

- Song 7 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"I Am With You to Save You":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Jeremiah.*]
Jer 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment (*w11 3/15 29 ¶4*)
Jer 1:7-10, 17-19—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah (*w05 12/15 23 ¶18; jr 88 ¶14-15*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Jer 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶8*)

Jer 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah "deceived" his people? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶4*)

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) Jer 4:1-10

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month's Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on "Sample Presentations." Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 18
- **Organizational Accomplishments:** (7 min.) Play the *Organizational Accomplishments* video for March.
- **Memorial Campaign to Begin March 18:** (8 min.) Talk by the service overseer based on the February 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, page 8. Distribute a copy of the Memorial invitation to all in the audience, and review its contents. Outline local arrangements for covering the territory.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 9 ¶10-15, chart on p. 90, boxes on pp. 93, 96-97
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 110 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 1-4 | "I Am With You to Save You"

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when Jehovah appointed him as a prophet. Jeremiah felt unqualified for the responsibility, but Jehovah reassured him of His continued support.



647
Jeremiah appointed as a prophet

607
Jerusalem destroyed

580
Writing completed

640

620

600

580

Jehovah, Our Strength

(Isaiah 12:2)

C G/B C G7/D C/G G C C° C

Gra - cious Je - ho - vah, our strength and our might,
 We who now serve you re - joice in your light;
 Glad - ly, O God, we keep do - ing your will.

G7 C/G G C G/B Am G/D C/D D G

You are our Sav - ior, in you we de - light.
 Eyes that are o - pened now see truth and right.
 Though Sa - tan mocks us, we're trust - ing you still.

C G/B C G7/D C/G E7/G# Am E7/G# Am

We are your Wit - ness - es bear - ing your news,
 Search - ing the Scrip - tures, we hear your com - mand;
 Though he may slay us, oh, help us to be

E/B Am/C G/D B7/D# Em A7 D7 G Chorus G7

Wheth - er men hear or they proud - ly re - fuse.
 Mak - ing our choice, for your King - dom we stand. Je -
 Firm to the end for your grand Sov - 'reign - ty.

Jehovah, Our Strength

C F/C C C/E F C/E F C

ho - vah, our Rock, Our strength and our might,

G B° Am/C E7/B Am G/D D7 G

Your name we make known Both day and night.

C G7/F C/E G7/D C G/F C/E G7/D C F

Glo - rious Je - ho - vah, Al - might - y in pow'r,

F#° C/G C#° Dm C/G G C

You are our hid - ing place; You are our Tow'r.

(See also 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; Isa. 43:12.)

to Tu'bal and Ja'van,^a and to the faraway islands—who have not heard a report about me or seen my glory; and they will proclaim my glory among the nations.^b **20** They will bring all your brothers out of all the nations^c as a gift to Jehovah, on horses, in chariots, in covered wagons, on mules, and on swift camels, up to my holy mountain, Jerusalem,” says Jehovah, “just as when the people of Israel bring their gift in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah.”

21 “I will also take some for the priests and for the Levites,” says Jehovah.

22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth^d that I am making will remain standing before me,” declares Jehovah, “so

CHAP. 66

a Ge 10:2
Eze 27:12, 13

b Isa 60:3
Mal 1:11

c De 30:1-3
Isa 11:16
Isa 43:6
Isa 60:4, 9

d Isa 65:17, 18
2Pe 3:13
Re 21:1

Second Col.

a Isa 65:23
Jer 31:35, 36

b Ps 86:9
Zec 14:16
Mal 1:11

c Isa 34:10
Mt 25:41
Mr 9:47, 48
2Th 1:9

your offspring* and your name will remain.”^a

23 “And from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, All flesh* will come in to bow down before[#] me,”^b says Jehovah.

24 “And they will go out and look on the carcasses of the men who rebelled against me;

For the worms on them will not die, And their fire will not be extinguished,^c And they will become something repulsive to all people.”[#]

66:22 *Lit., “seed.” **66:23** *Or “all humans.” [#]Or “to worship.” **66:24** *Lit., “all flesh.”

JEREMIAH

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Jeremiah appointed as prophet (1-10)
Vision of the almond tree (11, 12)
Vision of the cooking pot (13-16)
Jeremiah fortified for his commission (17-19)</p> <p>2 Israel abandons Jehovah for other gods (1-37)
Israel like a foreign vine (21)
Her skirts stained with blood (34)</p> <p>3 Depth of Israel's apostasy (1-5)
Israel and Judah guilty of adultery (6-11)
A call to repentance (12-25)</p> <p>4 Repentance brings blessings (1-4)
Disaster to come from the north (5-18)
Jeremiah's pain over the coming disaster (19-31)</p> <p>5 The people refuse Jehovah's discipline (1-13)
Destruction but not complete extermination (14-19)</p> | <p>Jehovah calls the people to account (20-31)</p> <p>6 Siege of Jerusalem near (1-9)
Jehovah's rage on Jerusalem (10-21)
Saying “Peace!” when there is no peace (14)
Cruel invasion from the north (22-26)
Jeremiah to serve as a metal tester (27-30)</p> <p>7 False trust in Jehovah's temple (1-11)
The temple to become like Shiloh (12-15)
Formal worship condemned (16-34)
“Queen of Heaven” worshipped (18)
Child sacrifice in Hinnom (31)</p> <p>8 The people choose the popular course (1-7)
What wisdom without Jehovah's word? (8-17)
Jeremiah laments Judah's breakdown (18-22)
“Is there no balsam in Gilead?” (22)</p> |
|---|---|

- 9 Jeremiah's deep sadness (1-3a)
 Jehovah calls Judah to account (3b-16)
 Lamentation over Judah (17-22)
 Boast about knowing Jehovah (23-26)
- 10 The gods of the nations versus the living God (1-16)
 Impending destruction and exile (17, 18)
 Jeremiah grieves (19-22)
 The prophet's prayer (23-25)
 Man cannot direct his own step (23)
- 11 Judah breaks covenant with God (1-17)
 As many gods as cities (13)
 Jeremiah likened to a lamb to be slaughtered (18-20)
 Opposition from the men of Jeremiah's hometown (21-23)
- 12 Jeremiah's complaint (1-4)
 Jehovah's answer (5-17)
- 13 The ruined linen belt (1-11)
 Wine jars to be smashed (12-14)
 Irreformable Judah to be exiled (15-27)
 "Can a Cushite change his skin?" (23)
- 14 Drought, famine, and sword (1-12)
 False prophets condemned (13-18)
 Jeremiah acknowledges the people's sins (19-22)
- 15 Jehovah will not change his judgment (1-9)
 Jeremiah's complaint (10)
 Jehovah's answer (11-14)
 Jeremiah's prayer (15-18)
 Delight in eating God's words (16)
 Jeremiah fortified by Jehovah (19-21)
- 16 Jeremiah not to marry, mourn, or feast (1-9)
 Punishment, then restoration (10-21)
- 17 Judah's sin ingrained (1-4)
 Blessings of trusting in Jehovah (5-8)
 The treacherous heart (9-11)
 Jehovah, the hope of Israel (12, 13)
 Jeremiah's prayer (14-18)
 Keeping the Sabbath sacred (19-27)
- 18 The clay in the potter's hands (1-12)
 Jehovah turns his back on Israel (13-17)
 Plot against Jeremiah; his plea (18-23)
- 19 Jeremiah told to break a clay flask (1-15)
 Child sacrifice to Baal (5)
- 20 Pashhur strikes Jeremiah (1-6)
- Jeremiah cannot stop preaching (7-13)
 God's message like a burning fire (9)
 Jehovah like a fearsome warrior (11)
 Jeremiah's complaint (14-18)
- 21 Jehovah denies Zedekiah's request (1-7)
 People to choose life or death (8-14)
- 22 Judgment messages against bad kings (1-30)
 Concerning Shallum (10-12)
 Concerning Jehoiakim (13-23)
 Concerning Coniah (24-30)
- 23 Good shepherds and bad (1-4)
 Security under the "righteous sprout" (5-8)
 False prophets condemned (9-32)
 "The burden" of Jehovah (33-40)
- 24 Good figs and bad figs (1-10)
- 25 Jehovah's controversy with the nations (1-38)
 Nations to serve Babylon for 70 years (11)
 The cup of wine of God's wrath (15)
 Calamity from nation to nation (32)
 Those slain by Jehovah (33)
- 26 Jeremiah threatened with death (1-15)
 Jeremiah spared (16-19)
 Micah's prophecy quoted (18)
 The prophet Urijah (20-24)
- 27 The yoke of Babylon (1-11)
 Zedekiah told to submit to Babylon (12-22)
- 28 Jeremiah versus the false prophet Hananiah (1-17)
- 29 Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (1-23)
 Israel to return after 70 years (10)
 A message to Shemaiah (24-32)
- 30 Promises of restoration and healing (1-24)
- 31 Israel's remnant to resettle the land (1-30)
 Rachel weeps over her children (15)
 A new covenant (31-40)
- 32 Jeremiah's purchase of a field (1-15)
 Jeremiah's prayer (16-25)
 Jehovah's answer (26-44)
- 33 Restoration promised (1-13)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Security under the “righteous sprout” (14-16)</p> <p>Covenant with David and priests (17-26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Covenant regarding day and night (20)</p> <p>34 Judgment message to Zedekiah (1-7)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Covenant granting slaves liberty broken (8-22)</p> <p>35 Rechabites show exemplary obedience (1-19)</p> <p>36 Jeremiah dictates a scroll (1-7)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Baruch reads aloud from the scroll (8-19)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jehoiakim burns the scroll (20-26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Message rewritten on a new scroll (27-32)</p> <p>37 Chaldeans’ withdrawal only temporary (1-10)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jeremiah imprisoned (11-16)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Zedekiah meets with Jeremiah (17-21)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jeremiah provided with bread (21)</p> <p>38 Jeremiah thrown into a cistern (1-6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ebed-melech rescues Jeremiah (7-13)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jeremiah urges Zedekiah to surrender (14-28)</p> <p>39 The fall of Jerusalem (1-10)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Zedekiah flees and is captured (4-7)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jeremiah to be safeguarded (11-14)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ebed-melech’s life to be spared (15-18)</p> <p>40 Nebuzaradan frees Jeremiah (1-6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Gedaliah appointed over the land (7-12)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Plot against Gedaliah (13-16)</p> <p>41 Gedaliah assassinated by Ishmael (1-10)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ishmael put to flight by Johanan (11-18)</p> <p>42 People ask Jeremiah to pray for direction (1-6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jehovah replies: “Do not go to Egypt” (7-22)</p> <p>43 People disobey and go to Egypt (1-7)</p> | <p>Jehovah’s word to Jeremiah in Egypt (8-13)</p> <p>44 Calamity on Jews in Egypt foretold (1-14)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">People reject God’s warning (15-30)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Queen of Heaven” worshipped (17-19)</p> <p>45 Jehovah’s message to Baruch (1-5)</p> <p>46 Prophecy against Egypt (1-26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Egypt to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (13, 26)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Promises to Israel (27, 28)</p> <p>47 Prophecy against the Philistines (1-7)</p> <p>48 Prophecy against Moab (1-47)</p> <p>49 Prophecy against Ammon (1-6)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Prophecy against Edom (7-22)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Edom no longer to exist as a nation (17, 18)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Prophecy against Damascus (23-27)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Prophecy against Kedar and Hazor (28-33)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Prophecy against Elam (34-39)</p> <p>50 Prophecy against Babylon (1-46)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Flee out of Babylon (8)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Israel to be brought back (17-19)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Babylon’s water to be dried up (38)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Babylon to be uninhabited (39, 40)</p> <p>51 Prophecy against Babylon (1-64)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Babylon to fall suddenly to the Medes (8-12)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Book thrown into the Euphrates (59-64)</p> <p>52 Zedekiah rebels against Babylon (1-3)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem (4-11)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Destruction of the city and the temple (12-23)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">People taken into exile to Babylon (24-30)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Jehoiachin released from prison (31-34)</p> |
|---|--|

1 These are the words of Jeremiah* the son of Hil-ki’ah, one of the priests in An’a-thoth^a in the land of Benjamin. **2** The word of Jehovah came to him in the days of Jo-si’ah^b the son of

1:1 *Possibly meaning “Jehovah Exalts.”

CHAP. 1

a Jos 21:8, 18
b 2Ki 22:1, 2

Second Col.

a 2Ki 21:19, 20
b 2Ki 24:1
2Ch 36:4
c 2Ki 24:18, 19
d 2Ki 25:8, 11
Jer 52:12, 15

A’m^a,^a the king of Judah, in the 13th year of his reign. **3** It came also in the days of Je-hoi’a-kim^b the son of Jo-si’ah, the king of Judah, until the completion of the 11th year of Zed-e-ki’ah^c the son of Jo-si’ah, the king of Judah, until Jerusalem went into exile in the fifth month.^d

4 The word of Jehovah came to me, saying:

5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew* you,^a And before you were born[#] I sanctified you.^{△b} I made you a prophet to the nations."

6 But I said: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! I do not know how to speak,^c for I am just a boy."^d

7 Jehovah then said to me: "Do not say, 'I am just a boy.' For you must go to all those to whom I send you, And you should say everything that I command you."^e

8 Do not be afraid because of their appearance,^f For 'I am with you to save you,'^g declares Jehovah."

9 Then Jehovah stretched out his hand and touched my mouth.^h And Jehovah said to me: "I have put my words in your mouth.ⁱ 10 See, I have commissioned you this day to be over the nations and over the kingdoms, to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to tear down, to build and to plant."^j

11 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" So I said: "I see the branch of an almond tree."^k

12 Jehovah said to me: "You have seen correctly, for I am wide awake concerning my word to carry it out."

13 The word of Jehovah came to me a second time, saying: "What do you see?" So I said: "I see a boiling* pot,[#] and its

1:5 *Or "chose." #Lit., "before you came out of the womb." △Or "set you apart." 1:6 *Or "young person." 1:11 *Lit., "an awakening one." 1:13 *Lit., "blown upon," indicating a fanned fire underneath. #Or "wide-mouthed cooking pot."

CHAP. 1
a Jg 13:5
Ps 139:15, 16
b Lu 1:13, 15
c Ex 4:10
d 1Ki 3:5, 7
e Ex 7:1, 2
f Eze 2:6
g Ex 3:11, 12
Jer 15:20
Ac 18:9, 10
h Isa 6:7
i Ex 4:12, 15
Eze 33:7
j Jer 18:7-10
Jer 24:5, 6

Second Col.

a Jer 6:1
Jer 10:22
b Jer 5:15
Jer 6:22
Jer 25:9
c Jer 39:3
d De 28:52
Jer 34:22
Jer 44:6
e Jos 24:20
2Ki 22:17
2Ch 7:19, 20
f Eze 8:10, 11
Ho 11:2
g Isa 2:8
h Eze 2:6
i Jer 15:20
Jer 20:11
Eze 3:8
Mic 3:8
j Jer 26:12
k Ge 28:15
Ex 3:12
Jos 1:5

mouth is tilted away from the north." 14 Then Jehovah said to me:

"Out of the north the calamity will break loose Against all the inhabitants of the land."^a

15 For 'I am summoning all the families of the kingdoms of the north,' declares Jehovah,^b

'And they will come; each one will set up his throne At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem,^c Against her walls all around And against all the cities of Judah.'^d

16 And I will declare my judgments against them over all their wickedness, Because they have abandoned me,^e

And they are making sacrificial smoke to other gods^f And bowing down to the works of their own hands.'^g

17 But you should prepare for action,^{*}

And you must stand up and tell them everything that I command you.

Do not be terrified of them,^h So that I do not terrify you before them.

18 For today I have made you a fortified city,

An iron pillar, and copper walls against all the land,ⁱ Toward the kings of Judah and her princes,

Toward her priests and the people of the land.^j

19 And they will certainly fight against you,

But they will not prevail against you,^{*}

For 'I am with you,'^k declares Jehovah, 'to save you.'"

1:17 *Lit., "gird up your hips." 1:19 *Or "defeat you."

2 The word of Jehovah came to me, saying: **2** "Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, 'This is what Jehovah says:

"I well remember the devotion* of your youth,^a
The love you showed when you were engaged to marry,^b

How you followed me in the wilderness,
In a land not sown with seed.^c

3 Israel was holy to Jehovah,^d the firstfruits of his harvest."^e

'Anyone devouring him would become guilty.
Disaster would come upon them,' declares Jehovah."^e

4 Hear the word of Jehovah, O house of Jacob,
And all you families of the house of Israel.

5 This is what Jehovah says: "What fault did your forefathers find in me,^f

So that they strayed so far from me,
And they walked after worthless idols^g and became worthless themselves?^h

6 They did not ask, 'Where is Jehovah,

The One who brought us out of the land of Egypt,ⁱ
Who led us through the wilderness,

Through a land of deserts/^j and pits,

Through a land of drought^k and of deep shadow,

Through a land where no man travels

And where no humans dwell?'

7 I then brought you to a land of orchards,

To eat its fruitage and its good things.^l

CHAP. 2

a Ho 2:15

b Ex 24:3

c De 2:7

d Ex 19:6
De 7:6

e Ex 17:8, 13

f Isa 5:4
Mic 6:3

g De 32:21

h Ps 115:4, 8

i Ex 14:30

j De 1:1
De 32:9, 10

k De 8:14, 15

l Nu 13:26, 27
De 6:10, 11
De 8:7-9

Second Col.

a Le 18:24
Nu 35:33
Ps 78:58
Ps 106:38
Jer 16:18

b 1Sa 2:12
La 4:13

c Eze 34:7, 8

d 1Ki 18:19
Jer 23:13

e Eze 20:35
Mic 6:2

f Ge 10:2, 4

g Ge 25:13
Ps 120:5
Jer 49:28

h Ps 106:20

i Ps 36:9
Jer 17:13
Re 22:1

But you came in and defiled my land;

You made my inheritance something detestable.^a

8 The priests did not ask, 'Where is Jehovah?'^b

Those handling the Law did not know me,

The shepherds rebelled against me,^c

The prophets prophesied by Ba'al,^d

And they followed those who could bring no benefit.

9 'So I will contend further with you,'^e declares Jehovah,

'And I will contend with the sons of your sons.'

10 'But cross over to the coastlands* of the Kit'tim^f and see.

Yes, send to Ke'dar^g and consider carefully;
See whether anything like this has happened.

11 Has a nation ever changed its gods for those that are not gods?

But my own people have exchanged my glory for what is useless.^h

12 Stare in amazement at this, you heavens;

Shudder in absolute horror,' declares Jehovah,

13 'Because my people have done two bad things:

They have abandoned me, the source of living water,ⁱ

And dug* for themselves cisterns,

Broken cisterns, that cannot hold water.'

14 'Is Israel a servant or a slave born in the household?

Then why has he been given over to plunder?

2:2 *Or "loyal love."

2:10 *Or "islands." 2:13 *Or "hewed out," likely from rock.

- 15** Against him young lions*
 roar;^a
 They have raised their voice.
 They made his land an object
 of horror.
 His cities have been set on
 fire, so that there is no
 inhabitant.
- 16** The people of Noph*^b and
 Tah'pan-es^c feed on the
 crown of your head.
- 17** Have you not brought this
 on yourself
 By abandoning Jehovah
 your God^d
 While he was leading you in
 the way?
- 18** Now why do you wish for
 the way to Egypt^e
 To drink the waters of
 Shi'hor?*
- Why do you wish for the way
 to As-syr'i-a^f
 To drink the waters of the
 River?#
- 19** Your wickedness should
 correct you,
 And your own unfaithfulness
 should reprove you.
 Know and realize how bad
 and bitter it is^g
 To abandon Jehovah your
 God;
 You have shown no fear
 of me,^h declares the
 Sovereign Lord, Jehovah
 of armies.
- 20** 'For long ago I smashed your
 yokeⁱ
 And tore off your shackles.
 But you said: "I am not going
 to serve,"
 For on every high hill and
 under every luxuriant tree^j
 You were lying sprawled out,
 prostituting yourself.^k
- 21** I planted you as a choice red
 vine,^l all of it pure seed;

2:15 *Or "maned young lions." 2:16
 *Or "Memphis." 2:18 *That is, a
 branch of the Nile River. #That is, the
 Euphrates.

CHAP. 2

- a Isa 5:29
 Jer 4:7
- b Jer 46:19
- c Jer 43:4, 7
 Jer 46:14
 Eze 30:18
- d 1Ch 28:9
 2Ch 7:19, 20
- e Isa 30:2
 Isa 31:1
 La 5:6
 Eze 16:26
 Eze 17:15
- f 2Ki 16:7
 Ho 5:13
- g Jer 4:18
- h Jer 5:22
- i Le 26:13
- j 1Ki 14:22, 23
 Eze 6:13
- k Ex 34:15
 Eze 16:15, 16
- l Ex 15:17
 Ps 80:8
 Isa 5:1

Second Col.

- a Isa 5:4
- b Jer 16:17
- c Jer 18:12
- d Isa 2:6
 Jer 3:13
- e Jer 44:17
- f Eze 9:7
- g Isa 44:13

- So how have you turned into
 the degenerate shoots of a
 foreign vine before me?^a
- 22** 'Though you should wash
 with soda* and use much
 lye,[#]
 Your guilt would still be a
 stain before me,^b declares
 the Sovereign Lord
 Jehovah.
- 23** How can you say, 'I have not
 defiled myself.
 I have not followed the
 Ba'als'^c
 Look at your way in the
 valley.
 Consider what you have
 done.
 You are like a swift, young
 she-camel,
 Aimlessly running back and
 forth in her ways,
- 24** A wild donkey accustomed
 to the wilderness,
 Sniffing the wind in her lust.*
 Who can restrain her when
 she is in heat?
 None of those looking for
 her will need to weary
 themselves.
 In her season[#] they will find
 her.
- 25** Keep your feet from going
 bare
 And your throat from thirst.
 But you said, 'It is hopeless!^c
 No! I have fallen in love with
 strangers,^{#d}
 And I will follow them.'^e
- 26** Like the shame of a thief
 when he is caught,
 So the house of Israel has
 been put to shame,
 They, their kings and their
 princes,
 Their priests and their
 prophets.^f
- 27** They say to a tree, 'You are
 my father,^g

2:22 *Or "alkali." #Or "soap." 2:24
 *Or "at the craving of her soul." #Lit.,
 "her month." 2:25 *Or "foreign gods."

- And to a stone, 'You gave birth to me.'
But to me they turn their back and not their face.^a
And in the time of their calamity they will say, 'Rise up and save us!'^b
- 28** Now where are your gods that you made for yourself?^c
Let them rise up if they can save you in your time of calamity,
For your gods have become as numerous as your cities, O Judah.^d
- 29** 'Why do you keep contending against me?
Why have all of you rebelled against me?'^e declares Jehovah.
- 30** I have struck your sons in vain.^f
They would accept no discipline;^g
Your own sword devoured your prophets,^h
Like a marauding lion.
- 31** O generation, consider for yourselves the word of Jehovah.
Have I become like a wilderness to Israel
Or a land of oppressive darkness?
Why have these, my people, said, 'We roam freely.
We will come to you no more?'ⁱ
- 32** Can a virgin forget her ornaments,
A bride her breastbands?^{*}
And yet my own people have forgotten me for countless days.^j
- 33** How skillfully, O woman, you set your course to seek love!
You have trained yourself in the ways of wickedness.^k

2:32 *Or "her wedding sash?"

CHAP. 2

- a 2Ch 29:6
Jer 32:33
- b Jg 10:13-15
Ps 78:34
Ps 106:47
Isa 26:16
Ho 5:15
- c De 32:37, 38
- d Jer 11:13
- e Jer 5:1
Jer 9:2
Da 9:11
- f 2Ch 28:20-22
Isa 9:13
- g Isa 1:5
Jer 5:3
Zep 3:2
- h 2Ch 36:15, 16
Ne 9:26
Ac 7:52
- i De 32:15
- j Ps 106:21
Isa 17:10
Jer 18:15
Ho 8:14
- k 2Ch 33:9

Second Col.

- a 2Ki 21:16
Ps 106:38
Isa 10:1, 2
Mt 23:35
- b Ex 22:2
- c Isa 30:3
Jer 37:7
- d 2Ch 28:20, 21
- e 2Sa 13:19

CHAP. 3

- f Isa 24:5
Jer 2:7
- g Jer 2:20
Eze 16:28, 29

- 34** Even your skirts are stained with the blood of the innocent poor ones,^{*a}
Though I did not find them in the act of breaking in;
It is on all your skirts.^b
- 35** But you say, 'I am innocent. Surely his anger has turned back from me.'
Now I am bringing judgment against you
Because you say, 'I have not sinned.'
- 36** Why do you treat so lightly your unstable course?
You will become ashamed of Egypt too,^c
Just as you became ashamed of As-syr'i-a.^d
- 37** For this reason also you will go out with your hands on your head,^e
For Jehovah has rejected those in whom you put confidence;
They will not bring you success."
- 3** People ask: "If a man sends his wife away and she leaves him and becomes another man's, should he return to her anymore?"
Has that land not been utterly polluted?^f
"You have committed prostitution with many companions,^g
And should you now return to me?" declares Jehovah.
- 2** "Raise your eyes to the bare hills and see.
Where have you not been raped?
You sat along the roadways for them,
Like a nomad* in the wilderness.
You keep polluting the land
- 2:34 *Or "souls." 3:2 *Lit., "an Arabian."

With your prostitution and your wickedness.^a

- 3** So showers of rain are withheld.^b
 And there is no rain in the spring.
 You have the brazen look* of a wife who commits prostitution;
 You refuse to feel shame.^c
- 4** But now you call out to me, 'My Father, you are the companion of my youth!'^d
- 5** Should one stay resentful forever,
 Or always hold a grudge?
 This is what you say,
 But you keep doing all the evil you are capable of doing."^e

6 In the days of King Jo-si'-ah,^f Jehovah said to me: "Have you seen what unfaithful Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and underneath every luxuriant tree to commit prostitution.^g **7** Even after she did all these things, I kept telling her to return to me,^h but she did not return; and Judah kept watching her treacherous sister.ⁱ **8** When I saw that, I sent unfaithful Israel away with a full certificate of divorce^j because of her adultery.^k But her treacherous sister Judah did not become afraid; she too went out and committed prostitution.^l **9** She took her prostitution lightly, and she kept polluting the land and committing adultery with stones and with trees.^m **10** Despite all this, her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, only in pretense,' declares Jehovah."

11 Jehovah then said to me: "Unfaithful Israel has shown herself* to be more righ-

3:3 *Lit., "the forehead." 3:11 *Or "her soul."

CHAP. 3

- a Eze 16:16
Eze 20:28
- b Le 26:19
Jer 14:4
Am 4:7
- c Jer 6:15
- d Jer 2:2
- e Mic 2:1
Mic 7:3
- f 2Ki 22:1
- g Eze 20:28
Ho 4:13
- h 2Ki 17:13
2Ch 30:6
Ho 14:1
- i Eze 16:46
Eze 23:2, 4
- j De 24:1
- k Eze 23:4, 5, 9
Ho 2:2
Ho 9:15
- l 2Ki 17:19
Eze 23:4, 11
- m Isa 57:5, 6
Jer 2:27

Second Col.

- a Eze 16:51
Eze 23:4, 11
- b 2Ki 17:6
Jer 23:8
- c Jer 4:1
Eze 33:11
Ho 14:1
- d Ho 11:8, 9
- e Jer 23:3
- f Jer 23:4
Eze 34:23
- g Ho 1:10
- h Ps 87:3
Eze 43:7
- i Isa 2:2, 3
Isa 56:6, 7
Isa 60:3
Mic 4:1, 2
Zec 2:11
Zec 8:22, 23
- j Jer 50:4
Eze 37:19
Ho 1:11
- k 2Ch 36:23
Ezr 1:3
Am 9:15

teous than treacherous Judah.^a
12 Go and proclaim these words to the north:^b

"Return, O renegade Israel," declares Jehovah.^c "I will not look down angrily* on you,^d for I am loyal," declares Jehovah.^e "I will not stay resentful forever. **13** Only acknowledge your guilt, for you have rebelled against Jehovah your God. You continued scattering your favors* to strangers^f under every luxuriant tree, but you would not obey my voice," declares Jehovah."

14 "Return, you renegade sons," declares Jehovah. "For I have become your true master;* and I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.^g **15** And I will give you shepherds after my own heart,^f and they will feed you with knowledge and insight. **16** You will become many and will bear fruit in the land in those days," declares Jehovah.^g "No more will they say, 'The ark of the covenant of Jehovah!' It will not come up into the heart, nor will they remember it or miss it, and it will not be made again. **17** At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah;^h and all the nations will be brought together to the name of Jehovah at Jerusalem,ⁱ and they will no longer stubbornly follow their own wicked heart."

18 "In those days they will walk together, the house of Judah alongside the house of Israel,^j and together they will come from the land of the north into the land that I gave to your forefathers as an inheritance.^k **19** And I thought, 'How I placed you among the sons and gave you the desirable land,

3:12 *Lit., "make my face fall." 3:13 *Lit., "ways." #Or "foreign gods." 3:14 *Or possibly, "your husband."

the most beautiful inheritance among the nations!*"a I also thought that you would call me, 'My Father!' and that you would not turn away from following me. **20** 'Truly as a wife treacherously leaves her husband,* so also you, O house of Israel, have dealt treacherously with me,'^b declares Jehovah."

21 On the bare hills a sound is heard,
The weeping and the pleading of the people of Israel,
For they have distorted their way;
They have forgotten Jehovah their God.^c

22 "Return, you renegade sons. I will heal your renegade condition."^d
"Here we are! We have come to you,
For you, O Jehovah, are our God."^e

23 Truly the hills and the turmoil on the mountains are a delusion.^f

Truly in Jehovah our God is the salvation of Israel.^g

24 But the shameful thing* has consumed the toil of our forefathers since our youth,^h
Their flocks and their herds,
Their sons and their daughters.

25 Let us lie down in our shame,
And let our disgrace cover us,
For we have sinned against Jehovah our God,ⁱ
We and our fathers since our youth until this day,^j
And we have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God."

4 "If you will return, O Israel," declares Jehovah,
"If you will return to me

3:19 *Lit., "of the armies of the nations."
3:20 *Lit., "companion." 3:24 *Or "the shameful god."

CHAP. 3

a Eze 20:6

b Isa 48:8
Ho 3:1
Ho 5:7c Isa 17:10
Ho 8:14
Ho 13:6

d Ho 14:1, 4

e Jer 31:18
Ho 3:5

f Isa 65:7

g Isa 12:2

h Ho 9:10

i Jer 2:19

j Eze 9:7
Ps 106:7

Second Col.

CHAP. 4

a Jer 3:22
Joe 2:12, 13

b Isa 65:16

c Ho 10:12

d Jer 9:25, 26

e La 4:11

f Jer 6:1

g Jer 35:11

h Jer 1:14
Jer 21:7
Jer 25:9i 2Kj 24:1
2Kj 25:1
Jer 5:6
Jer 50:17

j Eze 26:7

And if you will remove your disgusting idols from before me,
Then you will not be a fugitive.^a

2 And if you swear,
'As surely as Jehovah is alive!' in truth, justice, and righteousness,
Then the nations will obtain a blessing for themselves by him,
And in him they will boast."^b

3 For this is what Jehovah says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem:

"Plow for yourselves arable land,
And do not keep sowing among thorns.^c

4 Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah,
And remove the foreskins of your hearts,^d

You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
So that my wrath may not blaze up like a fire

And burn with no one to extinguish it,
Because of your evil deeds."^e

5 Declare it in Judah, and proclaim it in Jerusalem.
Shout and blow a horn throughout the land.^f

Call out loudly and say:
"Gather together,
And let us flee into the fortified cities."^g

6 Raise a signal* toward Zion. Seek shelter, and do not stand still,"

For I am bringing in calamity from the north,^h a great crash.

7 He has emerged like a lion from his thicket;ⁱ
The destroyer of nations has set out.^j

4:6 *Or "signal pole."

He has gone out from his place to make your land an object of horror. Your cities will be reduced to ruins, without an inhabitant.^a

8 Therefore, put on sackcloth,^b Mourn* and wail, Because the burning anger of Jehovah has not turned away from us.

9 "In that day," declares Jehovah, "the heart* of the king will fail him,^c Also the heart* of the princes; The priests will be horrified, and the prophets will be amazed."^d

10 Then I said: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Truly you have utterly deceived this people^e and Jerusalem, saying, 'You will have peace,'^f when the sword is at our throats."^g

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: "A scorching wind from the barren hills of the desert Will sweep down on the daughter of* my people; It is not coming to winnow or to cleanse.

12 The full wind comes from these places at my bidding. Now I will pronounce judgments against them.

13 Look! He will come like rain clouds, And his chariots are like a storm wind.^g His horses are swifter than eagles.^h Woe to us, for we are ruined!

14 Wash your heart clean of wickedness, O Jerusalem, in order to be saved.ⁱ

4:8 *Or "Beat your chests." 4:9 *Or "courage." 4:10 *Or "when the sword has reached our soul." 4:11 *A poetic personification, perhaps expressing pity or sympathy.

CHAP. 4

a Isa 5:9
Isa 6:11
Jer 2:15
Jer 9:11

b Jer 6:26

c 2Ki 25:5

d Isa 29:9, 10

e Eze 14:9

f Jer 6:13, 14
Jer 14:13
Jer 23:16, 17

g Isa 5:26, 28

h De 28:49, 50
La 4:19
Hab 1:8

i Isa 1:16
Eze 18:31

Second Col.

a Jer 8:16

b 2Ki 25:1, 2

c Isa 63:10
Eze 2:3

d Ps 107:17

e Zep 1:15, 16

f Jer 10:20

How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?

15 For a voice tells the news from Dan,^a And it proclaims disaster from the mountains of E'phra-im.

16 Report it, yes, to the nations; Proclaim it against Jerusalem."

"Sentinels* are coming from a distant land, And they will raise their voices against the cities of Judah.

17 They come against her on all sides like guards of the open field,^b Because she has rebelled against me,"^c declares Jehovah.

18 "Your own ways and your actions will be brought upon you.^d

How bitter is your disaster, For it reaches clear to your heart!"

19 O my anguish,* my anguish! I feel great pain in my very heart.^e

My heart pounds within me. I cannot keep silent, For I have^Δ heard the sound of the horn,

The alarm signal of war.^{Ⓢe}

20 Disaster after disaster has been reported, For the whole land has been destroyed.

Suddenly my own tents are destroyed, In a moment my tent cloths.^f

21 How long will I keep seeing the signal,*

4:16 *Lit., "Watchers," that is, those watching the city to determine when to attack. 4:19 *Lit., "my intestines." #Lit., "in the walls of my heart." ΔOr "my soul has." ⓈOr possibly, "the sound of the battle cry." 4:21 *Or "signal pole."

- Keep hearing the sound of the horn?^a
- 22** For my people are foolish;^b They take no note of me. They are stupid sons, with no understanding. They are clever* enough when it comes to doing bad, But they do not know how to do good.
- 23** I saw the land, and look! it was empty and desolate.^c I looked at the heavens, and their light was no more.^d
- 24** I saw the mountains, and look! they were quaking, And the hills were shaking.^e
- 25** I saw, and look! there was no man, And the birds of the heavens had all fled.^f
- 26** I saw, and look! the orchard had become a wilderness, And its cities had all been torn down.^g It was because of Jehovah, Because of his burning anger.
- 27** For this is what Jehovah says: "The whole land will become desolate,^h But I will not carry out a complete extermination.
- 28** For this reason the land will mourn,ⁱ And the heavens above will become dark.^j It is because I have spoken, I have decided, And I will not change my mind,* nor will I turn back from it.^k
- 29** At the sound of the horsemen and the archers, The entire city flees.^l They enter into the thickets, And they climb the rocks.^m
- CHAP. 4
a Jer 6:1
b De 32:6 Jer 5:21
c Jer 9:10
d Isa 5:30 Joe 2:31
e Isa 5:25
f Zep 1:3
g De 29:22, 23
h Le 26:32 2Ch 36:20, 21 Isa 6:11 Jer 10:22 Eze 33:28
i Isa 24:4 Joe 1:10
j Isa 5:30 Joe 2:30, 31
k 2Ki 23:26 Eze 24:14
l 2Ki 25:4
m Isa 2:19

Second Col.

a Eze 23:22, 26

b La 1:2

c La 1:17

CHAP. 5

d Eze 22:29 Mic 7:2

e Isa 48:1

f 2Ch 16:9

g 2Ch 28:20-22 Jer 2:30

- Every city is abandoned, And no man dwells in them."
- 30** Now that you are devastated, what will you do? You used to clothe yourself with scarlet, To deck yourself with gold ornaments, And to enlarge your eyes with black paint.* But it is in vain that you beautified yourself,^a For those lusting after you have rejected you; They are now seeking to take your life.^{#b}
- 31** For I have heard the sound like that of a sick woman, The distress like that of a woman giving birth to her first child, The voice of the daughter of Zion who keeps gasping for breath. She says as she spreads out her palms:^c "Woe to me, for I am* exhausted because of the killers!"
- 5** Roam the streets of Jerusalem. Look around and take note. Search her public squares to see Whether you can find a man who acts with justice,^d One who seeks to be faithful, And I will forgive her.
- 2** Even if they say: "As surely as Jehovah is alive!" They would still swear to what is false.^e
- 3** O Jehovah, do your eyes not look for faithfulness?^f You struck them, but it made no impact on them.* You exterminated them, but they refused to accept discipline.^g

4:22 *Or "eye shadow." #Or "seeking your soul." 4:31 *Or "my soul is." 5:3 *Lit., "they did not become weak."

4:22 *Or "wise." 4:28 *Or "feel regret."

- Song 7 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"I Am With You to Save You":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Jeremiah.*]
Jer 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment (*w11 3/15 29 ¶4*)
Jer 1:7-10, 17-19—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah (*w05 12/15 23 ¶18; jr 88 ¶14-15*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Jer 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶8*)

Jer 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah "deceived" his people? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶4*)

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) Jer 4:1-10

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month's Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on "Sample Presentations." Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 18
- **Organizational Accomplishments:** (7 min.) Play the *Organizational Accomplishments* video for March.
- **Memorial Campaign to Begin March 18:** (8 min.) Talk by the service overseer based on the February 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, page 8. Distribute a copy of the Memorial invitation to all in the audience, and review its contents. Outline local arrangements for covering the territory.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 9 ¶10-15, chart on p. 90, boxes on pp. 93, 96-97
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 110 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 1-4 | "I Am With You to Save You"

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when Jehovah appointed him as a prophet. Jeremiah felt unqualified for the responsibility, but Jehovah reassured him of His continued support.



647
Jeremiah appointed as a prophet

607
Jerusalem destroyed

580
Writing completed

640

620

600

580

March 6-12

Treasures From God's Word

Jeremiah 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment

Reference: *w11 3/15 29* paragraph 4.

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when he received from Jehovah his commission as a watchman. (**Jeremiah 1:1, 2**) But he felt like a mere boy, utterly unqualified to speak to the elders of the nation, men advanced in age and having positions of authority. (**Jeremiah 1:6**) He had scathing denunciations and fearful judgments to proclaim, especially to the priests, false prophets, and rulers, as well as to those who took “the popular course” and developed “an enduring unfaithfulness.” (**Jeremiah 6:13; 8:5, 6**) King Solomon’s glorious temple, which had been the center of true worship for almost four centuries, would be demolished. Jerusalem and Judah would lie desolate, and their inhabitants would be taken captive. Clearly, the message that Jeremiah was commissioned to deliver was urgent!

Jeremiah 1:7-10 **17-19**—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah

Reference: *w05 12/15 23* paragraph 18.

God told the prophet Jeremiah: “I am with you to deliver you.” (**Jeremiah 1:8**) How might Jehovah deliver us from persecution today? He might raise up a fair-minded judge like Gamaliel. Or he may see to it that a corrupt or antagonistic official is unexpectedly replaced by a more reasonable one. At times, though, Jehovah may permit the persecution of his people to run its course. (2 Timothy 3:12) If God allows us to be persecuted, he will always give us the strength to endure persecution. (1 Corinthians 10:13) And no matter what God permits, we have no doubt as to the final outcome: Those who fight against God’s people are fighting against God, and fighters against God will not prevail.

Reference: *jr 88* paragraphs 14-15.

Will You Refresh Tired Souls?

14 We do well to give attention to how Jeremiah was encouraged and how he encouraged others who were ‘tired souls.’ (**Jeremiah 31:25**) The prophet received encouragement particularly from Jehovah. Think of how built up you would have been to hear Jehovah tell you: “As for me, here I have made you today a fortified city . . . They will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for ‘I am with you,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘to deliver you.’” (**Jeremiah 1:18, 19**) With good reason, Jeremiah referred to Jehovah as “my strength and my stronghold, and my place for flight in the day of distress.”—**Jeremiah 16:19**.

15 It is noteworthy that Jehovah told Jeremiah: “I am with you.” Do you see in that a clue as to what you can do when someone you know needs encouragement? It is one thing to realize that a Christian brother or sister or perhaps a relative has that need; it is another thing to respond effectively to that need. In many cases, the most effective course is to do what God did for Jeremiah—just be with the afflicted one. Then, at some point, offer words of encouragement, but not a torrent of words. Fewer words will likely do more good if they are words chosen to reassure and build up. What you say need not be eloquent. Use simple words that manifest interest, concern, and Christian affection. Words like that can do much good.—*Read Proverbs 25:11*.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Jeremiah 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do?

Reference: *w07 3/15 9* paragraph 8.

Unfaithful Israelites did two bad things. They left Jehovah, the sure source of blessing, guidance, and protection. And they hewed out for themselves their own figurative cisterns by seeking to make military alliances with Egypt and Assyria. In our time, to abandon the true God in favor of human philosophies and theories and worldly politics is to replace “the source of living water” with “broken cisterns.”

Jeremiah 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah “deceived” his people?

Reference: *w07 3/15 9* paragraph 4.

In Jeremiah’s day, there were prophets ‘prophesying in falsehood.’ (**Jeremiah 5:31; 20:6; 23:16, 17, 25-28, 32**) Jehovah did not prevent them from proclaiming misleading messages.

- Song 7 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"I Am With You to Save You":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Jeremiah.*]
Jer 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment (*w11 3/15 29 ¶4*)
Jer 1:7-10, 17-19—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah (*w05 12/15 23 ¶18; jr 88 ¶14-15*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Jer 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶8*)

Jer 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah "deceived" his people? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶4*)

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) Jer 4:1-10

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Prepare This Month's Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on "Sample Presentations." Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 18
- **Organizational Accomplishments:** (7 min.) Play the *Organizational Accomplishments* video for March.
- **Memorial Campaign to Begin March 18:** (8 min.) Talk by the service overseer based on the February 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, page 8. Distribute a copy of the Memorial invitation to all in the audience, and review its contents. Outline local arrangements for covering the territory.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 9 ¶10-15, chart on p. 90, boxes on pp. 93, 96-97
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 110 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 1-4 | "I Am With You to Save You"

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when Jehovah appointed him as a prophet. Jeremiah felt unqualified for the responsibility, but Jehovah reassured him of His continued support.



647
Jeremiah appointed as a prophet

607
Jerusalem destroyed

580
Writing completed

640

620

600

580



Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Presentations



THE WATCHTOWER

Question: In your opinion, what is the greatest gift that God has ever given us?

Scripture: *Joh 3:16*

Offer: This issue of *The Watchtower* highlights why God sent Jesus to earth to die for us and how we can show appreciation for that gift.



MEMORIAL INVITATION

Offer: We're inviting people to a very important event. [Offer the invitation.] On April 11, millions around the world will gather to remember the death of Jesus and to hear a free Bible talk about how his death can benefit us. This invitation shows the time and location of the meeting being held in our area. We hope you can join us.



WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Question: [Show the front of the tract.] How would you answer this question? Is the Kingdom of God something within your heart? a figure of speech? or a government in heaven?

Scripture: *Da 2:44; Isa 9:6, ftn.*

Offer: This tract explains what God's Kingdom can mean for you.

BUILD YOUR OWN PRESENTATION

Question:

Scripture:

Offer:

- Song 7 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"I Am With You to Save You":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Jeremiah.*]
Jer 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment (*w11 3/15 29 ¶4*)
Jer 1:7-10, 17-19—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah (*w05 12/15 23 ¶18; jr 88 ¶14-15*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Jer 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶8*)

Jer 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah "deceived" his people? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶4*)

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) Jer 4:1-10

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

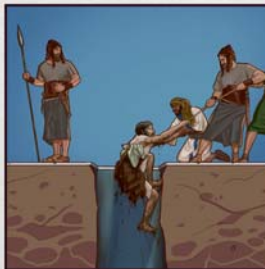
- **Prepare This Month's Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on "Sample Presentations." Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 18
- **Organizational Accomplishments:** (7 min.) Play the *Organizational Accomplishments* video for March.
- **Memorial Campaign to Begin March 18:** (8 min.) Talk by the service overseer based on the February 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, page 8. Distribute a copy of the Memorial invitation to all in the audience, and review its contents. Outline local arrangements for covering the territory.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 9 ¶10-15, chart on p. 90, boxes on pp. 93, 96-97
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 110 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 1-4 | "I Am With You to Save You"

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when Jehovah appointed him as a prophet. Jeremiah felt unqualified for the responsibility, but Jehovah reassured him of His continued support.



647
Jeremiah appointed as a prophet

607
Jerusalem destroyed

580
Writing completed

640

620

600

580

18

Grateful for the Ransom

(Luke 22:20)

E_b *A_badd9* *C_m* *C_m/B_b* *G_m/B_b*

To - day, Je - ho - vah God, we stand be - fore your
It was a will - ing sac - ri - fice that Je - sus

A_b *E_badd9/G* *F_m* *D_b* *A_b* *F_m7*

throne, For you showed the great - est love that could ev - er be
made. Out of love, his per - fect life was the price that he

B_bsus4 *B_b* *A_b/B_b* *B_b7sus4* *B_b* *E_b* *A_b*

shown. You gave the gift of your dear
paid. We had no hope un - til he

C_m *C_m/B_b* *G_m/B_b* *A_b* *F_m7* *B_b* *C_m* *G_m*

Son, that we might live. No great - er sac - ri - fice than
came to save man - kind. But now our hope is find - ing

Grateful for the Ransom

Chorus

Ab6 Ab/Bb Eb Ebsus4 Eb Ebma7/G

this could you ev - er give. He gave his
life, leav - ing death be - hind.

Ab Fm7 Bbsus4 Bb Cm Eb/G Ab Fm7

life to set us free. His pre - cious blood pro - vides the

Bbsus4 Bb Cm Eb/Bb Ab Eb/G

key. With all our hearts, we'll go on thank - ing

Fm7 Ab/Bb Eb Ebsus4 Eb

you e - ter - nal - ly.

- Song 7 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **"I Am With You to Save You":** (10 min.)
[Play the video *Introduction to Jeremiah.*]
Jer 1:6—Jeremiah was reluctant to accept a new assignment (*w11 3/15 29 ¶4*)
Jer 1:7-10, 17-19—Jehovah promised to strengthen and help Jeremiah (*w05 12/15 23 ¶18; jr 88 ¶14-15*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Jer 2:13, 18—What two bad things did the unfaithful Israelites do? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶8*)

Jer 4:10—In what sense had Jehovah "deceived" his people? (*w07 3/15 9 ¶4*)

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) Jer 4:1-10

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

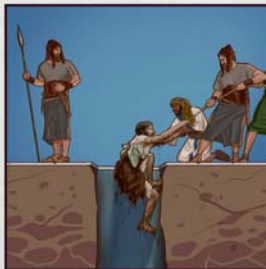
- **Prepare This Month's Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on "Sample Presentations." Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 18
- **Organizational Accomplishments:** (7 min.) Play the *Organizational Accomplishments* video for March.
- **Memorial Campaign to Begin March 18:** (8 min.) Talk by the service overseer based on the February 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, page 8. Distribute a copy of the Memorial invitation to all in the audience, and review its contents. Outline local arrangements for covering the territory.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 9 ¶10-15, chart on p. 90, boxes on pp. 93, 96-97
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 110 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 1-4 | "I Am With You to Save You"

Jeremiah may have been close to 25 years old when Jehovah appointed him as a prophet. Jeremiah felt unqualified for the responsibility, but Jehovah reassured him of His continued support.



647
Jeremiah appointed as a prophet

607
Jerusalem destroyed

580
Writing completed

640

620

600

580

FREE PUBLIC EVENT | APRIL 11, 2017



PEACE, HEALTH, AND PROSPERITY

Everyone's Dream!

JW
ORG

© 2017 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania

TM



INVITATION

Centuries ago, a divinely inspired prophet foretold the time when man would be at peace with nature. Illness would be eliminated. Families would build their own houses, plant their own fields, and enjoy the fruits of their labors.—Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:5, 6; 65:21-23.

Jesus performed powerful works that showed on a small scale how such prophecies will become a global reality. His death was fundamental to the future elimination of every cause for sorrow. So important was Jesus' death to the fulfillment of God's purposes that Jesus commanded his disciples to commemorate it.—Luke 22:19, 20.

This year, according to the Bible's lunar calendar, the anniversary of Jesus' death falls on **Tuesday, April 11**. Jehovah's Witnesses invite you to meet with them on that date to listen to an explanation of how his death can benefit you and your family.

This free event will be held at the time and place shown below.

FIND A LOCATION NEAR YOU
www.jw.org
(Look under ABOUT US > MEMORIAL)

You are also invited to a special Bible talk entitled
"How to Cultivate Peace in an Angry World."

FIND THE LOCATION OF
A PUBLIC MEETING NEAR YOU
www.jw.org
(Look under ABOUT US > MEETINGS)



m10w17-E
160831

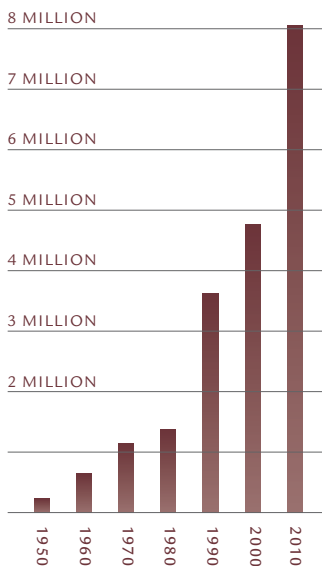
Scan code for other locations

10, 11. In the parable of the mustard grain, what aspects of the seed's growth are highlighted?

12. How does the parable of the mustard grain apply to today's harvest? (See also the chart "Growing Number of Bible Studies.")

13. The parable of the leaven highlights what aspects of growth?

GROWING NUMBER OF BIBLE STUDIES



The Result of the Harvest —Foretold in Vivid Word Pictures

10 In his Kingdom parables, Jesus foretold in vivid language the result of the harvest work. Let us consider the parable about the mustard grain and the one about the leaven. We will focus particularly on how they have been fulfilled in the time of the end.

11 **The parable of the mustard grain.** A man plants a mustard grain. It then grows into a tree in which birds find shelter. (**Read Matthew 13:31, 32.**) What aspects of the growth of the seed are highlighted in this parable? (1) The *extent* of the growth is amazing. "The tiniest of all the seeds" becomes a tree with "great branches." (Mark 4:31, 32) (2) Growth is *assured*. "When [the seed] has been sown, it grows." Jesus does not say, "It may grow." No, he states: "It grows." Its growth is unstoppable. (3) The growing tree attracts visitors and provides *lodging*. "The birds of heaven come" and "find lodging under its shadow." How do these three aspects apply to the modern-day spiritual harvest?

12 (1) **Extent of growth:** The parable highlights the growth of the Kingdom message and the Christian congregation. Since 1919, zealous harvest workers have been gathered into the restored Christian congregation. At that time, the number of workers was small, but it grew rapidly. In fact, its growth from the early 1900's to today has been phenomenal. (Isa. 60:22) (2) **Assurance:** The growth of the Christian congregation has been unstoppable. No matter how many layers of rocklike opposition God's enemies placed upon the tiny seed, it kept growing—pushing aside all obstacles. (Isa. 54:17) (3) **Lodging:** "The birds of heaven" that find lodging in the tree represent many millions of rightharted individuals from some 240 lands who have responded to the Kingdom message by becoming part of the Christian congregation. (Ezek. 17:23) There they receive spiritual food, refreshment, and protection.—Isa. 32:1, 2; 54:13.

13 **The parable of the leaven.** After a woman adds some leaven to a mass of flour, the leaven ferments the whole mass. (**Read Matthew 13:33.**) What aspects of growth are highlighted in this parable? Let us consider two. (1) Growth causes *transformation*. The leaven spread "until the whole mass was fermented." (2) Growth is *pervasive*. The leaven ferments all "three large measures of flour"—the entire mass. How do these two aspects apply to the modern-day spiritual harvest?



The parable of the mustard seed shows that lodging and protection are enjoyed by those in the Christian congregation

(See paragraphs 11, 12)

14 (1) Transformation: The leaven stands for the Kingdom message, and the mass of flour represents mankind. As leaven causes a change in flour after the two are mixed together, so the Kingdom message causes a transformation in the hearts of individuals after they accept that message. (Rom. 12:2) **(2) Pervasive:** The spreading of the leaven stands for the spreading of the Kingdom message. Leaven works its way through the dough until it has spread throughout the entire mass. Similarly, the Kingdom message has spread “to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) This aspect of the parable also indicates that even in lands where our work is under ban, the Kingdom message will spread, though our preaching activities in those parts of the earth may largely go unnoticed.

15 Some 800 years before Jesus spoke those parables, Jehovah, by means of Isaiah, foretold in memorable language

14. How does the parable of the leaven apply to today’s harvest?

15. How have the words found at Isaiah 60:5, 22 been fulfilled? (See also the boxes “Jehovah Made It Possible,” page 93, and “How ‘the Small One’ Has Become ‘a Mighty Nation,’” pages 96-97.)

16, 17. What is one reason why ‘the sower and the reaper rejoice together’? (See also the box “How Two Tracts Touched Two Hearts in the Amazon.”)

18. What reason for joy is mentioned at 1 Corinthians 3:8?

19. (a) How does Jesus’ prophecy found at Matthew 24:14 relate to our joy? (b) What should we keep in mind even if we do not personally succeed in making a disciple?

the scope of the modern-day spiritual harvest and the joy this harvest would cause.^[3] Jehovah describes people “from far away” streaming toward his organization. Directing himself to a “woman,” who today is represented by the anointed remnant on earth, he states: “You will see and become radiant, and your heart will throb and overflow, because the wealth of the sea will be directed to you; the resources of the nations will come to you.” (Isa. 60:1, 4, 5, 9) How true those words are! Today, longtime servants of Jehovah are indeed radiant with joy as they observe how the number of Kingdom publishers in their lands has increased from just a few to many thousands.

Why All Servants of Jehovah Have Reason to Rejoice

16 You will recall that Jesus told his apostles: “The reaper is . . . gathering fruit for everlasting life, so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.” (John 4:36) How do we “rejoice *together*” in the global harvest? In several ways. Let us consider three.

17 First, we rejoice to see Jehovah’s role in the work. When we preach the Kingdom message, we sow seed. (Matt. 13:18, 19) When we help someone to become a disciple of Christ, we harvest fruitage. And all of us feel deep joy as we observe with awe how Jehovah causes Kingdom seed to “sprout and grow tall.” (Mark 4:27, 28) Some seed that we scatter sprouts later and is harvested by others. You may have had an experience similar to that of Joan, a Christian sister in Britain who was baptized 60 years ago. She said: “I have met individuals who told me that I planted a seed in their heart when I preached to them years ago. Unknown to me, other Witnesses later studied the Bible with them and helped them to become servants of Jehovah. I rejoice that the seed I planted grew and was harvested.”—**Read 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.**

18 Second, we remain joyful workers when we keep in mind that Paul stated: “Each person will receive his own reward according to his *own work*.” (1 Cor. 3:8) The reward is given according to the work, not according to the results of that work. How heartening that assurance is for those preaching in territories where there is little response! In God’s eyes, every Witness who wholeheartedly shares in the sowing work is “bearing much fruit” and therefore has reason to rejoice.—John 15:8; Matt. 13:23.

19 Third, we rejoice that our work fulfills prophecy. Consider Jesus’ answer to his apostles when they asked: “What

FOOTNOTE

[3] For more details about this colorful prophecy, see *Isaiah’s Prophecy—Light for All Mankind II*, pages 303-320.

JEHOVAH MADE IT POSSIBLE

JESUS declared: “Things impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke 18:27) Many of us have experienced the truth of that statement. Despite all the efforts of those who want to stop the preaching work, Jehovah has helped us to carry it out.



Zacharie Elegbe (aged 66, baptized in 1963) recalls how a ban against the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in **Benin** actually helped the brothers: “In 1976, when we had 2,300 publishers, our work was banned and the government ordered the ban to be broadcast in every local language. That was unheard of. Though Benin’s population speaks more than 60 languages, radio programs back then were usually broadcast in only five. So when the ban was broadcast in *all* local languages, many thousands of people living in remote areas heard of us for the very first time. They wondered, ‘Who are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and why are they banned?’ Later, when we reached those areas, many accepted the truth in short order.” Today, there are more than **11,500** Witnesses in Benin.

“This is Jehovah’s work. Nobody is able to stop it!”



Mariya Zinich (aged 74, baptized in 1957): “When I was about 12 years old, our whole family was exiled from Ukraine to Siberia, **Russia**. Despite all efforts of the government to silence us throughout the former Soviet Union, our numbers kept increasing. Seeing that amazing growth in spite of harsh opposition convinced me that this is Jehovah’s work. Nobody is able to stop it!” Another sister named Mariya (aged 73, baptized in 1960) noted: “As a result of deporting our brothers to Siberia, the government caused many isolated people there to get a chance to hear the truth.”



“With Jehovah on our side, nothing is impossible!”

Jesús Martín (aged 77, baptized in 1955) recalls: “When I learned the truth, there were 300 Witnesses here in **Spain**. In 1960, the repression against us became brutal. The government ordered the police to snuff out Jehovah’s Witnesses. At that time, it was hard to imagine how we would ever be able to preach the good news throughout the country. Everything seemed to be stacked against us. But today, there are nearly **111,000** Witnesses in Spain. Having witnessed how that growth has taken place despite opposition reinforces my conviction that with Jehovah on our side, nothing is impossible!”

HOW “THE SMALL ONE” HAS BECOME “A MIGHTY NATION”

“THE little one will become a thousand and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, will speed it up in its own time.” (Isa. 60:22)
How has that prophecy come true? How has its fulfillment affected longtime Witnesses around the world?



Börje Nilsson (aged 84, baptized in 1943): “I remember an anointed brother who was a colporteur in the 1920’s. When he received nearly half of **Sweden** as his assignment, he obediently began preaching—and how his work and that of other faithful ones has been rewarded! Today we have over **22,000** publishers. Though I’m now up in years, I want to continue obediently in Jehovah’s service. Who knows what surprises Jehovah still has in store for us?”



Etienne Esterhuyse (aged 83, baptized in 1942): “Today, I look back in wonderment as I see how the number of Jehovah’s people in **South Africa** has grown from some 1,500 in 1942 to over **94,000** today. It is absolutely faith-strengthening to be part of such a vast organization!”



Keith Gaydon (aged 82, baptized in 1948): “Witnessing how the number of publishers in **Britain** increased from some 13,700 in 1948 to nearly **137,000** today demonstrates to me that this is Jehovah’s work. By human power it would have been impossible, but Jehovah is ‘the One doing wonders.’”—Ex. 15:11.

Ulrike Krolop (aged 77, baptized in 1952): “After World War II, the congregations in **Germany** were invigorated by the active spirit of the Witnesses who had endured Nazi persecution. People needed comfort, and we could give it without hesitation because the Witnesses had not participated in that terrible war. Over the past 60 years, I have observed how God’s spirit has guided his people. Today we have over **164,000** Witnesses—what a wonderful result!”





Mariya Brinetskaya (aged 77, baptized in 1955): “To avoid arrest, I was baptized at night under the cover of darkness. Later my husband was sent to a distant labor camp for being a Witness. Cautiously, I continued preaching in my village here in **Russia**, and several neighbors accepted the truth. Back then, we had few brothers and sisters. I rejoice that today there are over **168,000** Witnesses in Russia!”



Kimiko Yamano (aged 79, baptized in 1954): “When I learned in 1970 that we had 10,000 publishers in **Japan**, I could not hold back my tears of joy, and I was moved to promise Jehovah anew, ‘As long as I live, I want to be loyal to you.’ Imagine how happy I feel today, as we now have more than **216,000** publishers!”



Daniel Odogun (aged 83): “When I was baptized in 1950, **Nigeria** had 8,000 publishers. Today, there are some **351,000!** At assemblies, I’m moved when I see so many in attendance, and I think of Haggai 2:7. Jehovah is really shaking the nations, and the precious things are coming in. I still try to do as much as possible in the preaching work because preaching is my way of saying, ‘Thank you, Jehovah!’ ”



Carlos Silva (aged 79): “We had 5,000 Witnesses in **Brazil** when I was baptized in 1952. That year, we had an assembly in a gymnasium in São Paulo. There were two cars in the parking lot. A brother pointed to the nearby Pacaembu Stadium and asked me, ‘Do you think we’ll ever fill it?’ It seemed impossible, but in 1973 the stadium was packed with 94,586 in attendance! Today we have over **767,000** dear brothers and sisters in Brazil—it’s marvelous to see the increase!”



Carlos Cázares (aged 73): “In 1954, the year I was baptized, there were 10,500 publishers in **Mexico**. The need for workers was so great that I was appointed as a circuit overseer at the age of 21. It has been a blessing to see the fulfillment of Isaiah 60:22 before my very eyes. We now have more than **806,000** publishers, who are conducting over one million Bible studies! It’s overwhelming!”

"The Joy of Jehovah"

(Nehemiah 8:10)

C C/B F/A C/G G/F C/E Am7

Signs of the times are point - ing to the King - dom. Good news we tell for
 Look to our God, you lov - ers of Je - ho - vah. No need to fear, for

Dm7 Dm/G G/F E E/D# A/C# E/B C°

all to hear. Lift up your heads, and look to your sal - va - tion;
 he is strong. Stand up and shout with voic - es loud as thun - der;

Chorus
 C#m Am/C E/B B/A E/G# B7/F# E G7/D C G/B F/A G7

Time for de - liv - er - ance is near! The joy of Je - ho - vah is our
 Sing to our God a joy - ful song!

C Dm7 C/E F Am7 Dm7 C/E Dm/F D7/F# Gsus4 G G#°

strong - hold. Sing loud, and raise a joy - ful cry. Re -

“The Joy of Jehovah”

Am D9 C/D D7 G D7/A G/B Em/C# G/D D7sus4 D7

joyce in the hope, and show a grate - ful heart, All give praise and laud our God on

G G/F C/E G7/D C G/B F/A G7 C Dm7 C/E

high. The joy of Je - ho - vah is our strong - hold. His

F Am7 Dm7 C/E Dm/F D7/F# Gsus4 G G#° Am C/G

great - ness all must come to know. With con - stant de - vo - tion to our

F E7 Am Fm/D C/G G7sus4 C

God and King, God - ly joy in ser - vice we will show.

JANUARY 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
FEBRUARY 27–APRIL 2, 2017



COVER IMAGE:

CHILE

Publishers in the south of Chile follow a river that winds through lush forests and snowcapped peaks of the Andes Mountains. They participate in a preaching campaign to reach as many remote homes as possible while the weather is favorable.

PUBLISHERS

76,296

BIBLE STUDIES

64,178

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)

174,761

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 THEY OFFERED THEMSELVES WILLINGLY

7 WEEK OF FEBRUARY 27–MARCH 5 “Trust in Jehovah and Do What Is Good”

This article discusses how our yeartext for 2017 encourages us to look to Jehovah for help when faced with challenges. Using faithful examples from the past, we will examine how we can trust in Jehovah to support us while taking whatever action we can to solve problems and help others.

12 WEEK OF MARCH 6-12 Treasure Your Gift of Free Will

In this article, we will learn how to treasure God’s gift of free will by using it in a way that pleases the Giver of that gift. It will also help us to see how we can respect the way that others exercise their gift of free will.

17 WEEK OF MARCH 13-19 Why Modesty Still Matters

22 WEEK OF MARCH 20-26 You Can Remain Modest Under Test

These articles will help us to understand better the desirable quality of modesty. The first article explains what modesty is and what it is not. The second article teaches us how to remain modest even when we are under test.

27 WEEK OF MARCH 27–APRIL 2 “These Things Entrust to Faithful Men”

As one generation replaces another, younger ones take on the work of older ones. This article discusses how both young and old can successfully make the transition.

32 DID YOU KNOW?

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*.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Issue 2 January 2017 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.

January 2017

Vol. 138, No. 2 ENGLISH

To Whom Do We Belong?

(Romans 14:8)

F

To whom do you be - long? Which
 To whom do you be - long? Which
 To whom do I be - long? Je -

Gm F/A Bb C C/G

god do you now o - bey? Your
 god will you now o - bey? For
 ho - vah I will o - bey. My

C7 Bb/D C7/E C7/Bb F/A C/G F Dm7

mas - ter's the one to whom you bow. He
 one god is false and one is true, So
 Fa - ther in heav - en I will serve; I'll

G7 F/A Bb° G7/B C6 G7/D C7/E C

is your god; you serve him now. You
 make your choice; it's up to you. Will
 pay my vows with - out re - serve. He

To Whom Do We Belong?

F

can - not serve two gods; De -
 Cae - sar of this world Pos -
 bought me at great cost; De -

Cm7 F7 B♭ D7/A Gm D

vo - tion can - not be shared. And
 sess your al - le - giance still? Or
 vot - ed to him I'll stay. To

Gm/B♭ D/A Gm B♭m6/G F A/E Dm Dm/C

so in the end your choice will de - pend On
 will you o - bey the true God to - day By
 him I will give each mo - ment I live. His

Gm/B♭ G7/B C7 F

how - your heart is pre - pared.
 al - ways do - ing his will?
 name I'll hon - or each day.

(See also Josh. 24:15; Ps. 116:14, 18; 2 Tim. 2:19.)



Treasure Your Gift of Free Will

“Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.”—2 COR. 3:17.

SONGS: 40, 54

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What is free will?

How can the way we use our freedom of choice reveal the depth of our love for Jehovah?

How can we show respect for the decisions of others?

WHEN faced with making a personal choice, one woman told a friend: “Do not make me think; just tell me what to do. That is easier.” The woman preferred being told what to do instead of using a precious gift from her Creator, the gift of free will. What about you? Do you like making your own decisions, or do you prefer that others decide for you? How do you view the matter of free will?

² People have debated this subject for centuries. Some claim that there is no such thing as free will—that all our actions are predetermined by God. Others argue that true free will is only possible if we have absolute freedom. However, to understand this matter properly, we must turn to God’s Word, the Bible. Why? It reveals that Jehovah created us with free will; that is, the capacity and freedom to make our own intelligent choices. **(Read Joshua 24:15.)** The Bible also answers such questions as: How should our freedom to make decisions be exercised? Does it have limitations? How does the way we use our freedom of choice reveal the depth of our love for Jehovah? How can we show respect for the decisions of others?

1, 2. (a) What different views do people have regarding the matter of free will? (b) What does the Bible teach us about our freedom of choice, and what questions will we consider?

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JEHOVAH AND JESUS?

³ Jehovah alone has absolute freedom, but the way he uses it sets a pattern for us. For example, he chose to select the nation of Israel as his name people, “his special property.” (Deut. 7:6-8) This was not an arbitrary choice. Jehovah was being true to a promise that he had made centuries earlier to his friend Abraham. (Gen. 22:15-18) Furthermore, Jehovah always exercises his freedom in harmony with his attributes of love and justice. This is evident in the way he disciplined the Israelites, who repeatedly abandoned true worship. When they expressed heartfelt repentance, Jehovah willingly extended love and mercy, saying: “I will heal their unfaithfulness. I will love them of my own free will.” (Hos. 14:4) What a fine example of using his freedom for the benefit of others!

⁴ When Jehovah began his creative works, he lovingly chose to bestow free will on his intelligent creatures. The first one to receive this gift was his firstborn Son, “the image of the invisible God.” (Col. 1:15) Even before coming to earth, Jesus chose to remain loyal to his Father and not join Satan in his rebellion. Later, when Jesus was on earth, he exercised his free will to reject the temptations of the great Adversary. (Matt. 4:10) In earnest prayer the night before his death, Jesus reaffirmed his determination to do the will of God. He said: “Father, if you want to, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will,

3. What example does Jehovah set in the use of his freedom?

4, 5. (a) Who was the first to receive God’s gift of free will, and how did he use it? (b) What question must each of us ask?

but yours take place.” (Luke 22:42) May we imitate Jesus and use our free will to honor Jehovah and to do his will! Is that really possible?

⁵ Yes, we can imitate the example of Jesus, for we too are made in God’s image and likeness. (Gen. 1:26) However, we have limitations. We do not have the absolute freedom that Jehovah has. God’s Word explains that our freedom has boundaries and that we must observe the limits Jehovah appropriately places on us. What is more, wives are to be in subjection to their husbands and children to their parents. (Eph. 5:22; 6:1) How do these limitations affect the way we use our free will? The answer to that question can determine our everlasting future.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF FREE WILL

⁶ Is having free will with limits *real* freedom? Yes, it is! Why can we say that? Limitations put on people’s freedom can protect them. For example, we may exercise our freedom of choice to drive to a distant city. However, would we feel safe traveling on highways where there were no traffic laws, where everyone was free to decide how fast or on which side of the road to drive? Obviously not. Limits are necessary in order for all to enjoy the blessings of true freedom. To illustrate further the wisdom of using our free will within the boundaries set by Jehovah, let us consider some Bible examples.

⁷ When creating the first human, Adam, God gave him the same gift

6. Illustrate why it is proper for our freedom to have limitations.

7. (a) How did the gift of free will distinguish Adam from other forms of life in Eden? (b) Describe one way that Adam exercised his free will.

he had given his intelligent creatures in heaven, the gift of free will. This set Adam apart from the animals, since they live according to instinct. Consider an example of how Adam used his free will in an appropriate way. Animals were created before man. However, Jehovah reserved the joy of naming those creatures for his first human son. God “began bringing them to the man to see what he would call each one.” After Adam observed each animal and assigned it a suitable name, Jehovah did not step in and override Adam’s choices. Rather, “whatever the man would call each living creature, that became its name.”—Gen. 2:19.

⁸ Regrettably, Adam was not content with his God-given assignment as cultivator and caretaker of the earthly paradise. He was not satisfied with his extensive freedom to carry out his God-given mandate: “Be fruitful and become many, fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish . . . , the flying creatures . . . , and every living creature that is moving on the earth.” (Gen. 1:28) Instead, he chose to overstep his God-ordained boundaries by eating the forbidden fruit. This gross misuse of free will resulted in millenniums of suffering and pain for Adam’s descendants. (Rom. 5:12) Knowing the consequences of Adam’s decision should move us to use our freedom responsibly and within the limits set by Jehovah.

⁹ The descendants of Adam and Eve inherited imperfection and death from their disobedient parents. However,

8. How did Adam misuse his free will, and with what result?

9. What choice did Jehovah give his people, Israel, and how did the nation respond?

they retained the right to exercise the gift of free will. This is evident in the way God dealt with the nation of Israel. Through his servant Moses, Jehovah gave the people the choice to accept or reject the privilege of becoming His special property. (Ex. 19:3-6) What was their response? They freely chose to carry out the conditions of becoming God’s name people and unanimously declared: “All that Jehovah has spoken, we are willing to do.” (Ex. 19:8) Sadly, in time the nation misused its freedom of choice and broke that promise. Let us heed this warning example and always treasure our gift of free will by continuing to stick close to Jehovah and obeying his righteous requirements.—1 Cor. 10:11.

¹⁰ In Hebrews chapter 11, we find the names of 16 servants of God who chose to use their free will within the limits set by Jehovah. As a result, they reaped rich blessings and a sure hope for the future. For example, *Noah* showed great faith and chose to obey God’s instructions to build an ark for the preservation of his own family and future generations of humankind. (Heb. 11:7) *Abraham* and *Sarah* willingly followed God’s leadings to a land of promise. Even after they embarked on this long journey, they had the “opportunity to return” to the prosperous city of Ur. However, they kept their eyes of faith focused on the future “fulfillment of [God’s] promises”; they were “reaching out for a better place.” (Heb. 11:8, 13, 15, 16) *Moses* turned his back on the treasures of Egypt, “choosing to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoy-

10. What examples prove that it is possible for imperfect humans to use their free will in a way that honors God? (See opening picture.)

ment of sin.” (Heb. 11:24-26) May we imitate the faith of such ancient ones by treasuring our gift of free will and using it to do God’s will.

¹¹ While it might seem easier to have someone else make decisions for us, doing so would rob us of one of the great blessings of free will. That blessing is revealed at **Deuteronomy 30:19, 20. (Read.)** Verse 19 describes the choice that God gave to the Israelites. In verse 20 we learn that Jehovah gave them the precious opportunity to show him what was in their hearts. We too can *choose* to worship Jehovah. We could have no greater motive than to use God’s gift of free will to express our love for him and to bring him honor and glory!

AVOID MISUSING YOUR GIFT OF FREE WILL

¹² Imagine that you gave a valuable gift to a friend. How disappointed you would

11. (a) What is one of the great blessings of free will? (b) What motivates you to use your free will properly?

12. What must we never do with our gift of free will?

be if you learned that he had thrown your gift in the trash or, worse yet, that he had used it to injure someone! Now think of how Jehovah must feel as he watches so many people misuse their freedom to make choices in life even to the harm of others. Indeed, just as the Bible foretold, during “the last days” men would be “unthankful.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 2) May we never misuse this precious gift from Jehovah or take it for granted. How, though, can we avoid misusing our gift of free will?

¹³ All of us have freedom of choice regarding associations, styles of dress and grooming, and entertainment. However, our freedom could become “a cover for doing wrong” if we chose to become slaves of our own fleshly desires or if we adopted the disgraceful fads and trends of the world. **(Read 1 Peter 2:16.)** Instead of using our freedom “as an opportunity to pursue fleshly desires,” we want to be determined to make choices that help us to heed the admonition: “Do

13. What is one way we can avoid misusing our Christian freedom?

We can make personal decisions without imposing our conscience on others
(See paragraph 15)



all things for God's glory."—Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 10:31.

¹⁴ Another way to guard our gift of free will is to put our trust in Jehovah and let him guide us within the protective boundaries that he has set for us. He alone is 'the One teaching us to benefit ourselves, the One guiding us in the way we should walk.' (Isa. 48:17) We must humbly acknowledge the truthfulness of the inspired words: "Man's way does not belong to him. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jer. 10:23) May we never fall into the trap of choosing to rely on our own understanding, as did Adam and the rebellious Israelites. Instead, may we "trust in Jehovah with all [our] heart." —Prov. 3:5.

RESPECTING OTHERS' GIFT OF FREE WILL

¹⁵ One of the limitations on our freedom is that we must respect the right that others have to make their own decisions in life. Why? Since we all have the gift of free will, no two Christians will always make exactly the same decision. This is true even in matters that involve our conduct and worship. Remember the principle found at **Galatians 6:5**. (**Read.**) When we recognize that each Christian must "carry his own load," we will respect the right that others have to use their own gift of free will.

¹⁶ Consider a Bible example that illus-

14. What does trusting in Jehovah have to do with our use of free will?

15. What do we learn from the principle found at Galatians 6:5?

16, 17. (a) How did freedom of choice become an issue in Corinth? (b) How did Paul resolve matters, and what does this teach us about the rights of others?

trates why we must respect our brothers' freedom to make their own decisions in matters of conscience. Christians in Corinth became divided over the matter of eating meat that may have been offered to idols but was thereafter sold in a meat market. Some reasoned: 'Since an idol is nothing, the meat can be eaten in good conscience.' However, others who formerly worshipped those idols felt that eating the meat would be an act of worship. (1 Cor. 8:4, 7) This was a sensitive issue, one that threatened to cause divisions in the congregation. How did Paul help the Christians in Corinth to gain God's view of the matter?

¹⁷ First, Paul reminded both sides that food would not bring them nearer to God. (1 Cor. 8:8) Next, he warned them not to allow their "right to choose" to become "a stumbling block to those who [were] weak." (1 Cor. 8:9) Later, he instructed those with a more sensitive conscience not to judge those who chose to eat such meat. (1 Cor. 10:25, 29, 30) Hence, in this important matter related to worship, each Christian needed to make a conscientious decision. Therefore, should we not also respect our brother's right to make personal decisions in matters of lesser importance? —1 Cor. 10:32, 33.

¹⁸ Jehovah has given us the gift of free will and with it true freedom. (2 Cor. 3:17) We treasure this gift because it allows us to make decisions that reveal to Jehovah how much we love him. May we continue to show our appreciation for this precious gift by using it in a way that honors God and by respecting the way that others choose to use their gift.

18. How will you show that you treasure your gift of free will?

"This Is the Way"

(Isaiah 30:20, 21)

E \flat /B \flat *B \flat ma7*

There is a way of peace, The way you've
 There is a way of love, No need to
 There is a way of life, No need to

E \flat /B \flat *F/B \flat* *E \flat /B \flat* *F/A* *Gm* *F*

come to know. It is the way you learned, The way of
 look a - round. God's voice has shown the way He lets him -
 look be - hind. Our God has prom - ised us: No bet - ter

E \flat *B \flat /D* *Cm*

long a - go, The way that Je - sus taught you When his
 self be found. His love is full - and good; His love is
 way we'll find, No high - er way to peace, No fin - er

Dm *E \flat* *Cm7*

voice you heard. This is the way of peace, Found in Je -
 warm and true. This is the way of love; It touch - es
 way to love. This is the way to life, Thanks to our

“This Is the Way”

Chorus

Cm/F Dm/F Eb/F F Bb F/A

ho - vah's Word.
all we do. This is the way to life; This is the
God a - bove.

Gm Bb/F Dm/F Eb Bb/D

way. Don't look a - side; Not for a mo - ment

C7sus4 C7 Cm11 F7/C Bbadd9/D Bb/D

stray! God's voice is call - ing: 'This is the

Ebma7 Gm/E Bb/F Eb/F Bb

way; Do not look back, for yes, this is the way.'