ENGLISH

Fear Them Not!

(Matthew 10:28)

G/D D7 G Am11 D7/A G/B E+5 E/D Am/C E7/B Am

Ev - er on - ward, O my peo - ple, Let the King - dom tid - ings go.
E - ven though your foes are man - y, Though they threat - en and re - vile,
Nev - er fear you are for - got - ten; I am still your strength and shield.

D7 D° D7 G G° G

Trem - ble not be - fore our foe. Let all lov - ers of truth know
Though they flat - ter and they smile, To mis - lead and to be - guile.
Though you die up - on the field, E - ven death to me will yield.

G/D D7 G Am11 D7/A G/B E+5 E/D A/C# D A7/E D/F#

That my reign - ing Son, Christ Je - sus, To the earth has cast the foe,
Fear them not, my faith - ful war - riors, Nor their per - se - cu - tion's heat,
Fear them not who kill the bod - y But can - not de - stroy the soul.

F° D/F# Am6/C B7 D/E E9 G/A A7 D D7

Soon to bind the Dev - il, Sa - tan, Let - ting all his vic - tims go.
For I will pre - serve the faith - ful Till the vic - t'ry is com - plete.
To the end may you be faith - ful; I will bring you to your goal!

Fear Them Not!

Chorus

G Bm/D D/C G/B G/D D7 C/G G

Fear them not, O my be - lov - ed,

D7 C/D D7 D4+5 G G#° D7/A D7

Though their boast - ing threats may fly.

G Bm/D D/C G/B B7 D/C C Am7 A#°

I will keep my faith - ful ser - vant

G/B Bb° D7/A G G/D D7 G G/B Am11 G

As the ap - ple of my eye.



Maintain Your Neutrality in a Divided World

“Pay back . . . God’s things to God.”—MATT. 22:21.

GOD’S WORD tells us to be obedient to human governments, yet it also teaches that we must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29; Titus 3:1) Is this a contradiction? Not at all! The principle of relative subjection helps us to understand and obey these commands. Jesus summarized this principle when he said: “Pay back, therefore, Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.”^[1] (Matt. 22:21) How do we follow Jesus’ direction? We submit to the authority of the government under which we live by obeying its laws, respecting its officials, and paying the taxes it levies. (Rom. 13:7) However, if government authorities tell us to disobey God, we respectfully refuse to comply.

² We pay back to God what is rightfully his, in part, by remaining neutral in the world’s political affairs. (Isa. 2:4) Thus, we do not oppose human governments that Jehovah allows to function; nor do we promote patriotic or nationalistic activity. (Rom. 13:1, 2) We do not lobby, vote

1. How can we obey both God and human governments?
2. How do we show that we do not take sides in the world’s politics?

SONGS: 33, 137

CAN YOU ANSWER?

What does Jehovah think about human governments?

What should we do when it becomes difficult to stay neutral?

What can we learn from faithful servants of Jehovah who stayed neutral?

in political elections, run for government office, or try to change governments.

³ The Bible gives several reasons why God requires that we remain neutral. For example, we follow the teachings and example of his Son, Jesus Christ, by being “no part of the world,” avoiding its politics and wars. (John 6:15; 17:16) We must remain neutral in order to be loyal subjects of God’s Kingdom. Otherwise, how could we have a clean conscience when we preach the good news that only God’s Kingdom can solve mankind’s problems? Additionally, unlike false religions that divide their members by meddling in politics, true worship preserves our international brotherhood by helping us to remain neutral.—1 Pet. 2:17.

⁴ Where we live, the political environment may be calm, seemingly tolerant of true worship. Yet, as Satan’s system nears its end, we can expect the issue of neutrality to become more prominent. The world is filled with people who are “not open to any agreement” and “headstrong,” so it will only become more divided and polarized. (2 Tim. 3:3, 4) In some countries, our brothers have already faced unexpected challenges to their neutrality because of a rapidly changing political environment. Do you see why we need to strengthen our resolve now to remain neutral? If we wait until we face a challenging situation, we might compromise and violate our neutral stand. So how can we pre-

3. Why must we remain neutral?

4. (a) How do we know that it will become more difficult to remain neutral? (b) Why should we prepare now to remain neutral?

pare to maintain our neutrality in a divided world? Let us consider four keys that will help us to succeed.

VIEW HUMAN GOVERNMENTS AS JEHOVAH DOES

⁵ A first key to remaining neutral is to share Jehovah’s view of political systems. Although some governments might appear to be just, the very concept of humans ruling over other humans was never Jehovah’s purpose. (Jer. 10:23) Man-made governments promote nationalism, which divides the human family. Even the best human leaders are unable to solve all problems. In addition, since 1914, human governments have become rivals to God’s Kingdom, which will soon execute judgment on the nations by destroying them.—**Read Psalm 2:2, 7-9.**

⁶ God lets the world’s political structure remain because it provides a measure of stability that, in turn, helps us to preach the good news of the Kingdom. (Rom. 13:3, 4) God even directs us to pray concerning those in authority, especially when their decisions might affect our worship. (1 Tim. 2:1, 2) We appeal to government authorities for fair treatment, as the apostle Paul did. (Acts 25:11) Although the Bible teaches that God’s adversary, Satan, has authority over political systems, it does not say that he directly controls each leader or official. (Luke 4:5, 6) We should therefore avoid implying that a particular official is controlled by the Devil. Instead, when dealing with “governments

5. What does Jehovah think about human governments?

6. How should we treat those who have authority in the government?

and authorities,” we “speak injuriously of no one.”—Titus 3:1, 2.

⁷ We obey God by never favoring any candidate or political party over another, regardless of whether they seem to support or oppose our interests. How might our neutrality be tested in this regard? Suppose that a popular uprising tries to oust an oppressive regime, one under which God’s people have also suffered. Although we would not march with the protesters, might we be with them in spirit? (Eph. 2:2) We must remain neutral not only in our words and actions but also in our heart.

BE “CAUTIOUS” YET “INNOCENT”

⁸ A second key to maintaining our neutrality is to be “cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves” when facing challenges. **(Read Matthew 10:16, 17.)** We show caution by recognizing dangers early, and we remain innocent by not letting them lead us into compromise. Consider some potential challenges and how we can deal with them.

⁹ *Conversations.* We must exercise caution when political issues are brought up. For example, when presenting the Kingdom message, avoid either praising or criticizing the policies of a political party or leader. Try to establish common ground with the householder by focusing on the underlying problem rather than on any proposed political solution. Then, show from the Bible how God’s government will solve the problem completely and perma-

nently. If such volatile issues as same-sex marriage or abortion come up, defend God’s standards and explain how we follow these in our own lives. During the discussion, remain strictly neutral on the political aspects of these topics. We take no position regarding what laws should be enacted, repealed, or changed, and we do not pressure others to agree with our view.

¹⁰ *The media.* Information broadcast as “news” is often presented in a biased and opinionated way. The media sometimes functions as a tool of the political system. News reports might be blatantly slanted in lands with State-controlled media, yet even Christians living in so-called free countries must be careful not to adopt the bias of a commentator. Ask yourself, ‘Do I enjoy listening to someone in the media because I agree with his political leaning?’ If so, you might look for a more objective source of information. In any case, it is wise to limit your intake from media sources that promote a political agenda and to test what you hear against “the standard of wholesome words” found in the Bible.—2 Tim. 1:13.

¹¹ *Materialism.* If we are attached to our possessions, we risk compromising our neutrality when we are under test. Ruth, in Malawi, saw several Witnesses do so when they were persecuted in the 1970’s. She recalls: “They could not give up their comfortable life. Some went into exile with us but later joined the

7. What thinking must we avoid?

8. When it is difficult to remain neutral, how can we be “cautious” yet “innocent”?

9. What must we be careful of when talking to others?

10. How can we make sure that we remain neutral when we watch or read anything in the media?

11. How might it be hard for us to remain neutral when the things we own are very important to us?

political party and returned home because they did not want to put up with the discomforts of life in the refugee camp.” In contrast, the vast majority of God’s people have remained neutral despite economic pressures or even the loss of everything they own.—Heb. 10:34.

¹² *Undue pride.* People often tout the merits of their race, tribe, culture, city, or nation. However, we know that taking undue pride in tribe, culture, or nation puts us at odds with Jehovah’s view of human rule and the human family. Of course, God does not expect us to renounce our culture. In fact, cultural differences illustrate the marvelous diversity of the human family. Still, we must remember that in God’s sight, all people are equal.—Rom. 10:12.

¹³ Taking undue pride in our place of origin is at the heart of nationalism and could be the first step on a path to compromise. Christians are not immune to such pride, for even some in the first-century congregation discriminated against their brothers because of their nationality. (Acts 6:1) How can we tell if undue pride is taking root in us? Suppose a brother or sister from another land offered you a suggestion. Would you reject it, immediately thinking, ‘We do things better around here’? Instead, we should all apply the inspired counsel: “With humility consider others superior to you.”—Phil. 2:3.

GAIN STRENGTH FROM JEHOVAH

¹⁴ A third key to maintaining our neu-

12, 13. (a) What does Jehovah think about humans? (b) How can we tell if we are becoming too proud of our country?

14. How can prayer help us, and what Bible example proves this?

trality is to gain strength from Jehovah. Pray for holy spirit, which can give you patience and self-control, qualities needed to cope with a government that may be corrupt or unjust. You can also ask Jehovah for the wisdom to recognize and deal with situations that could cause you to violate your Christian neutrality. (Jas. 1:5) If you are imprisoned or otherwise punished because of your resolute stand for true worship, pray for the strength to defend your faith with boldness and to endure whatever persecution may come.—**Read Acts 4:27-31.**

¹⁵ Jehovah can strengthen you by means of his Word. Meditate on verses that will help you maintain your neutrality under test. Commit them to memory now, so that they can sustain you if you do not have access to a Bible later. God’s Word can also reinforce your hope in future Kingdom blessings. This hope is essential if we are to endure persecution. (Rom. 8:25) Select passages that describe blessings that you especially hope to enjoy, and visualize yourself experiencing those blessings in Paradise.

BENEFIT FROM OTHER INTEGRITY-KEEPERS

¹⁶ Faithful servants of Jehovah provide the fourth key to maintaining neutrality. Their examples can give us the wisdom and strength we need to endure. For instance, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to wor-

15. How can the Bible help us to remain neutral? (See also the box “God’s Word Strengthened Their Conviction.”)

16, 17. What can we learn from the examples of God’s faithful servants who remained neutral? (See opening picture.)

GOD'S WORD Strengthened Their Conviction

“Meditating on Proverbs 27:11, Matthew 26:52, and John 13:35 strengthened my conviction to refuse military service. These verses also helped me to remain calm during my trial.”—*Andriy, from Ukraine.*

“Isaiah 2:4 helped me to remain neutral under test. I pictured in my mind the quietness of life in the new world, when no one will carry a weapon to harm his neighbor.”—*Wilmer, from Colombia.*

ship an image representing the Babylonian State. **(Read Daniel 3:16-18.)** Reading about their determination has given Witnesses today the courage to refuse to worship the flag of the nation in which they live. Also, Jesus stayed completely separate from the political and social conflicts of the world. Noting the effect that his example would have on others, he urged his disciples: “Take courage! I have conquered the world.”—John 16:33.

¹⁷ Many Witnesses in modern times have maintained their neutrality. Some have suffered physical abuse and imprisonment and have even died for their faith. Their examples can help you as they did Barış, from Turkey, who said: “Franz Reiter was a young brother who was executed because he refused to join Hitler’s army. The letter he wrote to his mother the night before he died showed

tremendous faith and confidence in Jehovah, and I wanted to follow his example if I faced such a trial.”^[2]

¹⁸ Support also comes from the brothers and sisters in your congregation. Let the elders know about the tests of neutrality that you may be facing, and ask for their mature, Bible-based counsel. Members of the congregation will encourage you if they are aware of the challenges you are facing. Ask them to pray in your behalf. Of course, if we want our brothers to support us and pray for us, we should do the same for them. (Matt. 7:12) The [jw.org](#) article “Jehovah’s Witnesses Imprisoned for Their Faith—By Location” posted under [NEWSROOM > LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS](#) can help you to be specific in your prayers. It includes links to lists of Witnesses currently imprisoned for their faith. Pick some names, and pray that such ones courageously maintain their integrity.—Eph. 6:19, 20.

¹⁹ As human governments near their end, we will not be surprised if they become less and less tolerant of our loyalty to Jehovah and his Kingdom. Thus, may we now strengthen our resolve to maintain our neutrality in a divided world.

18, 19. (a) How can the members of your congregation help you to remain neutral? (b) What are you determined to do?

ENDNOTES:

[1] (paragraph 1) Jesus here used Caesar, the highest-ranking human ruler at the time, as a symbol of the civil authority, or State.

[2] (paragraph 17) See *Jehovah’s Witnesses—Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom*, p. 662, and the box “He Died for God’s Honor” on p. 150 in the book *God’s Kingdom Rules!*

Grant Us Boldness

(Acts 4:29)

Capo fret 3

Bm Dm F#m Am

As we tell a - bout the King - dom, As we wit - ness for your name,
E - ven though we may be fear - ful, You re - mem - ber we are dust.

Bm C
Dm Eb

There are ma - ny who op - pose us And who try to bring us shame.
Your as - sur - ance to sup - port us Is a prom - ise we can trust.

F# A Bm A
Dm Dm C

But in - stead of fear - ing men, It's real - ly you we must o -
Give at - ten - tion to the threats Of those who per - se - cute and

D C D E
F Eb F G

be y. So we beg you now for your spir - it; O Je - ho - vah, hear what we
blame. May you help us all to con - tin - ue As we bold - ly speak in your

A D G
C Chorus F Bb

pray. name. Grant us bold - ness as we wit - ness; Help us o - ver - come our fear.

Bm E
Dm G

Give us con - fi - dence and cour - age So that all the world may hear.

G F#m Em
Bb Am Gm

Ar - ma - ged - don draws ev - er near, But un - til that great day is

A Bm G A D
C Dm Bb C F

here, Grant us bold - ness as we wit - ness. This is our prayer.