

- Song 38 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Throw Your Burden On Jehovah”:** (10 min.)
Ps 55:2, 4, 5, 16-18—David had moments of great anxiety in his life (w06 6/1 11 ¶3; w96 4/1 27 ¶2)
Ps 55:12-14—David’s son and a trusted friend conspired against David (w96 4/1 30 ¶1)
Ps 55:22—David expressed confidence in Jehovah’s help (w06 6/1 11 ¶4; w99 3/15 22-23)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Ps 56:8—What does the expression “collect my tears in your skin bottle” mean? (w09 6/1 29 ¶1; w08 10/1 26 ¶3)

Ps 59:1, 2—What does David’s experience teach us about prayer? (w08 3/15 14 ¶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 52:1–53:6

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Offer one of the tracts. Direct attention to the code on the back page.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who accepted a tract.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *fg* lesson 3 ¶2-3 —Conclude by introducing the *iw.org* video *How Can We Be Sure the Bible Is True?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 56
- **Local needs:** (7 min.)
- **“God Is My Helper”:** (8 min.) Discussion. Obtain as many comments as possible for the questions listed so that all may benefit from the personal expressions of their brothers and sisters. (Ro 1:12) Encourage publishers to use the *Research Guide* to find help from God’s Word when challenges arise.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *ia* chap. 18 ¶14-21, review on p. 161
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 121 and Prayer

“God Is My Helper”

Psalms 52-59 express David’s sentiments during several challenging periods of his life. Yet, he still trusted in Jehovah during those critical times. (Ps 54:4; 55:22) He also praised Jehovah for His word. (Ps 56:10) Are we developing the same kind of faith and trust in our God? Do we look to his Word for guidance when facing difficulties? (Pr 2:6) Which Bible verses helped you when you were . . .

discouraged or depressed?

ill?

offended by others?

persecuted?

38 *Throw Your Burden on Jehovah* (Psalm 55)

1. Please give ear, O Lord, Jehovah,
Let yourself be found by me.
Hear my prayer, and may you answer;
Help me unafraid to be.

(CHORUS)

*Throw your burden on Jehovah;
He himself will you sustain.
He will never let you totter
But will help you firm remain.*

2. Had I wings just as a dove has,
Far from danger I would fly,
Safe from those who seek to hurt me,
Sheltered from their hateful cry.

(Chorus)

3. I will call upon Jehovah,
His protection I will seek.
He gives peace midst opposition;
Strength he gives to all the meek.

(Chorus)

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 34:23
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.

He will uproot you from the land of the living.^a (*Selah*)

6 The righteous ones will see it and be filled with awe.^b And they will laugh at him.^c

7 "Here is a man who did not make God his refuge,^{*d} But he trusted in his great riches^e And relied on[#] his own evil plots."^Δ

8 But I will be like a luxuriant olive tree in God's house; My trust is in God's loyal love,^f forever and ever.

9 I will praise you forever because you have taken action;^g

In the presence of your loyal ones,

I will hope in your name,^h for it is good.

To the director; in the style of Ma'ha-lath. * Mas'kil. * Of David.

53 The foolish* one says in his heart:

"There is no Jehovah."ⁱ Their unrighteous actions are corrupt and detestable; No one is doing good.^j

2 But God looks down from heaven on the sons of men^k To see whether anyone has insight, whether anyone is seeking Jehovah.^l

3 They have all turned away; They are all alike corrupt. No one is doing good, Not even one.^m

4 Do none of the wrongdoers understand? They devour my people as if they were eating bread. They do not call on Jehovah.ⁿ

5 But they will be filled with great terror,

52:7 *Or "fortress." #Or "took shelter in." ΔLit., "adversities by him." 53:Sup; 54:Sup *See Glossary. 53:1 *Or "senseless."

CHAP. 52

a Pr 2:22
b Ps 37:34
c Ps 58:10
d Jer 17:5
e Ps 49:6, 7
Pr 11:28
f Ps 13:5
Ps 147:11
g Ps 50:15
h Ps 27:14
Ps 123:2
Pr 18:10

CHAP. 53

i Ps 10:4
Ro 1:21
j Ps 14:1-7
Ro 3:10
k Ps 11:4
Ps 33:13-15
Jer 16:17
Jer 23:24
l 1Ch 28:9
2Ch 15:2
2Ch 19:1, 3
Isa 55:6
1Pe 3:12
m Ec 7:20
Ro 3:12
n Job 21:7, 14

Second Col.

a Isa 12:6

CHAP. 54

b 1Sa 23:19
1Sa 26:1
c Ps 20:1
Ps 79:9
Pr 18:10
d Ps 43:1
e Ps 13:3
Ps 65:2
f Ps 22:16
Ps 59:3
g Ps 36:1
h 1Ch 12:18
Heb 13:6
i Ro 12:19
j Ps 143:12
k Ps 50:14
Heb 13:15
l Ps 7:17
Ps 52:9
m 2Sa 4:9
Ps 34:19
Ps 37:39
n Ps 37:34
Ps 59:10

Terror they have never felt before,^{*}

For God will scatter the bones of those attacking you.[#]

You will put them to shame, for Jehovah has rejected them.

6 O that Israel's salvation may come from Zion!^a When Jehovah gathers back his captive people, Let Jacob be joyful, let Israel rejoice.

To the director; to be accompanied with stringed instruments. Mas'kil. * Of David, when the Ziph'ites came in and said to Saul: "David is hiding among us."^b

54 O God, save me by your name,^c

And defend me^{*d} with your power.

2 O God, hear my prayer;^e Pay attention to the words of my mouth.

3 For strangers rise up against me, And ruthless men seek my life.^{*f} They have no regard for God.^{#g} (*Selah*)

4 Look! God is my helper;^h Jehovah is with those supporting me.^{*}

5 He will repay my foesⁱ with their own evil; In your faithfulness, put an end to^{*} them.^j

6 I will sacrifice to you^k willingly.

I will praise your name, O Jehovah, for it is good.^l

7 For he saves me from every distress,^m And I will look in triumph on my enemies.ⁿ

53:5 *Or possibly, "Fear where there was nothing to fear." #Lit., "camping against you." 54:1 *Or "plead my cause." 54:3 *Or "soul." #Or "They do not keep God before them." 54:4 *Or "my soul." 54:5 *Lit., "silence."

To the director; to be accompanied with stringed instruments.
Mas·kil.* Of David.

- 55** Listen to my prayer,
O God,^a
And do not ignore my request for mercy.*^b
- 2** Do pay attention to me and answer me.^c
My concern makes me restless,^d
And I am distraught
- 3** Because of what the enemy is saying
And the pressure from the wicked one.
For they heap trouble upon me,
And in anger they harbor animosity against me.^e
- 4** My heart is in anguish within me,^f
And the terrors of death overwhelm me.^g
- 5** Fear and trembling come upon me,
And shuddering grips me.
- 6** I keep saying: "If only I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and reside in safety.
- 7** Look! I would flee far away,^h
I would lodge in the wilderness.ⁱ (*Selah*)
- 8** I would hurry to a place of shelter
Away from the raging wind,
away from the storm."
- 9** Confuse them, O Jehovah, and frustrate their plans,^{*j}
For I have seen violence and conflict in the city.
- 10** Day and night they walk around on its walls;
Within it are malice and trouble.^k
- 11** Ruin is in its midst;
Oppression and deception never depart from its public square.^l

55:Sup *See Glossary. 55:1 *Or "And do not hide yourself when I pray for help." 55:9 *Lit., "divide their tongue."

CHAP. 55

- a 1Pe 3:12
b Ps 28:2
Ps 143:7
c Ps 17:1
d Isa 38:14
e 2Sa 16:5-7
f Ps 69:29
g Ps 18:4
Ps 116:3
Isa 38:10
h 2Sa 15:14
i 1Sa 23:14
j 2Sa 15:31
2Sa 17:7
k 2Sa 17:1
l Ps 109:2

Second Col.

- a Ps 41:9
Mt 26:21
Joh 13:18
b 2Sa 15:12
2Sa 16:23
c Lu 22:21
Lu 22:48
d 2Sa 17:23
2Sa 18:14
Ps 109:15
Mt 27:3, 5
Ac 1:16, 18
e Ps 91:15
f Ps 119:147
Da 6:10
g Ps 5:3
h 2Ch 32:7
Ps 3:6
i Ps 143:12
j De 33:27
Ps 90:2

- k Ps 36:1
l 2Sa 15:12

- m 2Sa 5:3
Ec 8:2

- n 2Sa 16:23

- 12** For it is not an enemy who taunts me;^a
Otherwise I could put up with it.
It is not a foe who has risen up against me;
Otherwise I could conceal myself from him.
- 13** But it is you, a man like me,^{*b}
My own companion whom I know well.^c
- 14** We used to enjoy a warm friendship together;
Into the house of God we used to walk along with the multitude.
- 15** May destruction overtake them!^d
Let them go down alive into the Grave;^{*e}
For evil resides among them and within them.
- 16** As for me, I will call out to God,
And Jehovah will save me.^e
- 17** Evening and morning and noontime, I am troubled and I groan,^{*f}
And he hears my voice.^g
- 18** He will rescue* me and give me[#] peace from those fighting against me,
For multitudes come against me.^h
- 19** God will hear and respond to them,ⁱ
The one who sits enthroned from of old.^j (*Selah*)
They will refuse to change,
Those who have not feared God.^k
- 20** He* attacked those at peace with him;^l
He violated his covenant.^m
- 21** His words are smoother than butter,ⁿ

55:13 *Or "a man, my equal." 55:15 *Or "Sheol," that is, the common grave of mankind. See Glossary. 55:17 *Or "I am boisterous." 55:18 *Lit., "redeem." *Or "my soul." 55:20 *That is, the former friend mentioned in vss. 13 and 14.

But conflict is in his heart.
His words are softer than oil,
But they are drawn swords.^a

- 22** Throw your burden on
Jehovah.^b
And he will sustain you.^c
Never will he allow the
righteous one to fall.^{*d}

- 23** But you, O God, will bring
them down to the deep-
est pit.^e
Those bloodguilty and
deceitful men will not
live out half their days.^f
But as for me, I will trust
in you.

To the director; set to "The Silent
Dove That Is Far Away."
Of David. Mik'tam.* When the
Phi-lis'tines captured him in Gath.^g

- 56** Show me favor, O God,
because mortal man
is attacking* me.
All day long they keep fight-
ing and oppressing me.
- 2** My foes keep snapping at me
all day long;
Many arrogantly fight
against me.
- 3** When I am afraid,^h I put
my trust in you.ⁱ
- 4** In God—whose word
I praise—
In God I put my trust;
I am not afraid.
What can mere man* do
to me?^j
- 5** All day long they hurt my
interests;
Their only thought is to
harm me.^k
- 6** They conceal themselves
to attack;
They watch my every step,^l
Hoping to take away my
life.^{*m}

55:22 *Or "stagger; totter." 56:Sup;
57:Sup *See Glossary. 56:1 *Or
"snapping at." 56:4 *Lit., "flesh."
56:6, 13 *Or "my soul."

CHAP. 55

- a Ps 28:3
Ps 62:4
b Ps 43:5
1Pe 5:6, 7
c Ps 37:5
Ps 68:19
Php 4:6, 7
d Ps 37:23, 24
Ps 62:2
Ps 121:3
e Ps 55:15
f Ps 5:6
Pr 10:27

CHAP. 56

- g 1Sa 21:10
h 1Sa 21:12
i Ps 18:2
j Ps 27:1
Ps 56:10, 11
Ro 8:31
Heb 13:6
k Jer 18:18
l Lu 20:20
m Ps 59:3
Ps 71:10

Second Col.

- a Jer 18:23
b 1Sa 27:1
c Ps 39:12
d Mal 3:16
e Ps 18:40
f Ro 8:31
g Ps 27:1
h Ps 56:4
Isa 51:7, 12
i Nu 30:2
Ec 5:4
j Ps 50:23
k 2Co 1:10
l Ps 94:18
Ps 116:8
m Job 33:29, 30

CHAP. 57

- n 1Sa 22:1
1Sa 24:3
Ps 142:Sup
o Ps 18:2
p Ru 2:12
Ps 17:8
q Ps 144:7
Ac 12:11

- 7** Reject them because of their
wickedness.
Bring down the nations in
your anger, O God.^a
- 8** You keep track of my wan-
dering.^b
Do collect my tears in your
skin bottle.^c
Are they not recorded in
your book?^d
- 9** My enemies will retreat on
the day that I call for help.^e
Of this I am confident: God
is on my side.^f
- 10** In God—whose word
I praise—
In Jehovah—whose word
I praise—
- 11** In God I put my trust;
I am not afraid.^g
What can a mere human
do to me?^h
- 12** I am bound by my vows
to you, O God;ⁱ
I will offer you expressions
of thanksgiving.^j
- 13** For you have rescued me*
from death^k
And prevented my feet from
stumbling,^l
So that I may walk before
God in the light of the
living.^m
- To the director; set to "Do Not Bring
to Ruin." Of David. Mik'tam.* When he
ran away from Saul into the cave.ⁿ
- 57** Show me favor, O God,
show me favor,
For I take* refuge in you,^o
And in the shadow of your
wings I take refuge until
the troubles pass.^p
- 2** I call to God the Most High,
To the true God, who brings
them to an end for me.
- 3** He will send help from heav-
en and save me.^q
He will frustrate the one
snapping at me. (*Selah*)

57:1 *Or "my soul takes."

God will send his loyal love
and his faithfulness.^a

4 I am* surrounded by lions;^b
I must lie among men who
want to devour me,
Whose teeth are spears and
arrows
And whose tongue is a sharp
sword.^c

5 Be exalted above the heav-
ens, O God;
May your glory be over all
the earth.^d

6 They have prepared a net to
ensnare my feet;^e
I am* bowed down with dis-
tress.^f

They have dug a pit ahead
of me,
But they fell into it them-
selves.^g (*Selah*)

7 My heart is steadfast,
O God,^h

My heart is steadfast.
I will sing and make music.

8 Do awake, my glory.
Do awake, O stringed instru-
ment; you too, O harp.
I will awaken the dawn.ⁱ

9 I will praise you among the
peoples, O Jehovah;^j
I will sing praises* to you
among the nations.^k

10 For your loyal love is great,
as high as the heavens,^l
And your faithfulness, up to
the skies.

11 Be exalted above the heav-
ens, O God;
May your glory be over all
the earth.^m

To the director;
set to "Do Not Bring to Ruin."
Of David. Mik'tam.*

58 Can you speak about righ-
teousness when you are
silent?ⁿ

Can you judge in upright-
ness, you sons of men?^o

57:4, 6 *Or "My soul is." 57:9 *Or
"make music." 58:Sup *See Glossary.

CHAP. 57

a Ps 40:11
Ps 61:7

b Ps 22:13
Ps 35:17

c Ps 52:2
Ps 64:3
Pr 25:18

d Ps 57:11
Ps 108:5

e Ps 35:7

f Ps 42:6

g 1Sa 24:4
Pr 26:27

h Ps 112:7

i Ps 108:2-5

j Ps 9:11
Ps 145:11, 12

k Ro 15:9

l Ps 36:5
Ps 103:11

m Ps 8:1
Ps 57:5
Ps 108:5

CHAP. 58

n 2Ch 19:6

o Ps 82:2

Second Col.

a Ec 3:16
Mic 3:9

b Ec 5:8
Isa 10:1, 2

c Ps 140:3
Jas 3:8

d Pr 10:25
Jer 23:19

e Ps 52:5, 6
Ps 64:10
Eze 25:17
Re 18:20

f Pr 21:18

g Isa 3:10

h Ps 9:16
Ps 98:9

2 Instead, you devise unrighteousness in your heart,^a
And your hands dispense
violence in the land.^b

3 The wicked go astray* from
birth;^c

They are wayward, liars from
the time they are born.

4 Their venom is like the
venom of serpents;^c
They are deaf like the cobra
that stops up its ear.

5 It will not listen to the voice
of charmers,
No matter how skillful their
spells.

6 O God, knock the teeth out
of their mouth!
Break the jaws of these
lions,* O Jehovah!

7 May they disappear like
waters that drain away.
May He bend his bow and
make them fall by his
arrows.

8 May they be like a snail that
melts away as it moves
along;

Like a woman's stillborn
child who never sees the
sun.

9 Before your cooking pots
feel the heat of the bram-
ble,

He will sweep away both the
moist and the burning twig,
as in a storm wind.^d

10 The righteous one will re-
joice because he has seen
the vengeance;^e

His feet will be drenched
with the blood of the
wicked.^f

11 Then men will say: "Surely
there is a reward for the
righteous."^g

There is indeed a God who
judges in the earth."^h

58:3 *Or "are corrupt." ^cLit., "from
the womb." 58:6 *Or "maned young li-
ons."

To the director; set to "Do Not Bring to Ruin." Of David. Mik'tam.*
When Saul sent men to watch David's^a
house to put him to death.^a

- 59** Rescue me from my enemies, O my God;^b
Protect me from those rising up against me.^c
- 2** Rescue me from those who act wickedly,
And save me from violent* men.
- 3** Look! They wait to ambush me;^{*d}
Strong men attack me
But not because I have revolted or sinned,^e
O Jehovah.
- 4** Though I did no wrong, they run and prepare to attack.
Do arise at my calling and see.
- 5** For you, O Jehovah God of armies, are the God of Israel.^f
Awake to turn your attention to all the nations.
Do not show mercy to any malicious traitors.^g (*Selah*)
- 6** They return each evening;^h
They growl* like dogs/ and prowl around the city.^j
- 7** Look what pours* forth from their mouth;
Their lips are like swords,^k
For they say: "Who is listening?"^l
- 8** But you, O Jehovah, will laugh at them;^m
You will scoff at all the nations.ⁿ
- 9** O my Strength, I will keep watch for you;^o
For God is my secure refuge.^{*p}
- 10** The God who shows loyal love to me will come to my aid;^q

59:Sup; 60:Sup *See Glossary.
59:Sup #Lit., "the." 59:2 *Or "blood-thirsty." 59:3 *Or "my soul." 59:6, 14 *Or "bark." 59:7 *Or "bubbles." 59:9 *Or "secure height."

CHAP. 59

- a 1Sa 19:11
b 1Sa 19:12
Ps 18:48
Ps 71:4
c Ps 12:5
Ps 91:14
d 1Sa 19:1
Ps 10:9
Ps 71:10
e 1Sa 24:11
1Sa 26:18
Ps 69:4
f De 33:29
g Pr 2:22
h 1Sa 19:11
i Ps 22:16
j Ps 59:14
k Ps 57:4
Ps 64:3
l Ps 10:4, 11
Ps 73:3, 11
m Ps 37:12, 13
n Ps 33:10
o Ps 27:1
Ps 46:1
p Ps 9:9
Ps 62:2
q Ps 6:4

Second Col.

- a Ps 54:7
b Ge 15:1
De 33:29
Ps 3:3
c Ps 64:8
Pr 12:13
Pr 16:18
d Ps 7:9
e 1Sa 17:46
Ps 9:16
Ps 83:17, 18
f Ps 59:6
g Ps 109:2, 10
h Job 37:23
Ps 21:13
Ps 145:10-12
i 1Sa 17:37
Ps 61:3
j Pr 18:10
k Isa 12:2
l Ps 59:10

CHAP. 60

- m 2Sa 8:13
1Ch 18:3
n Ps 60:10

God will cause me to look in triumph on my foes.^a

- 11** Do not kill them, so that my people may not forget.
By your power make them wander about;
Cause their downfall,
O Jehovah, our shield.^b
- 12** For the sin of their mouth,
the word of their lips,
May they be trapped by their pride,^c
Because of the cursing and deception that they speak.
- 13** Finish them off in your wrath;^d
Finish them off, so that they are no more;
Make them know that God is ruling in Jacob and to the ends of the earth.^e (*Selah*)
- 14** Let them return in the evening;
Let them growl* like dogs and prowl around the city.^f
- 15** Let them wander about for something to eat;^g
Do not let them be satisfied or find a lodging place.
- 16** But as for me, I will sing about your strength;^h
In the morning I will joyfully tell about your loyal love.
For you are my secure refuge;ⁱ
And a place for me to flee in my time of distress.^j
- 17** O my Strength, to you I will sing praises,^{*k}
For God is my secure refuge,
the God who shows loyal love to me.^l

To the director; set to "The Lily of Reminder." Mik'tam.* Of David.
For teaching. When he fought with A'ram-na-ha-ra'im and A'ram-Zo'bah, and Jo'ab returned and struck down 12,000 E'dom-ites in the Valley of Salt.^m

60 O God, you rejected us;
you broke through our defenses.ⁿ

59:17 *Or "make music."

- Song 38 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Throw Your Burden On Jehovah”:** (10 min.)
Ps 55:2, 4, 5, 16-18—David had moments of great anxiety in his life (w06 6/1 11 ¶3; w96 4/1 27 ¶2)
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Ps 56:8—What does the expression “collect my tears in your skin bottle” mean? (w09 6/1 29 ¶1; w08 10/1 26 ¶3)

Ps 59:1, 2—What does David’s experience teach us about prayer? (w08 3/15 14 ¶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 52:1–53:6

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Offer one of the tracts. Direct attention to the code on the back page.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who accepted a tract.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *fg* lesson 3 ¶2-3 —Conclude by introducing the *jw.org* video *How Can We Be Sure the Bible Is True?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 56
- **Local needs:** (7 min.)
- **“God Is My Helper”:** (8 min.) Discussion. Obtain as many comments as possible for the questions listed so that all may benefit from the personal expressions of their brothers and sisters. (Ro 1:12) Encourage publishers to use the *Research Guide* to find help from God’s Word when challenges arise.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *ia* chap. 18 ¶14-21, review on p. 161
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 121 and Prayer

“God Is My Helper”

Psalms 52-59 express David’s sentiments during several challenging periods of his life. Yet, he still trusted in Jehovah during those critical times. (Ps 54:4; 55:22) He also praised Jehovah for His word. (Ps 56:10) Are we developing the same kind of faith and trust in our God? Do we look to his Word for guidance when facing difficulties? (Pr 2:6) Which Bible verses helped you when you were . . .

discouraged or depressed?

ill?

offended by others?

persecuted?

PSALMS 52-59 | “Throw Your Burden on Jehovah”

David experienced many devastating trials during his life. By the time Psalm 55 was composed, he had suffered such things as . . .



Insults



Persecution



Severe Guilt



Family Tragedy



Sickness



Betrayal

55:22

Even when his burdens seemed unbearable, David found a way to cope with them. For any who might feel the same way, David gives this inspired advice: “Throw your burden on Jehovah.”

How can we apply this verse today?

- 1 Turn to Jehovah in heartfelt prayer with any problem, anxiety, or concern
- 2 Seek guidance and support from Jehovah’s Word and organization
- 3 Do what you reasonably can to relieve the situation in harmony with Bible principles



(w06 6/1 11 ¶3)

55:4, 5, 12-14, 16-18. The conspiracy of his own son Absalom and the betrayal of the trusted counselor Ahithophel caused David intense emotional pain. However, that did not diminish David's confidence in Jehovah. We should not allow emotional strain to weaken our trust in God.

(w96 4/1 27 ¶2)

At one time King David of Israel felt that the pressure was almost unbearable. According to Psalm 55, he was driven to distraction by anxiety because of pressures and animosity from his enemies. He felt great heartache and fear. He could only groan in his grief. (Psalm 55:2, 5, 17) Despite all his distress, however, he found a way to cope. How? He looked to his God for support. His advice to others who might feel as he did was: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself."—Psalm 55:22.

(w96 4/1 30 ¶1)

This brings us to the episode that prompted David to write Psalm 55. He was under great emotional strain. “My very heart is in severe pain within me,” he wrote, “and the frights of death itself have fallen upon me.” (Psalm 55:4) What caused this pain? Absalom, David’s son, had schemed to steal the kingship from David. (2 Samuel 15:1-6) This betrayal by his own son was hard enough to bear, but what made it worse was that David’s most trusted counselor, a man by the name of Ahithophel, joined the conspiracy against David. It is Ahithophel that David describes at Psalm 55:12-14. As a result of the conspiracy and betrayal, David had to flee Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 15:13, 14) What anguish this must have caused him!

(w06 6/1 11 ¶4)

55:22. How do we throw our burden upon Jehovah? We do this (1) by taking a matter of concern to him in prayer, (2) by turning to his Word and organization for guidance and support, and (3) by doing what we reasonably can to relieve the situation.—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 11:14; 15:22; Philippians 4:6, 7.

(w99 3/15 22-23)

Obviously, Moses was concerned about a number of issues. He asked Jehovah: “Suppose I am now come to the sons of Israel and I do say to them, ‘The God of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they do say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” Jehovah gave him the answer. (Exodus 3:13, 14) Moses was also concerned about what might happen if Pharaoh refused to believe him. Again, Jehovah answered the prophet. One final problem—Moses admitted that he was “not a fluent speaker.” How could this be remedied? Jehovah provided Aaron to speak for Moses.—Exodus 4:1-5, 10-16.

Prepared with answers to his questions and having faith in God, Moses proceeded to do as Jehovah had commanded. Rather than torture himself with frightening thoughts of what might happen when he confronted Pharaoh, Moses “did just so.” (Exodus 7:6) If he had allowed anxieties to take over, these could well have weakened the faith and boldness needed to carry out his assignment.

Moses’ balanced way of tackling his assignment is an example of what the apostle Paul called “soundness of mind.” (2 Timothy

1:7; Titus 2:2-6) If Moses had not exercised soundness of mind, he could easily have become so overwhelmed by the enormity of his assignment that he would probably not have accepted it.

Taking Control of Your Thoughts

How do you react when in your daily life you are confronted with tests of your faith or with trials? Do you tend to become panicky just thinking of the obstacles and challenges looming ahead? Or do you view them in a balanced way? As some would say, ‘Do not cross the bridge until you come to it.’ There may be no need to cross that imaginary bridge after all! So why be tormented by something that may never occur? The Bible says: “Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down.” (Proverbs 12:25) The result often is that one will procrastinate in making a decision, putting things off until it is too late.

Far more serious is the spiritual harm that undue anxiety may cause. Jesus Christ indicated that appreciation for “the word of the kingdom” can be completely choked out by the deceptive power of wealth and “the anxiety of this system of things.” (Matthew 13:19, 22) Just as thorns can prevent seedlings from reaching

maturity and bearing fruit, so uncontrolled anxiety can prevent us from making spiritual advancement and bearing fruit to God's praise. Self-inflicted, destructive anguish has even kept some from dedicating themselves to Jehovah. They worry, 'What if I do not live up to my dedication?'

The apostle Paul told us that in our spiritual warfare, we are endeavoring to bring "every thought into captivity to make it obedient to the Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) Our archenemy, Satan the Devil, would be very pleased to capitalize on our worries in order to discourage us and to weaken us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He is a master at using doubts to trap the unwary. That is why Paul also warned Christians not to "allow place for the Devil." (Ephesians 4:27) As "the god of this system of things," Satan has successfully "blinded the minds of the unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 4:4) May we never allow him to control our minds!

Help Is Available

When facing problems a child can go to a loving father and receive direction and comfort. Similarly, we can go to our heavenly Father, Jehovah, with our problems. In fact, Jehovah

invites us to throw our burdens and anxieties upon him. (Psalm 55:22) Like a child who no longer worries about his problems after he has received assurances from his father, we should not only throw our burdens upon Jehovah but also leave them with him.—James 1:6.

How do we throw our anxieties upon Jehovah? Philippians 4:6, 7 answers: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” Yes, in response to our persistent prayers and supplications, Jehovah can give us an inner calm that protects our minds from being disturbed by unnecessary anxieties.—Jeremiah 17:7, 8; Matthew 6:25-34.

To work in harmony with our prayers, though, we should not isolate ourselves either physically or mentally. (Proverbs 18:1) Rather, we would do well to consider Bible principles and directions that touch on our problem, thus avoiding reliance upon our own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Young and old alike can turn to the Bible and Watch Tower publications for a wealth of information on making decisions and

dealing with problems. Additionally, in the Christian congregation, we are blessed with wise and experienced elders and other mature Christians who are always willing to talk to us. (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22) Those who are not emotionally involved and who have God's mind on a matter can often help us to look at our problems from a different perspective. And while they will not make decisions for us, they can be a great source of encouragement and support.

“Wait for God”

No one can deny that there is enough stress in dealing with our real problems each day without adding to them by worrying about imaginary ones. If anxiety over what might happen makes us feel apprehensive and uneasy, then let us turn to Jehovah in prayer and supplication. Look to his Word and organization for direction, wisdom, and soundness of mind. We will find that whatever circumstance may arise, there is help available to deal with it.

Feeling heavy of heart and agitated, the psalmist sang: “Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you boisterous within me? Wait for God, for I shall yet laud him as the

grand salvation of my person and as my God.”
(Psalm 42:11) Let those be our sentiments.

Yes, plan for what can reasonably be expected, and leave the unexpected to Jehovah. “Throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

(w09 6/1 29 ¶1)

In the Bible book of Psalms, we find many heartwarming expressions by ancient Hebrew psalmists, such as King David, that describe Jehovah’s loving care for his servants. At Psalm 56:8, we find King David pleading to God: “Do put my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not in your book?” As shown by this analogy, David knew that Jehovah was aware not only of his suffering but also of its emotional impact. Jehovah was aware of David’s pain and remembered what David went through emotionally that caused his tears. Truly, our Creator watches over all those who endeavor to do his will, “those whose heart is complete toward him.”

(w08 10/1 26 ¶3)

David's touching words about the skin bottle can also have meaning for us. How so? Well, the Bible explains that Satan controls this world and that he has "great anger" in our day. As a result, the earth is experiencing terrible woes. (Revelation 12:12) For that reason, there are many who, like David, are faced with emotional, mental, or physical suffering—especially those who are trying to please God. Does that describe you? With courage, "even weeping," such faithful people never stop trying to live a life of integrity. (Psalm 126:6) They can be assured that their heavenly Father sees not only the trials they face but also the emotional impact of those trials. He truly understands the pain afflicting his servants, and he compassionately remembers their tears and sufferings, figuratively storing them up in his skin bottle.

(w08 3/15 14 ¶13)

¹³ Is it enough, then, for us just to take our problems to Jehovah in prayer? No. More is required. We need to act in harmony with our prayers. When King Saul sent men to David's home to put him to death, David prayed: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; from those rising up against me may you protect me. Deliver me from the practicers of what is hurtful, and from bloodguilty men save me." (Ps. 59:1, 2) In addition to praying, David listened to his wife and took the necessary action to escape. (1 Sam. 19:11, 12) In a similar way, we can pray for practical wisdom to help us deal with and perhaps improve our distressing circumstances.—Jas. 1:5.

- Song 38 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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discouraged or depressed?

ill?

offended by others?

persecuted?

Please Hear My Prayer
(Psalm 54)

1. Heavenly Father, please hear my song.
You are my God; to you I belong.
Great is your name, beyond all compare.

(CHORUS)

Gracious Jehovah, please hear my prayer.

2. Thank you, Dear God, for granting this day,
Giving me life, and showing the way.
How I delight in your tender care.

(Chorus)

3. O how I long to do what is right!
Help me, O Lord, to walk in the light.
Give me the strength all burdens to bear.

(Chorus)

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- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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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

* 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.

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?

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 angel told them that the Christ, or Messiah, had just been born in Bethlehem. They would find the child lying in a manger, swaddled in cloth bands. Then, something even more spectacular happened—a mighty host of angels appeared, praising God!—Luke 2:8-14.

¹⁵ No wonder these humble men came rushing into Bethlehem! They must have been thrilled to see a newborn infant lying there just as the angel had described. They did not keep this good news to themselves. “They made known the saying . . . And all that heard marveled over the things told them by the shepherds.” (Luke 2:17, 18) The religious leaders of the day evidently looked down on shepherds. But Jehovah clearly valued these humble, faithful men. How, though, did this visit affect Mary?

¹⁶ Mary was surely exhausted from the rigors of childbirth, yet she listened intently to every word. And she did more: “Mary began to preserve all these

16. How did Mary show that she truly was thoughtful, revealing what key to her faith?

sayings, drawing conclusions in her heart.” (Luke 2: 19) This young woman truly was thoughtful. She knew that this angelic message was vital. Her God, Jehovah, wanted her to know and to appreciate her son’s identity and importance. So she did more than listen. She stored away the words in her heart so that she could ponder over them again and again in the months and years to come. Here is an outstanding key to the faith that Mary showed throughout her life.—*Read Hebrews 11:1.*

¹⁷ Will you follow Mary’s example? Jehovah has filled the pages of his Word with vital spiritual truths. However, those truths can do us little good unless we first pay attention to them. We do that by reading the Bible regularly—not merely as a work of literature but as the inspired Word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16) Then, like Mary, we need to store up spiritual sayings in our heart, drawing conclusions. If we meditate on what we read in the Bible, contemplating ways that we can apply Jehovah’s counsel more ful-

17. How can we follow Mary’s example when it comes to spiritual truths?



Mary listened carefully to the shepherds and preserved their words in her heart

ly, we will give our faith the nourishment it needs to grow.

More Sayings to Preserve

¹⁸ On the baby's eighth day, Mary and Joseph had him circumcised as the Mosaic Law required, naming him Jesus, as directed. (Luke 1:31) Then, on the 40th day, they took him from Bethlehem to the temple in Jerusalem, some six miles away, and presented the purification offerings that the Law allowed for poorer folk—two turtledoves or two pigeons. If they felt shame in offering less than the ram and a turtledove that other parents could afford, they put such feelings aside. At any rate, they received powerful encouragement while they were there.—Luke 2:21-24.

¹⁹ An aged man named Simeon approached them and gave Mary even more sayings to treasure in her heart. He had been promised that he would see the Messiah before he died, and Jehovah's holy spirit indicated to him that little Jesus was the foretold

18. (a) How did Mary and Joseph obey the Mosaic Law in Jesus' early days? (b) What did the offering that Joseph and Mary gave at the temple reveal about their financial situation?

19. (a) How did Simeon give Mary more sayings to treasure in her heart? (b) What was Anna's reaction on seeing Jesus?



Savior. Simeon also warned Mary of the pain that she would one day have to endure. He said that she would feel as if a long sword were run through her. (Luke 2:25-35) Even those foreboding words may have helped Mary to endure when that hard time arrived, three decades later. After Simeon, a prophetess named Anna saw little Jesus and began speaking about him to everyone who cherished the hope of Jerusalem's deliverance.—*Read Luke 2:36-38.*

²⁰ What a good decision Joseph and Mary had made in bringing their baby to Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem! They thus launched their son on a life-long course of faithful attendance at Jehovah's temple. While there, they gave of themselves according to their ability and received words of instruction and encouragement. Mary surely left the temple that day stronger in faith, her heart full of spiritual sayings to meditate on and share with others.

²¹ It is a beautiful thing to see parents today following that example. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, **20. How did bringing Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem prove to be a good decision?**
21. How can we ensure that our faith will grow ever stronger, as Mary's did?

parents faithfully bring their children to Christian meetings. Such parents give what they can, offering words of encouragement to their fellow believers. And they come away stronger, happier, and full of good things to share with others. What a pleasure it is to meet with them! As we do, we will find that our faith, like Mary's, will grow ever stronger.

TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- How did Mary set an example in submissiveness and obedience?
- What can we learn from the way that Mary coped with poverty?
- How did Mary prove to be a thoughtful, spiritual woman?
- In what ways are you determined to follow Mary's example?

121 *Encourage One Another* (Hebrews 10:24, 25)

1. As we encourage one another
 To serve Jehovah faithfully,
We find the bonds of love are strengthened;
 Fine works bring peace and unity.
 The love we find among God's people
 Gives each the courage to endure.
Our congregation is a refuge,
 A place where we can feel secure.
2. A word when spoken at the right time
 Is, oh, how comforting to hear!
We hear these words of consolation
 From friends so faithful and so dear.
 How good it is to work together
 With those whose hopes and goals we share!
We seek to strengthen one another
 And help each one his burden bear.
3. As we with eyes of faith are seeing
 The nearness of Jehovah's day,
We need our gathering together
 To keep us walking in the way.
 United with Jehovah's people,
 We hope to serve eternally.
So we encourage one another
 To hold to our integrity.

(See also Luke 22:32; Acts 14:21, 22; Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:14.)

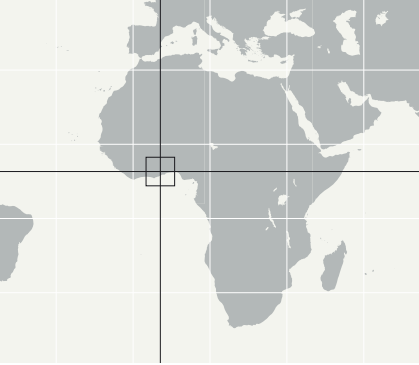
MAY 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JUNE 27–JULY 31, 2016



COVER IMAGE:
GHANA

A resourceful Kingdom proclaimer uses one of our tracts to witness to fellow students. She lives in the town of Ho in the Volta region of Ghana

PUBLISHERS
125,443

BIBLE STUDIES
382,408

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2014)
347,725

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8 WEEK OF JULY 4-10 “Go, . . . and Make Disciples of People of All the Nations”

This article discusses evidence that Jehovah’s Witnesses are the only people on earth today who are fulfilling Jesus’ prophetic words found at Matthew 24:14. It also explains what is involved in becoming “fishers of men.”—Matt. 4:19.

13 WEEK OF JULY 11-17 How Do You Make Personal Decisions?

When you make personal decisions, do you simply do what feels right to you? Or do you ask others what they would do? This article explains why the best decisions are made when we allow Jehovah God’s thinking to be the determining factor.

18 WEEK OF JULY 18-24 Is the Bible Still Changing Your Life?

Do you find the refining of your Christian qualities now harder than the larger changes you made before baptism? This article explains why this challenge exists and how we can continue to cultivate godly qualities with the help of God’s Word.

23 WEEK OF JULY 25-31 Benefit Fully From Jehovah’s Provisions

This article alerts us to a trap that could cause us to miss out on beneficial spiritual provisions. We will consider how we can avoid falling into that trap, and we will learn how to benefit from all the spiritual food available to us.

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This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

To make a donation, please visit www.jw.org.



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

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May 2016

Vol. 137, No. 8 ENGLISH

1. Praise Jehovah, God of peace,
God of unity.
He will make all wars to cease,
Bring in harmony.
Prince of Peace is Christ his Son,
Tender, calm, and kind.
When the fight for right he's won,
Perfect peace we'll find.
2. We have left off angry words,
Making quarrels cease.
We have made from spears and swords,
Implements of peace.
If this peace we want to keep,
Then we must forgive.
Peacefully as Jesus' sheep,
May we learn and live.
3. As a fruit of righteousness,
Peace we all must bear,
Proof of wisdom from above,
Gained through heartfelt prayer.
We would recommend our way,
Show our peaceful care
Till the Kingdom's perfect day
Brings peace ev'rywhere.

Settle Differences in a Spirit of Love

“Keep peace with one another.”—MARK 9:50.

SONGS: 39, 77

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

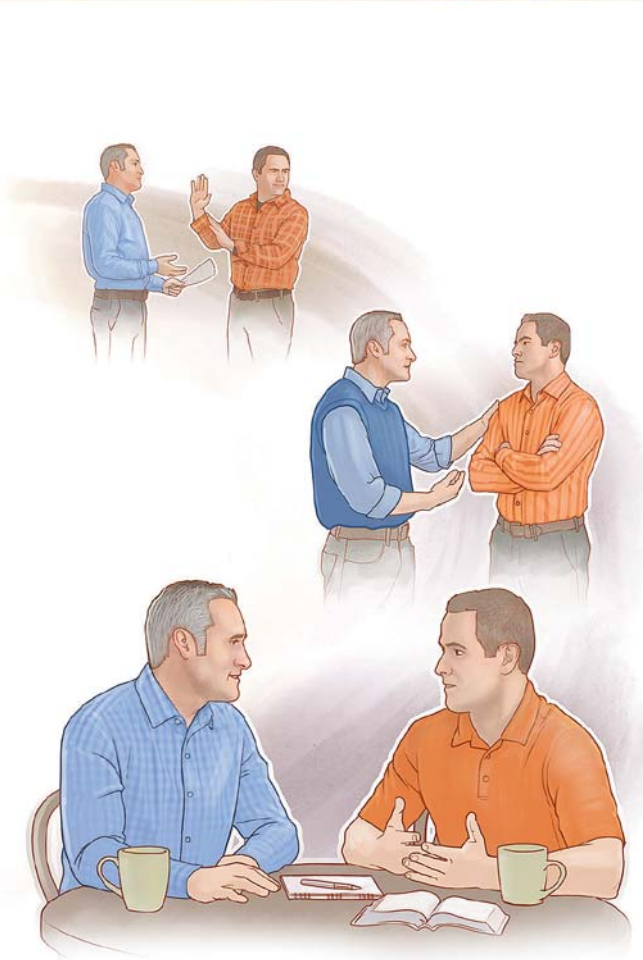
What counsel did Jesus give to help us handle differences in a spirit of love?

What questions might a Christian ask himself when deciding how to settle differences with others?

How can the three steps outlined at Matthew 18:15-17 be used to resolve some conflicts?

HAVE you ever thought about the personal conflicts recorded in the Bible? Consider just the first few chapters of Genesis. Cain kills Abel (Gen. 4:3-8); Lamech kills a young man for striking him (Gen. 4:23); the shepherds of Abraham (Abram) and Lot quarrel (Gen. 13:5-7); Hagar despises Sarah (Sarai), who becomes upset with Abraham (Gen. 16:3-6); Ishmael is against everyone and everyone’s hand is against him.—Gen. 16:12.

2 Why does the Bible mention such conflicts? Well, one
1, 2. What human struggles are featured in Genesis, and why is this of interest?



It may be necessary to reason with your brother more than once in order to gain him

reason is that it helps imperfect humans learn why they need to keep peace. It also shows us the way we can do this. We benefit from reading Bible accounts about real people struggling with real problems. We learn about the results of their efforts and may thus be able to apply such points to some situations we encounter in life. Indeed, all of this helps us to consider how we should or should not deal with similar issues.—Rom. 15:4.

3 This article will consider why Jehovah’s servants need to settle differences and how they can succeed in doing so. In addition, it will refer to Scriptural principles that can help them to deal with conflict and maintain good relations with their neighbor and with Jehovah God.

WHY GOD’S SERVANTS NEED TO SETTLE DIFFERENCES

4 Satan is primarily responsible for the strife and differences experienced by mankind. In Eden, his argument was that each individual can and should decide what is good and what is bad, doing so independent of God. (Gen. 3:1-5) The fruits of such reasoning are plain to see. The world abounds with people and societies motivated by a spirit of independence that fosters pride, egotism, and rivalry. Anyone who allows himself to be swept along by this spirit is, in effect, ac-

3. What topics will this article cover?

4. What attitude spread throughout the world, and what has been the result?

cepting Satan's argument that it is the course of wisdom to pursue one's own interests regardless of how doing so may affect others. Such a selfish course leads to strife. And it is good for us to remember that "a man prone to anger stirs up strife; anyone disposed to rage commits many transgressions." —Prov. 29:22.

5 In contrast, Jesus taught people to seek peace, even if such a course would seem detrimental to their own interests. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave excellent advice about handling disagreements or potential conflicts. For instance, he urged his disciples to be mild-tempered, to be peacemakers, to eliminate causes for anger, to settle matters quickly, and to love their enemies.—Matt. 5:5, 9, 22, 25, 44.

6 Our efforts to serve God—through prayers, meeting attendance, field service, and other aspects of our worship—are in vain if we refuse to make peace with others. (Mark 11:25) We cannot be friends of God unless we are willing to forgive the shortcomings of others.—Read Luke 11:4; Ephesians 4:32.

7 Every Christian needs to think carefully and honestly about being forgiving and having peaceful relations with others. Do you forgive fellow believers freely? Are you happy to

5. How did Jesus teach people to handle disagreements?

6, 7. (a) Why is it important to settle personal differences promptly?

(b) What questions should all of Jehovah's people ask themselves?

fellowship with them? Jehovah expects his servants to be forgiving. If your conscience tells you that you have improvements to make in this regard, prayerfully seek Jehovah's help in order to make them! Our heavenly Father will hear such humble prayers and answer them.—1 John 5:14, 15.

CAN YOU IGNORE AN OFFENSE?

8 Because all humans are imperfect, sooner or later someone is going to say or do something that will offend you. This is inevitable. (Eccl. 7:20; Matt. 18:7) How are you going to react? Consider what happened when the following situation developed: At a social gathering attended by some Witnesses, two brothers were greeted by a certain sister in a way that one of them considered inappropriate. When the two brothers were alone, the offended brother began to criticize the sister for what she had said. However, the other brother reminded him that she had served Jehovah loyally in difficult circumstances for 40 years; he was sure that she meant no harm. After considering this for a moment, the first brother responded, "You are right." As a result, the issue went no further.

9 What does this experience show? The way you react to situations that have the potential for causing offense lies in your own hands. A loving person covers over minor transgressions. (Read Proverbs 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8.) Jehovah considers it "beauty" on your part "to overlook an offense." (Prov. 19:

8, 9. What should we do if we are offended?

11; Eccl. 7:9) So the first thing to ask yourself when somebody treats you in a way that could seem unkind or disrespectful is: ‘Can I overlook this? Do I really need to make an issue of it?’

10 It may be challenging to treat criticism lightly. Take the case of a pioneer, whom we will call Lucy. Negative comments had been made about her ministry and her use of time. Upset, Lucy sought the counsel of mature brothers. She relates: “Their Scriptural advice helped me to maintain the right viewpoint of others’ opinions and to focus on who matters most—Jehovah.” Lucy was encouraged by reading Matthew 6:1-4. (Read.) That passage reminded her that making Jehovah happy should be her goal. “Even if others make negative comments about my activity,” she says, “I remain happy, for I know that I am trying my best to receive Jehovah’s smile of approval.” After reaching this conclusion, Lucy wisely chose to overlook the negative remarks.

WHEN YOU CANNOT OVERLOOK AN OFFENSE

11 “We all stumble many times.” (Jas. 3:2) Suppose you learn that a brother was offended by something you said or did. What should you do? Jesus said: “If . . . you are bringing

10. (a) How did one sister at first react to criticism? (b) What Scriptural thought helped this sister to maintain her peace?

11, 12. (a) How should a Christian act if he believes that his brother “has something against” him? (b) What can we learn from the way Abraham handled a problem? (See opening picture of the standard edition.)

your gift to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away. First make your peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift.” (Matt. 5:23, 24) In harmony with Jesus’ counsel, talk with your brother. Note what your objective should be. It is not to cast part of the blame on your brother but to admit your fault and *make peace*. Being at peace with our fellow worshippers is of utmost importance.

12 A Scriptural account in which God’s servants peacefully resolved a potentially divisive issue is the one mentioned earlier involving Abraham and his nephew Lot. Both men possessed livestock, and their shepherds apparently quarreled about grazing land. Eager to eliminate tensions, Abraham offered Lot first choice of the areas where their respective households would settle. (Gen. 13:1, 2, 5-9) What a good example! Abraham sought peace, not his own interests. Did he lose out because of his generosity? Not at all. Immediately after this incident with Lot, Jehovah promised Abraham great blessings. (Gen. 13:14-17) God will never allow his servants to suffer lasting loss for acting in harmony with divine principles and settling differences in a spirit of love.[1]

13 Consider a modern-day situation. When the new over-

13. How did one overseer react to harsh words, and what can we learn from his example?

seer of a convention department phoned a brother to ask if he would be able to volunteer, the brother made a number of cutting remarks and hung up. He was nursing hurt feelings over his dealings with the previous overseer. The new overseer did not take offense at this outburst, but neither could he ignore it. An hour later, he called again, mentioning that they had not yet met, and he suggested that they resolve the issues together. A week later, the two met at a Kingdom Hall. After praying, they spoke for an hour, during which the brother told his story. After listening sympathetically, the overseer shared Scriptural observations, and the two brothers parted on good terms. Thereafter, the brother served at the convention and now thanks the overseer for having dealt with him calmly and kindly.

SHOULD YOU INVOLVE THE ELDERS?

14 Most differences between Christians can and should be resolved privately by the individuals concerned. However, Jesus noted that some situations might require congregation involvement. (Read Matthew 18:15-17.) What would be the outcome if an offender refused to listen to his brother, to witnesses, and to the congregation? He should be treated “just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector.” Today, we

14, 15. (a) When should we apply the counsel at Matthew 18:15-17? (b) What three steps did Jesus mention, and what should be our goal in applying them?

would say that he should be disfellowshipped. The seriousness of this step indicates that the “sin” was not a small disagreement. Rather, it was (1) a sin that could be settled between the individuals concerned but it was also (2) a sin serious enough to merit disfellowshipping if not settled. Such sins might involve a measure of fraud or might include damaging a person’s reputation through slander. The three steps Jesus outlined here are applicable only where these conditions exist. The offense did not include such a sin as adultery, homosexuality, apostasy, idolatry, or some other gross sin definitely requiring the attention of the congregation elders.

15 The aim of Jesus’ counsel was to help a brother in a spirit of love. (Matt. 18:12-14) First, an attempt should be made to resolve the issue without involving others. It may be necessary to reason with the sinner more than once. If that fails, talk to the offender in the company of witnesses to the wrongdoing or with others who can help to determine if a wrong has really been committed. If you succeed in resolving the issue with their help, you will have “gained your brother.” A matter should be referred to the elders only when repeated efforts to help the wrongdoer have failed.

16 Cases requiring that brothers go through all three steps outlined at Matthew 18:15-17 are rare. That is encouraging, for it means that a solution is usually found before the situa-

16. What shows that following Jesus’ counsel is practical and loving?

tion reaches the point where an unrepentant sinner must be removed from the congregation. Often, the wrongdoer sees his error and corrects matters. The offended person may see that he no longer has a real reason to find fault and may prefer to forgive. Whatever the case, Jesus' words indicate that the congregation should not get involved in disagreements prematurely. The elders may intervene only if the preceding two steps have been taken and if solid evidence can be produced to show clearly what has happened.

17 As long as this system of things lasts, humans will be imperfect and will continue to offend others. The disciple James appropriately wrote: "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." (Jas. 3:2) In order to settle differences, we must earnestly "seek peace and pursue it." (Ps. 34:14) As peacemakers, we will enjoy a good relationship with our fellow believers and will promote the unity of the congregation. (Ps. 133:1-3) Above all, we will have a good relationship with Jehovah, "the God who gives peace." (Rom. 15:33) Such blessings are enjoyed by those who settle differences in a spirit of love.

17. What blessings will we enjoy when we "seek peace" with one another?

ENDNOTE:

[1] (paragraph 12) Others who solved problems peacefully included the following: Jacob, with Esau (Gen. 27:41-45; 33:1-11); Joseph, with his brothers (Gen. 45:1-15); and Gideon, with the Ephraimites. (Judg. 8:1-3) Perhaps you can think of similar examples recorded elsewhere in the Bible.

Be Forgiving (Psalm 86:5)

1. Lovingly Jehovah

Made provision through his Son
For our sins to be forgiven
And for death to be undone.
If we truly are repentant,
His forgiveness we can claim
On the basis of Christ's ransom,
Asking pardon in his name.

2. We receive such mercy

When we act like God above
And forgive each other freely,
Showing empathy and love.
Putting up with one another,
Putting hurtfulness away;
Showing honor to our brother,
Showing love's surpassing way.

3. Mercy is a virtue

That we all should cultivate.
It will keep us from resentment,
From the bitterness of hate.
When we imitate Jehovah,
Who is unsurpassed in love,
We will truly be forgiving;
We will be like God above.