

- Song 88 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Let Jehovah Mold Your Thinking and Conduct”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 18:1-4—A potter has authority over the clay (w99 4/1 22 ¶3)
 Jer 18:5-10—Jehovah has authority over mankind (it-2 776 ¶4)
 Jer 18:11—Respond favorably to Jehovah’s molding (w99 4/1 22 ¶4-5)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 17:9—How may the heart’s treachery become manifest? (w01 10/15 25 ¶13)

Jer 20:7—In what way did Jehovah use his strength against Jeremiah and fool him? (w07 3/15 9 ¶6)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Jer 21:3-14

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. Encourage all to make return visits on those who accepted the tract *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 85
- **Local Needs:** (5 min.) As an option, discuss the lessons learned from the *Yearbook*. (yb16 22)
- **“Warmly Welcome Them”:** (10 min.) Begin with a three-minute talk. Conclude by playing the video *Steve Gerdes: We Will Never Forget the Greeting* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 10 ¶12-19, box on p. 105 (right), review box on p. 107
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 13 and Prayer

Warmly Welcome Them

Warmly welcome whom? *Anyone* who attends our Christian meetings—from newcomers to longtime friends. (Ro 15:7; Heb 13:2) It could be a fellow believer visiting from another country or an inactive Christian attending for the first time in years. Imagine how you would feel in such circumstances. Would you not appreciate a warm greeting? (Mt 7:12) So why not make a greater effort to move about the Kingdom Hall and greet others before and after the meeting? This contributes to a warm and loving atmosphere and brings honor to Jehovah. (Mt 5:16) Of course, it will likely not be possible to speak personally with everyone present. Nevertheless, everyone will feel welcome if we all do our part.*

True hospitality is shown not just on special occasions like the Memorial but at all times. When newcomers see and experience Christian love in action, they may be moved to praise God and join us in pure worship.—Joh 13:35.

* Bible principles limit our dealings with disfellowshipped or disassociated ones who may attend meetings.—1Co 5:11; 2Jo 10.



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Make Me Know Your Ways

(Psalm 25:4)

1. We're gathered together, Jehovah our God,
Accepting your warm invitation.
Your Word is a lamp that lights up our pathway,
The source of divine education.

(CHORUS)

*Teach me your ways, and make me understand;
Incline my ear to hear your wise command.
Cause me to walk in ways of truth and right,
And make your law my principal delight.*

2. Unreachably high is your wisdom, O God;
Your judgments we find reassuring.
Your Word is a source of unending wonder;
Your sayings of truth are enduring.

(Chorus)

Jeremiah 17-21

17 “The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus.

With a diamond point it is engraved on
the tablet of their heart

And on the horns of their altars,

² While their sons remember their altars and
their sacred poles

Beside a luxuriant tree, on the high hills,

³ On the mountains in the open countryside.

Your resources, all your treasures, I will
give as plunder

—Yes, your high places because of sin
throughout your territories.

⁴ You will forfeit, of your own accord, your
inheritance that I gave you.

And I will make you serve your enemies
in a land you do not know,

For you have kindled my anger like a fire.
It will burn for all time.”

⁵ This is what Jehovah says:

“Cursed is the man who puts his trust in
mere humans,

Who relies on human power,

And whose heart turns away from
Jehovah.

- ⁶ He will become like a solitary tree in the
desert.
He will not see when good comes,
But he will reside in parched places in the
wilderness,
In a salt land where no one can live.
- ⁷ Blessed is the man who puts his trust in
Jehovah,
Whose confidence is in Jehovah.
- ⁸ He will become like a tree planted by the
waters,
That sends out its roots to the stream.
He will not notice when heat comes,
But his leaves will always flourish.
And in the year of drought he will not be
anxious,
Nor will he quit producing fruit.
- ⁹ The heart is more treacherous than
anything else and is desperate.
Who can know it?
- ¹⁰ I, Jehovah, am searching the heart,
Examining the innermost thoughts,
To give to each one according to his
ways,
According to the fruitage of his works.

- 11 Like a partridge that gathers what it has not
laid,
So is the one who acquires riches
dishonestly.
They will leave him in midlife,
And in the end he will prove senseless.”
- 12 A glorious throne, exalted from the
beginning,
Is the place of our sanctuary.
- 13 O Jehovah, the hope of Israel,
All those who abandon you will be put to
shame.
Those apostatizing from you will be
written in the dust,
Because they have abandoned Jehovah,
the source of living water.
- 14 Heal me, O Jehovah, and I will be healed.
Save me, and I will be saved,
For you are the object of my praise.
- 15 Look! There are those saying to me:
“Where is the word of Jehovah?
Let it come, please!”
- 16 But as for me, I did not run away from
following you as a shepherd,
Nor did I long for the day of disaster.

You well know everything my lips have
spoken;
It all took place before your face!

¹⁷ Do not be a cause of terror to me.
You are my refuge in the day of calamity.

¹⁸ Let my persecutors be put to shame,
But do not let me be put to shame.
Let them be struck with terror,
But do not let me be struck with terror.
Bring the day of calamity on them,
And crush them and destroy them
completely.

¹⁹ This is what Jehovah told me: “Go and
stand in the gate of the sons of the people by
which the kings of Judah go in and out, and in
all the gates of Jerusalem. ²⁰ You must say to
them, ‘Hear the word of Jehovah, you kings of
Judah, all people of Judah, and all inhabitants
of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. ²¹ This
is what Jehovah says: “Watch yourselves, and
do not carry any load on the Sabbath day or
bring it in through the gates of Jerusalem.

²² You must not bring any load out of your
homes on the Sabbath day; and you must do
no work at all. Keep the Sabbath day sacred,
just as I commanded your forefathers. ²³ But
they did not listen or incline their ear, and they

stubbornly refused to obey or to accept discipline.”

²⁴ ““However, if you strictly obey me,” declares Jehovah, “and you bring in no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, and you keep the Sabbath day sacred by not doing any work on it, ²⁵ then kings and princes who sit on the throne of David will also enter in through the gates of this city, riding in the chariot and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city will be inhabited for all time. ²⁶ And people will come from the cities of Judah, from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the lowland, from the mountainous region, and from the Neg'eb, bringing whole burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, frankincense, and thanksgiving sacrifices into the house of Jehovah.

²⁷ ““But if you do not obey me by keeping the Sabbath day sacred and by not carrying loads and bringing them through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, I will set her gates on fire, and it will certainly consume the fortified towers of Jerusalem and will not be extinguished.””

18 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah: ² “Rise up and go down to the house of the potter, and there I will cause you to hear my words.”

³ So I went down to the house of the potter, and he was working on the potter’s wheels.

⁴ But the vessel that the potter was making with the clay was spoiled in his hand. So the potter reworked it into another vessel, just as he saw fit.

⁵ Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: ⁶ “‘Can I not do to you just as this potter did, O house of Israel?’ declares Jehovah.

‘Look! As the clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

⁷ Whenever I may speak about uprooting and pulling down and destroying a nation or a kingdom, ⁸ and that nation abandons its wickedness that I spoke against, I will also change my mind concerning the calamity that I intended to bring against it. ⁹ But whenever I speak about building up and planting a nation or a kingdom, ¹⁰ and it does what is bad in my eyes and does not obey my voice, I will change my mind concerning the good that I intended to do for it.’

¹¹ “Now say, please, to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am preparing a calamity and devising a scheme against you. Turn back, please, from your bad ways, and reform your ways and your practices.”””

¹² But they said: “It is hopeless! For we will walk after our own thoughts, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his wicked heart.”

¹³ Therefore this is what Jehovah says:
“Ask for yourselves, please, among the nations.

Who has heard anything like this?

The virgin of Israel has done a most horrible thing.

¹⁴ Does the snow of Leb'a-non disappear from the rocks on its slopes?

Or will cool waters flowing from afar dry up?

¹⁵ But my people have forgotten me.

For they make sacrifices to something worthless,

And they make men stumble in their ways, the ancient paths,

To walk on back roads that are not
smooth and level,

¹⁶ In order to make their land an object of
horror

And something to whistle at forever.

Every last one passing by it will stare in
horror and shake his head.

¹⁷ Like the east wind, I will scatter them before
the enemy.

I will show them my back, not my face, in
the day of their disaster.”

¹⁸ And they said: “Come, let us devise a plot
against Jeremiah, for the law will not perish
from our priests or counsel from the wise men
or the word from the prophets. Come and let us
speak against him and pay no attention to what
he says.”

¹⁹ Do pay attention to me, O Jehovah,
And listen to what my opponents are
saying.

²⁰ Should good be repaid with bad?
For they have dug a pit for my life.
Remember how I stood before you to
speak good about them,
To turn your wrath away from them.

²¹ So give their sons over to the famine,

And hand them over to the power of the sword.

May their wives become bereaved of children and widowed.

May their men be killed with deadly plague,

Their young men struck down with the sword in battle.

²² Let a cry be heard from their houses
When you bring marauders on them suddenly.

For they have dug a pit to capture me
And have laid traps for my feet.

²³ But you, O Jehovah,
Well know all their schemes against me
to kill me.

Do not cover their error,
And do not wipe out their sin from before you.

Let them stumble before you
When you take action against them in your anger.

19 This is what Jehovah said: “Go and buy an earthenware flask from a potter. Take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, ² and go out to the Valley of the Son of Hin'nom, at the entrance of the Gate of

the Potsherds. And there proclaim the words that I speak to you. ³ You will say, 'Hear the word of Jehovah, you kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says:

““I am about to bring a calamity on this place, and the ears of anyone who hears about it will tingle. ⁴ It is because they abandoned me and made this place unrecognizable. In it they are sacrificing to other gods, whom they and their forefathers and the kings of Judah had not known, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent ones. ⁵ They built the high places of Ba'al in order to burn their sons in the fire as whole burnt offerings to Ba'al, something that I had not commanded or spoken of and that had never even come into my heart.”

⁶ ““Therefore look! the days are coming,” declares Jehovah, “when this place will no longer be called To'pheth or the Valley of the Son of Hin'nom but the Valley of the Slaughter. ⁷ I will thwart the plans of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those seeking to take their life. And I will give their dead bodies as food to the birds of the heavens and to the beasts of the earth. ⁸ And I

will make this city an object of horror and something to whistle at. Every last one passing by it will stare in horror and whistle over all its plagues. ⁹ And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will each eat the flesh of his fellow man, because of the siege and their desperation when they are hemmed in by their enemies and those seeking to take their life.”

¹⁰ “Then break the flask before the eyes of the men who go with you, ¹¹ and say to them, ‘This is what Jehovah of armies says: “This is how I will break this people and this city, like someone who breaks a potter’s vessel so that it can never be repaired; and they will bury the dead in To’pheth until there is no more room to bury them.”’

¹² “That is what I will do to this place,’ declares Jehovah, ‘and to its inhabitants, to make this city like To’pheth. ¹³ And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will become unclean like this place, To’pheth, yes, all the houses on whose roofs they offered sacrifices to all the army of the heavens and where they poured out drink offerings to other gods.’”

¹⁴ When Jeremiah returned from To'pheth where Jehovah sent him to prophesy, he stood in the courtyard of the house of Jehovah and said to all the people: ¹⁵ “This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says, ‘Here I am bringing on this city and on all its towns all the calamity that I have spoken against it, because they stubbornly refused to obey my words.’”

20 Now Pash'hur the son of Im'mer, the priest, who was also the leading commissioner in the house of Jehovah, was listening when Jeremiah prophesied these things. ² Then Pash'hur struck Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks that were at the Upper Gate of Benjamin, which was in the house of Jehovah. ³ But on the following day when Pash'hur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him:

“Jehovah has named you, not Pash'hur, but Terror All Around. ⁴ For this is what Jehovah says, ‘I will make you an object of terror to yourself and to all your friends, and they will fall by the sword of their enemies while your eyes are looking on; and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will take them into exile in Babylon and put them to death by the sword. ⁵ And I will give all the

wealth of this city, all its resources, all its precious things, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah into the hand of their enemies. And they will plunder them and seize them and take them to Babylon. ⁶ And as for you, Pash'hur, and all who live in your house, you will go into captivity. You will go off to Babylon and die there, and you will be buried there with all your friends, because you have prophesied lies to them.”

⁷ You have fooled me, O Jehovah, and I was fooled.

You used your strength against me, and you prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;

Everyone ridicules me.

⁸ For whenever I speak, I must cry out and proclaim,

“Violence and destruction!”

For me the word of Jehovah has been the cause of insults and jeering all day long.

⁹ So I said: “I am not going to make mention of him,

And I will speak no more in his name.”

But in my heart it became like a burning
fire shut up in my bones,
And I was tired of holding it in;
I could no longer endure it.

¹⁰ For I heard many evil rumors;
Terror surrounded me.
“Denounce him; let us denounce him!”
Every man wishing me peace was
watching for my downfall:
“Perhaps he will make a foolish mistake,
And we can prevail and take our revenge
against him.”

¹¹ But Jehovah was with me like a fearsome
warrior.
That is why those persecuting me will
stumble and will not prevail.
They will be put to great shame, for they
will not succeed.
Their everlasting humiliation will not be
forgotten.

¹² But you, O Jehovah of armies, are
examining the righteous one;
You see the innermost thoughts and the
heart.
Let me see your vengeance on them,
For to you I have committed my legal
case.

- ¹³ Sing to Jehovah! Praise Jehovah!
For he has rescued the poor one from the
hand of evildoers.
- ¹⁴ Cursed be the day I was born!
May the day my mother gave birth to me
not be blessed!
- ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought good news
to my father, saying:
“A son has been born to you, a boy!”
Making him rejoice greatly.
- ¹⁶ May that man become like cities that
Jehovah overthrew without regret.
May he hear an outcry in the morning and
the sound of alarm at midday.
- ¹⁷ Why did he not put me to death in the
womb,
So that my mother would become my
burial place
And her womb would always remain
pregnant?
- ¹⁸ Why did I have to come out of the womb
To see trouble and grief,
To end my days in shame?

21 Jeremiah received the word from Jehovah
when King Zed-e-ki'ah sent to him Pash'hur son
of Mal-chi'jah and Zeph-a-ni'ah son of

Ma·a·sei'ah, the priest, requesting: ² “Please inquire of Jehovah in our behalf, because King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon is waging war against us. Perhaps Jehovah will perform one of his wonderful works in our behalf, so that he will withdraw from us.”

³ Jeremiah said to them: “This is what you should say to Zed·e·ki'ah, ⁴ ‘This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says: “Here I am turning around against you the weapons of war that are in your own hands, with which you are fighting the king of Babylon and the Chal·de'ans who are outside the wall besieging you. And I will gather them into the middle of this city.

⁵ And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, with anger and wrath and great indignation. ⁶ I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. By a great pestilence they will die.”

⁷ ““And after that,” declares Jehovah, “I will give King Zed·e·ki'ah of Judah and his servants and the people of this city—those who survive the pestilence, the sword, and the famine—into the hand of King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon, into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who are seeking to take their life. He will strike them down with the

sword. He will not feel sorry for them, nor will he show compassion or have any mercy.”

⁸ “And to this people you should say, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am putting before you the way of life and the way of death.

⁹ Those who remain in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Chal-de'ans who are besieging you will keep living, and he will have his life as a spoil.”

¹⁰ ““For I have set my face against this city for calamity and not for good,” declares Jehovah. “It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire.”

¹¹ “To the household of the king of Judah: Hear the word of Jehovah. ¹² O house of David, this is what Jehovah says:

“Uphold justice every morning,
And rescue the one being robbed from
the hand of the defrauder,
So that my wrath does not blaze like a
fire
And burn with no one to extinguish it
Because of your evil deeds.”

¹³ ‘Here I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley,

O rock of the level land,' declares
Jehovah.

'As for you who say: "Who will come
down against us?

And who will invade our dwellings?"

¹⁴ I will hold an accounting against you
As your deeds deserve,' declares
Jehovah.

'And I will set her forest ablaze,
And it will consume all the things around
her.'"

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JEREMIAH 17-21 | Let Jehovah Mold Your Thinking and Conduct

18:1-11

Respond favorably to Jehovah's molding

- Jehovah shapes our spiritual qualities through counsel or discipline
- We need to be malleable and obedient
- Jehovah never forces us to do things against our will

A potter may change his mind about what to do with a vessel

- Because Jehovah has given us free will, we can choose either to accept his molding or to reject it
- Jehovah adjusts his dealings with people according to the way they respond to his direction



DID YOU KNOW?

Clay was a common material in Bible times. When moist, clay is soft and pliable, and it will maintain the impressions made on it. But clay, even when baked hard, is not a strong material.

In what ways do I need Jehovah to mold me?



April 3-9

Treasures From God's Word

Jeremiah 18:1-4—A potter has authority over the clay

Reference: w99 4/1 22 **paragraph 3.**

The need for a willing, obedient response on your part if you are to benefit from Jehovah's molding influence was powerfully illustrated when Jehovah told the prophet Jeremiah to visit the workshop of a potter. Jeremiah saw the potter change his mind about what to do with one vessel when the product he was trying to make "was spoiled by the potter's hand." Jehovah then said: "Am I not able to do just like this potter to you people, O house of Israel? . . . Look! As the clay in the hand of the potter, so you are in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jeremiah 18:1-6) Did that mean that people in Israel were just like lumps of lifeless clay in Jehovah's hands for him to mold arbitrarily into one kind of vessel or another?

Jeremiah 18:5-10—Jehovah has authority over mankind

Reference: it-2 776 **paragraph 4.**

A potter may begin to make one type of vessel and then

change to another style if the vessel is “spoiled by the potter’s hand.” (**Jeremiah 18:3, 4**) By this example Jehovah illustrates, *not* that he is like a human potter in ‘spoiling by his hand,’ but rather, that he has divine *authority* over mankind, authority to adjust his dealings with them according to the way they respond or fail to respond to his righteousness and mercy. (Compare **Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:19-21**.) He can thus “feel regret over the calamity that [he] had thought to execute” upon a nation, or “feel regret over the good that [he] said to [himself] to do for its good,” all depending upon the reaction of the nation to his prior dealings with it. (**Jeremiah 18:5-10**) Thus, it is not that the Great Potter, Jehovah, errs, but rather, that the human “clay” undergoes a “metamorphosis” (change of form or composition) as to its heart condition, producing regret, or a change of feeling, on Jehovah’s part.

Jeremiah 18:11—Respond favorably to Jehovah’s molding

Reference: w99 4/1 22 **paragraphs 4-5**.

Jehovah never uses his almighty power to make people do things against their will; nor is he responsible for defective products, as might be the case with a human potter.

(Deuteronomy 32:4) Defects develop when those whom Jehovah tries to mold in a positive way resist his direction.

That is one huge difference between you and a lifeless lump of clay. You have free will. Exercising it, you can choose to respond to Jehovah's molding influence or deliberately reject it.

What a sobering lesson! How much better to listen to Jehovah's voice instead of arrogantly asserting, "No one tells me what to do"! We all need Jehovah's guiding influence. (John 17:3) Be like the psalmist David, who prayed: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths." (Psalm 25:4) Remember what King Solomon said: "A wise person will listen and take in more instruction." (Proverbs 1:5) Will you listen? If you do, then "thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you."—Proverbs 2:11.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Jeremiah 17:9—How may the heart's treachery become manifest?

Reference: w01 10/15 25 **paragraph 13**.

"The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate," warned Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 17:9) This treachery of the heart may manifest itself when we make excuses for our errors, minimize shortcomings, rationalize away serious

personality flaws, or exaggerate accomplishments. A desperate heart is also capable of taking on a two-sided posture—smooth lips saying one thing, actions saying another. (Psalm 12:2; Proverbs 23:7) How vital that we be honest as we examine what comes out of the heart!

Jeremiah 20:7—In what way did Jehovah use his strength against Jeremiah and fool him?

Reference: w07 3/15 9 **paragraph 6**.

Because of facing indifference, rejection, and persecution when declaring Jehovah's judgments, Jeremiah might have felt that he did not have the strength to continue. However, Jehovah used his strength against such inclinations, empowering Jeremiah to continue. Jehovah thus fooled Jeremiah by using him to accomplish what the prophet himself thought he could not do.

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- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Jer 21:3-14

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- **Prepare This Month’s Presentations:** (15 min.) Discussion based on “Sample Presentations.” Play each presentation video, and then discuss the highlights. Encourage all to make return visits on those who accepted the tract *What Is the Kingdom of God?*

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 85
- **Local Needs:** (5 min.) As an option, discuss the lessons learned from the *Yearbook*. (yb16 22)
- **“Warmly Welcome Them”:** (10 min.) Begin with a three-minute talk. Conclude by playing the video *Steve Gerdes: We Will Never Forget the Greeting* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 10 ¶12-19, box on p. 105 (right), review box on p. 107
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 13 and Prayer

Warmly Welcome Them

Warmly welcome whom? *Anyone* who attends our Christian meetings—from newcomers to longtime friends. (Ro 15:7; Heb 13:2) It could be a fellow believer visiting from another country or an inactive Christian attending for the first time in years. Imagine how you would feel in such circumstances. Would you not appreciate a warm greeting? (Mt 7:12) So why not make a greater effort to move about the Kingdom Hall and greet others before and after the meeting? This contributes to a warm and loving atmosphere and brings honor to Jehovah. (Mt 5:16) Of course, it will likely not be possible to speak personally with everyone present. Nevertheless, everyone will feel welcome if we all do our part.*

True hospitality is shown not just on special occasions like the Memorial but at all times. When newcomers see and experience Christian love in action, they may be moved to praise God and join us in pure worship.—Joh 13:35.

* Bible principles limit our dealings with disfellowshipped or disassociated ones who may attend meetings.—1Co 5:11; 2Jo 10.



SUGGESTIONS TO HELP NEWCOMERS

- Introduce yourself and ask for their name
- Invite them to sit with you
- Share your Bible and songbook with them
- After the meeting, make yourself available to answer questions
- Offer a Bible study when appropriate

1. Welcome to all who gather here this day
To hear God's Word and to learn his way.
Life-giving truth he offers to us all;
With thankfulness of heart, we respond to his call.
2. Thanks to our God for brothers such as these,
Who welcome us and who seek to please.
May we keep holding men of that sort dear,
And now we welcome others who meet with us here.
3. God's invitation reaches all mankind,
That all sincere ones the truth may find.
God by his Son has drawn us to His side.
So welcome one another with hearts opened wide.

one text message, Anibal's mother wrote, "Today I am feeling much better because you have given me comfort and helped me to increase my faith."

Special metropolitan public witnessing has been organized at 127 locations in 14 cities in the **United States**. During the first seven months of the 2015 service year, 8,445 Bible studies were started! This form of witnessing has also been instrumental in helping many who were formerly associated to get involved with true worship once again. For instance, a man named Terry was looking over one of our literature displays in Los Angeles, California, so the Witness couple at the table asked if he had read our literature before. He explained that he is one of Jehovah's Witnesses but that he had been inactive for about four years. The couple read and discussed with him Ezekiel 34:11, where Jehovah says: "I myself will search for my sheep, and I will care for them." They told him about our website and JW Broadcasting. The next morning Terry e-mailed the brother, explaining that just moments before he saw the witnessing table, he had begged for God's forgiveness for neglecting congregation meetings. He had also asked for help to draw closer to Jehovah. "Then you greeted me warmly," said Terry. "You read that encouraging scripture to me and provided me with the information that I need to get back in step with Jehovah's organization. It was an answer to my prayer."

There are four special metropolitan public witnessing locations in Addis Ababa, **Ethiopia**. In three months the brothers placed 37,275 publications, and 629 people requested a visit from the Witnesses. Among the many who accepted a *Bible Teach* book was an older

- Song 88 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Let Jehovah Mold Your Thinking and Conduct”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 18:1-4—A potter has authority over the clay (w99 4/1 22 ¶3)
 Jer 18:5-10—Jehovah has authority over mankind (it-2 776 ¶4)
 Jer 18:11—Respond favorably to Jehovah’s molding (w99 4/1 22 ¶4-5)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 17:9—How may the heart’s treachery become manifest? (w01 10/15 25 ¶13)

Jer 20:7—In what way did Jehovah use his strength against Jeremiah and fool him? (w07 3/15 9 ¶6)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Jer 21:3-14

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

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it and apply what I learn?” Our willing obedience shows our support for the Messianic King, who is using the faithful slave to dispense timely spiritual food.—Acts 16:4, 5.

Should Christians Use the Cross?

¹² For many years, the Bible Students viewed the cross as an acceptable symbol of Christianity. They certainly did not feel that the cross should be worshipped, for they understood that idolatry is wrong. (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21) As early as 1883, the *Watch Tower* frankly stated that “all idolatry is an abomination to God.” Yet, at first, the Bible Students saw no objection to what they thought were appropriate uses of the cross. For example, they proudly wore a cross-and-crown pin as an identifying badge. To them it signified that if they proved faithful to death, they would receive the crown of life. Beginning in 1891, a cross-and-crown symbol appeared on the cover of the *Watch Tower*.

¹³ The Bible Students cherished the cross-and-

12. For many years, how did the Bible Students view the cross?

13. What enlightenment did Christ’s followers receive about use of the cross? (See also the box “Progressively Enlightened About Use of the Cross.”)

“CHRISTMAS, ITS ORIGIN AND PURPOSE”

IN December 1928, Brother Richard H. Barber delivered a powerful radio discourse on the subject of Christmas. The content of that discourse was published in *The Golden Age* of December 12, 1928, under the title “Christmas, Its Origin and Purpose.” Among the statements in the discourse were the following:

- “Satan . . . has taught the people to give more prominence to the *birth* of the *babe* Jesus than to the *death* of the *man* Jesus, in order to hide the importance of the *ransom*.”
- “Every one is aware of the spirit of frivolity, debauchery, drunkenness and revelry so prevalent during the Christmas season . . . Surely none of these things honor either Jehovah God or His Son.”
- “The Devil has now succeeded in grafting his counterfeit festivals, feast days, fast days and holy days upon the church . . . The Devil has succeeded in getting the people to adopt all his wicked schemes and to give them the name Christian, in order that thus he might mock the great Jehovah God.”

crowns emblem. Starting in the late 1920's, however, Christ's followers were progressively enlightened regarding the use of the cross. Reflecting on the 1928 assembly held in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., Brother

Grant Suiter, who later served on the Governing Body, recalled: “At the assembly the cross-and-crown emblems were shown to be not only unnecessary but objectionable.” Over the next few years, more enlightenment followed. It was clear that the cross has no place in worship that is pure and spiritually clean.

¹⁴ How did God’s people respond to the progressive enlightenment they received about the cross? Did they continue to hold on to the cross-and-crown emblem, which had been so dear to them? “We easily gave it up when we realized what it represented,” recalled Lela Roberts, a longtime servant of Jehovah. Another faithful sister, Ursula Serenco, expressed the feelings of many, saying: “We came to recognize that what we once cherished as symbolic or representative of the death of our Lord and of our Christian devotion was really a pagan symbol. In harmony with Proverbs 4:18, we were grateful that the path was being more brightly illuminated.” Christ’s loyal followers wanted to have no part in unclean false religious practices!

14. How did God’s people respond to the progressive enlightenment they received about the cross?

¹⁵ We share that determination today. We recognize that Christ has been using a clearly recognizable channel—his faithful and discreet slave—to help his people keep spiritually clean. Hence, when the spiritual food we receive alerts us to observances, practices, or customs that are tainted by false religion, we promptly and obediently respond. Like our brothers and sisters who lived in the early part of Christ’s presence, we are determined to keep the earthly courtyards of Jehovah’s spiritual temple clean.

¹⁶ Throughout the last days, Christ has also been working behind the scenes to protect the congregations of Jehovah’s people from individuals who could cause spiritual contamination. How has he done so? Let us see.

Separating “the Wicked From Among the Righteous”

¹⁷ The King Jesus Christ keeps a watchful eye on the congregations of God’s people earth wide. In ways

15, 16. How can we show that we are determined to keep the earthly courtyards of Jehovah’s spiritual temple clean?

17, 18. In the illustration of the dragnet, what is the meaning of (a) letting down the dragnet, (b) “gathering fish of every kind,” (c) collecting the fine fish into containers, and (d) throwing away the fish that were not suitable?

PROGRESSIVELY ENLIGHTENED ABOUT USE OF THE CROSS

- Cross-and-crown pins are not only unnecessary but also objectionable.—Assembly in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., 1928.
- Cross-and-crown pins are idols.—*Preparation*, 1933, page 239.
- The cross is pagan in origin.—*The Golden Age*, February 28, 1934, page 336.
- Jesus died on a stake, not on a cross.—*The Golden Age*, November 4, 1936, page 72; *Riches*, 1936, page 27.

The Greek word *stau-ros'* is translated “cross” in many Bible translations. Notice, however, what various sources say about the meaning of this word:

“The Greek word [*stau-ros'*] properly . . . means merely a stake.”
—*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*.

“A pole in the broadest sense. It is not the equivalent of a ‘cross.’”
—*Crucifixion in Antiquity*.

“A strong stake, such as farmers drive into the ground to make their fences or palisades—no more, no less.”—*History of the Cross*.

“It never means *two* pieces of timber placed across one another at any angle, but always of one piece alone.”—*The Companion Bible*.

“An upright pale or stake . . . It never means two pieces of wood joining each other at any angle.”—*A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*.

that we cannot fully perceive, Christ and the angels have been doing a separating work. Jesus described this work in his illustration of the dragnet. (**Read Matthew 13:47-50.**) What does the illustration mean?

¹⁸ *Letting “a dragnet . . . down into the sea.”* The dragnet represents the Kingdom preaching that is taking place throughout the sea of humanity. *“Gathering fish of every kind.”* The good news attracts people of all kinds—those who take steps to become true Christians, as well as many others who may initially show some interest but do not really take a stand for pure worship.*^[5] *Collecting “the fine ones into containers.”* Honesthearted ones are gathered into containerlike congregations, where they can render clean worship to Jehovah. *Throwing away “the unsuitable” fish.* Throughout the last days, Christ and the angels have been separating “the wicked from among the righteous.”^{#[6]} As

***[5]** Consider, for example, that in 2013, there was a peak of 7,965,954 publishers, while 19,241,252 attended the annual observance of the Memorial of Christ’s death.

#[6] The separating of the fine fish from the unsuitable fish is *not* the same as the separating of the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) The separating, or final judgment, of the sheep and the goats takes place during the coming great tribulation. Until then, those who are like unsuitable fish may return to Jehovah and be gathered into containerlike congregations.—Mal. 3:7.



The dragnet represents
the Kingdom preaching that
is taking place throughout
the sea of humanity
(See paragraph 18)

a result, those who lack the right heart condition—who are perhaps unwilling to abandon wrong beliefs or practices—have not been allowed to taint the congregations.*[7]

¹⁹ Is it not reassuring to know that our King, Jesus Christ, is protective of those under his care? And is it not comforting to know that his zeal for true worship—and true worshippers—is as fervent today as it was when he cleansed the temple in the first century C.E.? How thankful we are that Christ has been working to safeguard the spiritual cleanness of God’s people and the purity of true worship! We can show our support for the King and his Kingdom by avoiding all contact with false religion.

*[7] Eventually, the unsuitable ones will symbolically be cast into a fiery furnace, denoting their future destruction.

19. How do you feel about what Christ has been doing to safeguard the cleanness of God’s people and the purity of true worship?

How Real Is the Kingdom to You?

- What is spiritual cleanness, and through what channel has Christ helped his followers to be spiritually clean?
- How did Christ use his faithful and discreet slave to help his followers to abandon the celebration of Christmas and the use of the cross-and-crown emblem?
- How do you feel about what Christ has done to safeguard true worship?

Christ, Our Model

(1 Peter 2:21)

1. What love Jehovah showed,
 What goodness from him flowed,
 When for all mankind he offered his Firstborn.
Christ took on human form—
 The Son of man was born—
 By his example, God's name he adorned.
2. Jehovah's Word, he said,
 Sustained his life like bread.
 It gave him wisdom and knowledge and insight.
His Father's willing slave,
 A model Jesus gave;
 To please his Father would bring him delight.
3. Like Jesus, may our days
 Provide Jehovah praise,
 And may his footsteps become our own roadway.
Let Jesus' model be
 Our path eternally,
 And then God's favor we'll know day by day.

FEBRUARY 2017

THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 3-30, 2017

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

ETHIOPIA

A brother uses the Bible to share the Kingdom message with two villagers in the central highlands of Ethiopia. The men wear the handwoven cotton shawls typical of the area

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 WEEK OF APRIL 3-9

Jehovah's Purpose Will Be Fulfilled!

16 WEEK OF APRIL 10-16

The Ransom—A “Perfect Present”
From the Father

Christ's ransom sacrifice is fundamental to our faith and to the outworking of Jehovah's original purpose for mankind. These two articles examine why the ransom became necessary, what it accomplished, and how we can show heartfelt gratitude for this most loving of all gifts from our heavenly Father.

A Special Possession

(1 Peter 2:9)

1. God has a new creation,
His spirit-anointed sons.
He has bought them from mankind;
His approval they've won.

(CHORUS)

*A special possession,
They're a people for your name.
They love you. They praise you.
As one they declare abroad your fame.*

2. They are a holy nation,
Who handle the truth aright.
God has called them from darkness
To his wonderful light.

(Chorus)

3. Faithful to their commission,
They gather the other sheep.
To the Lamb they are loyal.
His commandments they keep.

(Chorus)



SONGS:

25, 18

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What is Jehovah's purpose for mankind?

What rebellious actions did not defeat Jehovah's purpose?

How will Jehovah's purpose be fulfilled?

Jehovah's Purpose Will Be Fulfilled!

“I have spoken, and I will bring it about. I have purposed it, and I will also carry it out.”—ISA. 46:11.

THE very first words of the Bible make this simple but profound statement: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1) It is true that we have only a little understanding of the many things God created, such as space, light, and

1, 2. (a) What has Jehovah revealed to us? (b) What assurance do we find at Isaiah 46:10, 11 and 55:11?

gravity, and we have seen only a small fraction of the universe. (Eccl. 3:11) Yet, Jehovah has revealed to us his purpose for the earth and for mankind. The earth was to be an ideal home for men and women created in God's image. (Gen. 1:26) They would be his children, and Jehovah would be their Father.

² As explained in the third chapter of Genesis, Jehovah's purpose encountered a challenge. (Gen. 3:1-7) However, that challenge was by no means insurmountable. No one can stand in Jehovah's way. (Isa. 46:10, 11; 55:11) Therefore, we can be certain that Jehovah's original purpose will be fulfilled exactly on time!

³ No doubt, we are familiar with Bible truths about God's purpose for the earth and mankind and about the central role of Jesus Christ in the outworking of God's purpose. They are of fundamental importance and are likely among the first truths we learned when we began to study God's Word. We, in turn, want to help sincere people to become familiar with these vital teachings. Currently, as we are considering this article as a

3. (a) What truths are fundamental to our understanding of the Bible's message? (b) Why do we review such teachings now? (c) What questions will we consider?

congregation, we are striving to invite as many people as possible to the Memorial of Christ's death. (Luke 22:19, 20) Those who attend will learn much regarding God's purpose. So in these last few days before the Memorial, it is timely that we think about specific questions that we can use to stimulate the interest of our Bible students and other sincere individuals in this important event. We will consider three questions: What was God's original purpose for the earth and mankind? What went wrong? And why is Jesus' ransom sacrifice the key that unlocks the door for God's purpose to be accomplished?

WHAT WAS THE CREATOR'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE?

⁴ Jehovah is an awe-inspiring Creator. Everything he creates meets the highest standards. (Gen. 1:31; Jer. 10:12) What can we learn from the beauty and order that are evident in creation? When observing creation, we are impressed with the way all of Jehovah's creative works, small and large, serve a beneficial purpose. Who does not marvel at the intricacies of the human cell, the delicateness of a newborn baby, or the splendor of a

4. How does creation declare Jehovah's glory?

gorgeous sunset? We admire these creations because we have a built-in sense of what is truly beautiful.—Read Psalm 19:1; 104:24.

⁵ As is evident in creation, Jehovah lovingly set boundaries. He made both natural laws and moral laws to ensure that everything functions harmoniously. (Ps. 19:7-9) Hence, all things in the universe have an assigned place and function according to their role in God's purpose. Jehovah sets the standard for how his creation should work together. Thus, the law of gravity holds the atmosphere close to the earth, regulates tides and oceans, and contributes to the physical order essential to life on earth. All creation, including humans, moves and functions within these boundaries. Clearly, the order in creation testifies that God has a purpose for earth and mankind. In our ministry, can we draw attention to the Cause of this impressive order?—Rev. 4:11.

⁶ Jehovah's original purpose was for mankind to live forever here on earth. (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 37:29) He generously gave Adam and Eve a variety of precious gifts that enabled them to enjoy life. (Read

5. How does Jehovah ensure that all creation functions harmoniously?

6, 7. What are some gifts that Jehovah gave Adam and Eve?

James 1:17.) Jehovah gave them free will, the ability to reason, and the capacity to love and to enjoy friendship. The Creator spoke to Adam and instructed him on how to show his obedience. Adam also learned how to take care of his needs and how to care for the animals and the land. (Gen. 2:15-17, 19, 20) Jehovah also created Adam and Eve with the senses of taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell. Thus they could enjoy to the full the beauty and bounty of their Paradise home. For the first human pair, the possibilities for satisfying work, accomplishment, and discovery were endless.

⁷ What else was part of God's purpose? Jehovah created Adam and Eve with the ability to have perfect children. God had in mind for their children to have children, until the human family filled the whole earth. He wanted Adam and Eve and all parents after them to love their children as Jehovah loved his first perfect human children. Earth, with all its resources, was to become their permanent home.—Ps. 115:16.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

⁸ Things did not immediately work out as God

8. What purpose was served by the law found at Genesis 2:16, 17?

had purposed. Why not? Jehovah gave Adam and Eve a simple law that served to test whether they recognized the limits of their freedom. He said: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Gen. 2: 16, 17) It was not hard for Adam and Eve to understand this law; nor was it a hardship for them to obey it. After all, they had more food available than they could eat.

⁹ Satan the Devil, using a serpent, fooled Eve into disobeying her Father, Jehovah. (Read Genesis 3:1-5; Rev. 12:9) Satan made an issue of the fact that God’s human children were not allowed to eat “from every tree of the garden.” It was as if he were saying: ‘You mean you cannot do what you want?’ Next, he told a blatant lie: “You certainly will not die.” Then he tried to convince Eve that she need not listen to God, saying: “God knows that in the very day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened.” Satan implied that Jehovah did not want them to eat the fruit because doing so would

9, 10. (a) What accusation did Satan hurl against Jehovah? (b) What did Adam and Eve decide? (See opening image.)

enlighten them. Further, Satan made this false promise: “You will be like God, knowing good and bad.”

¹⁰ Now Adam and Eve had to decide what to do. Would they obey Jehovah, or would they listen to the serpent? They decided to disobey God. By doing so, they joined Satan’s rebellion. They rejected Jehovah as their Father and estranged themselves from the security of his protective rule.—Gen. 3: 6-13.

¹¹ By rebelling against Jehovah, Adam and Eve lost their perfection. Moreover, their rebellion resulted in alienation from Jehovah because his “eyes are too pure to look on what is evil.” Therefore, he “cannot tolerate wickedness.” (Hab. 1: 13) If he had tolerated it, the well-being of all living creatures—in heaven and on earth—would be threatened. Above all, had God done nothing about the sin committed in Eden, his own trustworthiness would have been called into question. But Jehovah is faithful to his own standards; he never violates them. (Ps. 119:142) Thus, having free will did not entitle Adam and Eve to disregard God’s law. As a consequence of rebelling against

11. Why does Jehovah not tolerate rebellion?

Jehovah, they died and returned to the dust from which they had been created.—Gen. 3:19.

¹² When Adam and Eve ate of that fruit, they put themselves in a position where they could no longer be accepted as members of God’s universal family. God expelled them from Eden, and they had no hope of ever returning. (Gen. 3:23, 24) In doing so, Jehovah justly made them face the consequences of their own decision. (Read Deuteronomy 32:4, 5.) No longer perfect, man could not reflect God’s qualities perfectly. Adam not only lost a marvelous future for himself but also handed down to his children imperfection, sin, and death. (Rom. 5:12) He deprived his offspring of the prospect of life without end. Furthermore, Adam and Eve could no longer have a perfect child; neither could any of their children have a perfect child. After turning Adam and Eve away from God, Satan the Devil has continued to mislead mankind until today.—John 8:44.

THE RANSOM HEALS A RIFT

¹³ God’s love for humans, however, endures. Despite Adam and Eve’s rebellion, Jehovah wants

12. What happened to Adam’s children?

13. What does Jehovah want for mankind?

mankind to enjoy a good relationship with him. He does not desire any to die. (2 Pet. 3:9) So right after the rebellion, God made arrangements to enable humans to restore their friendship with him while he at the same time maintained his own righteous standards. How did Jehovah accomplish this?

¹⁴ **Read John 3:16.** Many whom we invite to the Memorial will know this verse by heart. But the question is, *How does Jesus' sacrifice make everlasting life possible?* The Memorial campaign, the Memorial itself, and the calls we later make on those who attended may provide us with the opportunity to help sincere truth-seekers to understand the answer to that important question. Such ones may be impressed when they begin to understand to a fuller degree how Jehovah's love and wisdom are expressed by the ransom provision. What points about the ransom could we highlight?

¹⁵ *Jehovah provided a perfect man who could become the ransomer.* That perfect man would need to be loyal to Jehovah and be willing to give his life in exchange for doomed humanity. (Rom. 5:17-19)

14. (a) According to John 3:16, what provision did God make to restore mankind? (b) What question might we consider with interested ones?

15. How did the man Jesus differ from the man Adam?

Jehovah transferred the life of his very first creation from heaven to earth. (John 1:14) Jesus thus became a perfect human, just as Adam had been. But unlike Adam, Jesus lived up to the standard Jehovah expected from a perfect man. Even under the most extreme tests, Jesus never sinned nor broke any of God's laws.

¹⁶ *As a perfect man, Jesus could save humankind from sin and death by dying in their behalf.* He corresponded exactly to all that Adam should have been—a perfect man, absolutely loyal and obedient to God. (1 Tim. 2:6) Jesus became the ransom sacrifice that opened the way to endless life “for many”—men, women, and children. (Matt. 20:28) Indeed, the ransom is the key that unlocks the door to the fulfillment of God's original purpose. (2 Cor. 1:19, 20) The ransom gives all faithful humans the prospect of everlasting life.

JEHOVAH OPENED THE DOOR FOR US TO RETURN

¹⁷ Jehovah provided the ransom at great cost to himself. (1 Pet. 1:19) He values humanity so highly

16. Why is the ransom such a precious gift?

17. What does the ransom make possible?

that he was willing to let his only-begotten Son die in our behalf. (1 John 4:9, 10) In a sense, Jesus takes the place of our original human father, Adam. (1 Cor. 15:45) By doing so, Jesus restores more than life; he gives us the opportunity to return eventually to God's family. Yes, on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, Jehovah can accept humans back into his family without compromising his righteousness. Is it not heartwarming to think of a time when all faithful humans will be brought to perfection? There will be complete unity between the heavenly and earthly parts of his family. In the fullest sense, we will all be children of God.—Rom. 8:21.

¹⁸ Satan's rebellion did not stop Jehovah from extending his love to mankind, nor can it prevent even imperfect humans from being loyal to Jehovah. Through his provision of the ransom, Jehovah will help all of his children to become completely righteous. Imagine what life will be like when everyone "who recognizes the Son and exercises faith" will have everlasting life. (John 6:40) With great love and wisdom, Jehovah will bring the human family to perfection, according to his

18. When will Jehovah become "all things to everyone"?

Let Us Keep Searching Out Deserving Ones



THE Memorial invitation is one of the most widely circulated publications that we print. Last year, we produced some 440,000,000 copies in more than 530 languages. Do you still have some printed copies of this year's invitation that you could distribute before the Memorial? One of the remaining invitations that you have might help a deserving one to make the decision to attend the Memorial. Who knows?—Matt. 10:11.

original purpose. Jehovah, our Father, will then become “all things to everyone.”—1 Cor. 15:28.

¹⁹ Gratitude for the ransom should motivate us to do all we can to make others aware that they can benefit from that priceless gift. People need to know that the ransom is the means by which Jehovah lovingly offers all mankind the prospect of everlasting life. Still, the ransom accomplished even more than that. The next article will consider how Jesus' sacrifice also addresses the moral issues that were raised by Satan back in the garden of Eden.

19. (a) Gratitude for the ransom should move us to do what? (See the box “Let Us Keep Searching Out Deserving Ones.”) (b) What aspect of the ransom will we consider next?

18

Grateful for the Ransom

(Luke 22:20)

1. Today, Jehovah God,
we stand before your throne,
For you showed the greatest love
that could ever be shown.
You gave the gift of your dear Son,
that we might live.
No greater sacrifice than this
could you ever give.

(CHORUS)

*He gave his life to set us free.
His precious blood provides the key.
With all our hearts,
we'll go on thanking you eternally.*

2. It was a willing sacrifice
that Jesus made.
Out of love, his perfect life
was the price that he paid.
We had no hope until he came
to save mankind.
But now our hope is finding life,
leaving death behind.

(Chorus)

