

- Song 55 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- “Ebed-melech—An Example of Bravery and Kindness”: (10 min.)

Jer 38:4-6—Zedekiah gave in to fear of man and allowed opposers to throw Jeremiah into a muddy cistern to die (*it-2 1228 ¶3*)

Jer 38:7-10—Ebed-melech acted bravely and decisively to help Jeremiah (*w12 5/1 31 ¶2-3*)

Jer 38:11-13—Ebed-melech demonstrated kindness (*w12 5/1 31 ¶4*)

- Digging for Spiritual Gems: (8 min.)

Jer 35:19—Why were the Rechabites blessed? (*it-2 759*)

Jer 37:21—How did Jehovah care for Jeremiah, and how can this encourage us when we experience adversity? (*w98 1/15 18 ¶16-17; w95 8/1 5 ¶5-6*)

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 36:27-37:2

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- Initial Call: (2 min. or less) *wp17.3 cover*—Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- Return Visit: (4 min. or less) *wp17.3 cover*—Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- Bible Study: (6 min. or less) *jl* lesson 26

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 92
- “Caring for Our Places of Worship”: (15 min.) Questions and answers by an elder. After playing the video *Caring for Our Places of Worship* and considering the questions, briefly interview the congregation’s representative on the operating committee. (If your congregation does not have a representative, interview the coordinator of the body of elders. If your congregation is the only one that meets in the Kingdom Hall, interview the maintenance coordinator.) What Kingdom Hall maintenance projects have been accomplished recently, and what is planned for the future? If someone has maintenance skills or would like to learn by assisting those with skills, what should he or she do? How can all of us, regardless of our circumstances, share in caring for the Kingdom Hall?
- Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) *kr* chap. 12 ¶9-15, boxes on pp. 122-123, 130-131
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 123 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 35-38 | Ebed-melech—An Example of Bravery and Kindness

38:7-13

Ebed-melech, an officer in the court of King Zedekiah, showed godly qualities

- He acted bravely and decisively by approaching King Zedekiah in behalf of Jeremiah and then by rescuing Jeremiah from the cistern
- He showed kindness by providing soft rags and pieces of cloth to cushion Jeremiah’s armpits against the ropes



(Matthew 10:28)

1. Ever onward, O my people,
Let the Kingdom tidings go.
Tremble not before our foe.
Let all lovers of truth know
That my reigning Son, Christ Jesus,
To the earth has cast the foe,
Soon to bind the Devil, Satan,
Letting all his victims go.

(CHORUS)

*Fear them not, O my beloved,
Though their boasting threats may fly.
I will keep my faithful servant
As the apple of my eye.*

2. Even though your foes are many,
Though they threaten and revile,
Though they flatter and they smile,
To mislead and to beguile.
Fear them not, my faithful people,
Nor their persecution's heat,
For I will preserve the faithful
Till the vict'ry is complete.

(Chorus)

3. Never fear you are forgotten;
I am still your strength and shield.
Though you die upon the field,
Even death to me will yield.
Fear them not who kill the body
But cannot destroy the soul.
To the end may you be faithful;
I will bring you to your goal!

(Chorus)

Jeremiah 35-38

35 The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah in the days of Je-hoi'a-kim son of Jo-si'ah, the king of Judah, saying: ² "Go to the house of the Re'cha-bites and speak with them and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the dining rooms; then offer them wine to drink."

³ So I took Ja-az-a-ni'ah the son of Jeremiah the son of Hab-az-zi-ni'ah, his brothers, all his sons, and the entire house of the Re'cha-bites ⁴ into the house of Jehovah. I brought them to the dining room of the sons of Ha'nan the son of Ig-da-li'ah, a man of the true God, which was next to the dining room of the princes that was above the dining room of Ma-a-sei'ah the son of Shal'lum the doorkeeper. ⁵ Then I put cups and goblets full of wine before the men of the house of the Re'cha-bites and said to them: "Drink wine."

⁶ But they said: "We will not drink wine, because Je-hon'a-dab the son of Re'chab, our forefather, gave us this command, 'Neither you nor your sons must ever drink wine. ⁷ And you must not build a house, sow seed, or plant or obtain a vineyard. Instead, you must always dwell in tents, so that you may live for a long time in the land where you are residing as foreigners.'

⁸ So we continue to obey the voice of Je-hon'a-dab the

son of our forefather Re'chab in all that he commanded us, by never drinking any wine—we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters. ⁹ And we do not build houses to dwell in, nor do we have vineyards or fields or seed. ¹⁰ We keep living in tents and obeying all that Je-hon'a-dab our forefather commanded us. ¹¹ But when King Neb-u-chad-nez'zar of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come, let us go into Jerusalem to escape the army of the Chal-de'ans and of the Syrians,' and now we are living in Jerusalem."

¹² And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying: ¹³ "This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says, 'Go and say to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "Were you not continually urged to obey my words?" declares Jehovah.

¹⁴ "Je-hon'a-dab the son of Re'chab commanded his descendants not to drink wine, and they have carried out his words by not drinking it to this day, thus obeying the order of their forefather. However, I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not obeyed me.

¹⁵ And I kept sending all my servants the prophets to you, sending them again and again, saying, 'Turn back, please, each of you from your evil ways, and do what is right! Do not walk after other gods and serve them. Then you will keep dwelling in the land that I gave to you and your forefathers.' But you did not incline your

ear or listen to me. ¹⁶ The descendants of Je-hon'a-dab the son of Re'chab have carried out the order that their forefather gave them, but these people have not listened to me.”””

¹⁷ “Therefore this is what Jehovah, the God of armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Here I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the calamity that I have warned them about, for I have spoken to them, but they would not listen, and I kept calling to them, but they would not answer.’”

¹⁸ And Jeremiah said to the household of the Re'cha-bites: “This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says, ‘Because you have obeyed the order of your forefather Je-hon'a-dab and you continue to observe all his orders, doing exactly what he ordered you, ¹⁹ this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: “There will never fail to be a descendant of Je-hon'a-dab the son of Re'chab to serve in my presence.”””

36 Now in the fourth year of Je-hoi'a-kim son of Jo-si'ah, the king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying: ² “Take a scroll and write in it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the first day I spoke to you in the days of Jo-si'ah to this day. ³ Perhaps when those of the house of Judah hear of all the calamity

that I intend to bring on them, they may turn back from their evil ways, so that I may forgive their error and their sin.”

⁴ Jeremiah then called Bar'uch the son of Ne-ri'ah, and Jeremiah dictated all the words that Jehovah had spoken to him, and Bar'uch wrote them in the scroll.

⁵ Then Jeremiah commanded Bar'uch: “I am confined and unable to enter the house of Jehovah. ⁶ So you are the one who must go in and read aloud the words of Jehovah from the scroll that you wrote at my dictation. Read them in the hearing of the people at the house of Jehovah on the day of a fast; thus you will read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their cities.

⁷ Perhaps their request for favor will reach Jehovah, and they will turn back, each one from his evil ways, for great is the anger and the wrath that Jehovah has declared against this people.”

⁸ So Bar'uch the son of Ne-ri'ah did all that Jeremiah the prophet had commanded him; he read aloud from the scroll the words of Jehovah at the house of Jehovah.

⁹ Now in the fifth year of Je-hoi'a-kim son of Jo-si'ah, the king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came into Jerusalem from the cities of Judah proclaimed a fast before Jehovah. ¹⁰ Bar'uch then read aloud from the scroll the

words of Jeremiah at the house of Jehovah, in the chamber of Gem·a·ri'ah the son of Sha'phan the copyist, in the upper courtyard, at the entrance of the new gate of the house of Jehovah, in the hearing of all the people.

¹¹ When Mi·cai'ah the son of Gem·a·ri'ah the son of Sha'phan heard all the words of Jehovah from the scroll, ¹² he went down to the house of the king, to the secretary's chamber. All the princes were sitting there: E·lish'a·ma the secretary, De·la'iah the son of She·mai'ah, El·na'than the son of Ach'bor, Gem·a·ri'ah the son of Sha'phan, Zed·e·ki'ah the son of Han·a·ni'ah, and all the other princes. ¹³ Mi·cai'ah told them all the words that he had heard when Bar'uch read from the scroll in the hearing of the people.

¹⁴ Then all the princes sent Je·hu'di the son of Neth·a·ni'ah the son of Shel·e·mi'ah the son of Cush'i to Bar'uch, saying: "Come and bring with you the scroll from which you read in the hearing of the people." Bar'uch the son of Ne·ri'ah took the scroll in his hand and went in to them. ¹⁵ They said to him: "Sit down, please, and read it aloud to us." So Bar'uch read it to them.

¹⁶ Now as soon as they heard all the words, they looked at one another in dread, and they said to Bar'uch: "We must certainly tell the king all these

words.” ¹⁷ And they asked Bar'uch: “Tell us, please, how you wrote all these words. Was it at his dictation?”

¹⁸ Bar'uch replied to them: “He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them down with ink in this scroll.”

¹⁹ The princes said to Bar'uch: “Go and hide yourselves, you and Jeremiah, and do not let anyone know where you are.”

²⁰ Then they went in to the king, to the courtyard, and deposited the scroll in the chamber of E·lish'a·ma the secretary, and they told the king everything they had heard.

²¹ So the king sent Je·hu'di out to get the scroll, and he brought it from the chamber of E·lish'a·ma the secretary. Je·hu'di began to read it in the hearing of the king and of all the princes standing by the king. ²² The king was sitting in the winter house, in the ninth month, with a fire burning in the brazier before him. ²³ After Je·hu'di had read three or four columns, the king would cut off that portion with the secretary's knife and pitch it into the fire that was burning in the brazier, until the entire scroll ended up in the fire that was in the brazier.

²⁴ And they felt no dread; neither the king nor all his servants who heard all these words ripped their garments apart. ²⁵ Although El·na'than, De·la'iah, and Gem·a·ri'ah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, he did not listen to them. ²⁶ Further, the king

commanded Je·rah'me·el the son of the king, Se·rai'ah the son of Az'ri·el, and Shel·e·mi'ah the son of Ab'de·el to seize Bar'uch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet, but Jehovah kept them concealed.

²⁷ And the word of Jehovah again came to Jeremiah after the king had burned up the scroll containing the words that Bar'uch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, saying: ²⁸ "Take another scroll and write on it all the same words that were on the first scroll, which King Je·hoi'a·kim of Judah burned up. ²⁹ And you should say against King Je·hoi'a·kim of Judah, 'This is what Jehovah says: "You have burned up this scroll and said, 'Why have you written on it: "The king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land and empty it of man and beast"?' ³⁰ Therefore this is what Jehovah says against King Je·hoi'a·kim of Judah, 'He will have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body will be left exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. ³¹ I will call him and his descendants and his servants to account for their error, and I will bring on them and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and on the men of Judah all the calamity that I have spoken against them, but they did not listen.'""

³² Jeremiah then took another scroll and gave it to Bar'uch the son of Ne·ri'ah, the secretary, and at Jeremiah's dictation he wrote on it all the words of the

scroll that King Je·hoi'a·kim of Judah had burned in the fire. And many more words like those were added.

37 And King Zed·e·ki'ah the son of Jo·si'ah began to reign in place of Co·ni'ah the son of Je·hoi'a·kim, for King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon made him king in the land of Judah. ² But he and his servants and the people of the land did not listen to the words of Jehovah spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

³ And King Zed·e·ki'ah sent Je·hu'cal the son of Shel·e·mi'ah and Zeph·a·ni'ah the son of Ma·a·sei'ah the priest to Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "Please pray in our behalf to Jehovah our God." ⁴ Jeremiah was moving about freely among the people, for they had not yet put him in prison. ⁵ Now Phar'aoh's army had set out from Egypt, and the Chal·de'ans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them. So they withdrew from against Jerusalem. ⁶ Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ⁷ "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, 'This is what you should say to the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me: "Look! The army of Phar'aoh that is coming to assist you will have to go back to their land, Egypt. ⁸ And the Chal·de'ans will come back and fight against this city and capture it and burn it with fire." ⁹ This is what Jehovah says, "Do not deceive yourselves by saying, 'The Chal·de'ans will surely go

away from against us,' because they will not go away.
¹⁰ Even if you were to strike down the entire army of the Chal-de'ans who are fighting against you and only their wounded men were left, they would still rise up from their tents and burn this city with fire.'””

¹¹ When the Chal-de'an army had withdrawn from against Jerusalem because of Phar'aoh's army,
¹² Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to the land of Benjamin to receive his portion there among his people. ¹³ But when he reached the Gate of Benjamin, the officer in charge of the guard, whose name was I-ri'jah the son of Shel-e-mi'ah the son of Han-a-ni'ah, seized Jeremiah the prophet and said: “You are deserting to the Chal-de'ans!” ¹⁴ But Jeremiah said: “It is not true! I am not deserting to the Chal-de'ans.” But he did not listen to him. So I-ri'jah arrested Jeremiah and brought him in to the princes. ¹⁵ The princes were furious with Jeremiah, and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of Je-hon'a-than the secretary, which had been made into a prison.
¹⁶ Jeremiah was put into the dungeon, into the vaulted rooms, and he remained there many days.

¹⁷ Then King Zed-e-ki'ah sent for him, and the king secretly questioned him in his house. He asked, “Is there any word from Jehovah?” Jeremiah said, “There

is!” and he continued, “You will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon!”

¹⁸ Jeremiah also said to King Zed-e-ki'ah: “How have I sinned against you and against your servants and against this people, so that you have put me into the prison? ¹⁹ Where, now, are your prophets who prophesied to you, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land’? ²⁰ Now listen, please, O my lord the king. May you grant, please, my request for favor. Do not send me back to the house of Je-hon'a-than the secretary, or I will die there.” ²¹ So King Zed-e-ki'ah ordered that Jeremiah be put in custody in the Courtyard of the Guard, and he was given a round loaf of bread daily from the street of the bakers until all the bread in the city was gone. And Jeremiah remained in the Courtyard of the Guard.

38 Now Sheph-a-ti'ah the son of Mat'tan, Ged-a-li'ah the son of Pash'hur, Ju'cal the son of Shel-e-mi'ah, and Pash'hur the son of Mal-chi'jah heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people, saying:
² “This is what Jehovah says, ‘The one who remains in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. But the one who surrenders to the Chal-de'ans will keep living and will have his life as a spoil and live.’ ³ This is what Jehovah says, ‘This city

will surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it.”

⁴ The princes said to the king: “Please have this man put to death, for this is how he is weakening the morale of the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as that of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man seeks, not the peace of this people, but their calamity.” ⁵ King Zed-e-ki'ah replied: “Look! He is in your hands, for the king cannot do anything to stop you.”

⁶ So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Mal-chi'jah the son of the king, which was in the Courtyard of the Guard. They let Jeremiah down by ropes. Now there was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah began to sink down into the mud.

⁷ E'bed-mel'ech the E-thi-o'pi-an, a eunuch in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. Now the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin, ⁸ so E'bed-mel'ech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying: ⁹ “O my lord the king, what these men have done to Jeremiah the prophet is evil! They have thrown him into the cistern, and he will die there because of the famine, for there is no bread left in the city.”

¹⁰ Then the king commanded E'bed-mel'ech the E·thi·o'pi·an: "Take 30 men with you from here, and pull Jeremiah the prophet up out of the cistern before he dies." ¹¹ So E'bed-mel'ech took the men with him and went into the king's house to a place beneath the treasury, and they took from there some worn-out rags and worn-out pieces of cloth and let them down by ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern. ¹² Then E'bed-mel'ech the E·thi·o'pi·an said to Jeremiah: "Please put the rags and the pieces of cloth between your armpits and the ropes." Jeremiah did so, ¹³ and they drew Jeremiah out with the ropes and pulled him up out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the Courtyard of the Guard.

¹⁴ King Zed·e·ki'ah sent for Jeremiah the prophet to come to him at the third entrance, which is in the house of Jehovah, and the king said to Jeremiah: "I have something to ask of you. Do not hide anything from me." ¹⁵ Jeremiah then said to Zed·e·ki'ah: "If I tell you, you will certainly put me to death. And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me." ¹⁶ So King Zed·e·ki'ah secretly swore to Jeremiah, saying: "As surely as Jehovah is alive, who has given us this life, I will not put you to death, and I will not hand you over to these men who are seeking to take your life."

¹⁷ Jeremiah then said to Zed·e·ki'ah: "This is what Jehovah, the God of armies, the God of Israel, says, 'If

you surrender to the princes of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared, and this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will be spared.

¹⁸ But if you will not surrender to the princes of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Chal-de'ans, and they will burn it with fire, and you will not escape out of their hand.”

¹⁹ Then King Zed-e-ki'ah said to Jeremiah: “I am afraid of the Jews who have deserted to the Chal-de'ans, for if I am handed over to them, they may deal cruelly with me.” ²⁰ But Jeremiah said: “You will not be handed over to them. Obey, please, the voice of Jehovah in what I am telling you, and it will go well with you, and you will continue to live. ²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, this is what Jehovah has revealed to me:

²² Look! All the women remaining in the house of the king of Judah are being brought out to the princes of the king of Babylon, and they are saying,

‘The men whom you trusted have deceived you and overcome you.

They have caused your foot to sink into the mud. Now they have turned away in retreat.’

²³ And all your wives and your sons they are bringing out to the Chal-de'ans, and you will not escape out of their hand, but you will be seized by the king of

Babylon, and because of you this city will be burned with fire.”

²⁴ Zed-e-ki'ah then said to Jeremiah: “Do not let anyone know about these things, so that you do not die. ²⁵ And if the princes hear that I have spoken with you and they come and say to you, ‘Tell us, please, what you said to the king. Do not hide anything from us, and we will not put you to death. What did the king say to you?’ ²⁶ you must answer them, ‘I was making a request of the king, that he not send me back to the house of Je-hon'a-than to die there.’”

²⁷ In time all the princes came in to Jeremiah and questioned him. He told them everything that the king had commanded him to say. So they said no more to him, for no one had heard the conversation. ²⁸ Until the day that Jerusalem was captured, Jeremiah remained in the Courtyard of the Guard; he was still there when Jerusalem was captured.

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Ebed-melech, an officer in the court of King Zedekiah, showed godly qualities

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May 8-14

Treasures From God's Word

Jeremiah 38:4-6—Zedekiah gave in to fear of man and allowed opposers to throw Jeremiah into a muddy cistern to die

Reference: it-2 1228 **paragraph 3**.

Indicating that Zedekiah was a very weak ruler is the fact that, when the princes later requested that Jeremiah be put to death for allegedly weakening the morale of the besieged people, Zedekiah said: “Look! He is in your hands. For there is nothing at all in which the king himself can prevail against you.” However, afterward Zedekiah granted Ebed-melech’s request to rescue Jeremiah and directed that Ebed-melech take along 30 men to assist in this. Later Zedekiah again had a private audience with Jeremiah. He assured the prophet that he would neither kill him nor deliver him into the hands of those seeking his death. But Zedekiah feared reprisals from the Jews who had fallen away to the Chaldeans and, therefore, did not heed Jeremiah’s inspired advice to surrender to the princes of Babylon. In further display of his fear, the king requested that Jeremiah not reveal the subject of their private discussion to the suspicious princes.—

Jeremiah 38:1-28.

Jeremiah 38:7-10—Ebed-melech acted bravely and decisively to help Jeremiah

Reference: w12 5/1 31 **paragraphs 2-3.**

Who was Ebed-melech? Evidently he was an officer in the court of King Zedekiah of Judah. Ebed-melech was a contemporary of Jeremiah, whom God sent to warn unfaithful Judah of its coming destruction. Though surrounded by godless princes, Ebed-melech was God-fearing and had great respect for Jeremiah. Ebed-melech's godly qualities were put to the test when evil princes falsely accused Jeremiah of sedition and threw him into a miry cistern, leaving him to die. (Jeremiah 38:4-6) What would Ebed-melech do?

Ebed-melech acted bravely and decisively, pushing aside any fear of reprisal from the princes. He publicly approached Zedekiah and protested the unjust treatment of Jeremiah. Perhaps pointing at the perpetrators, he told the king: "These men have done bad . . . to Jeremiah." (Jeremiah 38:9) Ebed-melech prevailed and, at Zedekiah's direction, took 30 men to go and rescue Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 38:11-13—Ebed-melech demonstrated kindness

Reference: w12 5/1 31 **paragraph 4**.

Ebed-melech now showed another desirable trait: kindness. He took “worn-out rags and worn-out pieces of cloth and let them down to Jeremiah . . . by means of the ropes.” Why the rags and cloth? So that Jeremiah could cushion his armpits, easing any chafing as he was being pulled up from the muddy deep.—Jeremiah 38:11-13.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Jeremiah 35:19—Why were the Rechabites blessed?

Reference: it-2 759.

Jehovah was pleased with the respectful obedience they showed. Their unswerving obedience to an earthly father stood in contrast to the disobedience of the Judeans to their Creator. (**Jeremiah 35:12-16**) God gave the Rechabites the rewarding promise: “There will not be cut off from Jonadab the son of Rechab a man to stand before me always.”—**Jeremiah 35:19**.

Jeremiah 37:21—How did Jehovah care for Jeremiah, and how can this encourage us when we experience adversity?

Reference: w98 1/15 18 **paragraphs 16-17**.

16 Lovingly, Jehovah tells us about the relief that will be experienced under the Messianic Kingdom. (**Psalm 72:1-4, 16; Isaiah 25:7, 8**) He also helps us to cope with the pressures of life now by giving us counsel on how to keep our priorities straight. (Matthew 4:4; 6:25-34) By means of the record of how he helped his servants in times past, Jehovah reassures us. (Jeremiah 37:21; James 5:11) He fortifies us with the knowledge that, regardless of any adversity that comes upon us, his love for his loyal servants remains constant. (Romans 8:35-39) To those who put their trust in Jehovah, he declares: “I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.”—Hebrews 13:5.

17 Strengthened by this knowledge, true Christians keep on walking with God instead of turning aside to worldly ways. A common worldly philosophy among the poor in many lands is that taking from someone who has more so that you can feed your family is not stealing. But those who walk by faith reject that view. They value God’s approval above all else and look to him to reward their honest conduct. (**Proverbs 30:8, 9**; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 13:18) A widow in India found that willingness to work coupled with resourcefulness helped her to cope. Instead of being resentful over her lot in life, she was aware that if she put God’s

Kingdom and his righteousness first in her life, Jehovah would bless her efforts to obtain the necessities for herself and her son. (**Matthew 6:33, 34**) Many thousands around the earth demonstrate that, regardless of the adversity they may experience, Jehovah is their refuge and stronghold. (Psalm 91:2) Is that true of you?

Reference: w95 8/1 5 **paragraphs 5-6.**

Later, when the king of Babylon laid siege to apostate Jerusalem, people had to “eat bread by weight and in anxious care.” (Ezekiel 4:16) The situation became so desperate that some women ate the flesh of their own children.

(Lamentations 2:20) Yet, even though the prophet Jeremiah was in custody because of his preaching, Jehovah saw to it that “there was a giving of a round loaf of bread to [Jeremiah] daily from the street of the bakers, until all the bread was exhausted from the city.”—Jeremiah 37:21.

Did Jehovah forget Jeremiah when the supply of bread became exhausted? Apparently not, for when the city fell to the Babylonians, Jeremiah was given ‘a food allowance and a present and let go.’—**Jeremiah 40:5, 6**; see also Psalm 37:25.

- Song 55 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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- “Ebed-melech—An Example of Bravery and Kindness”: (10 min.)

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

- Bible Reading: (4 min. or less) Jer 36:27-37:2

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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE FOUR HORSEMEN

How Their Ride Affects You



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The ride of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse is one of the best-known scenes from the book of Revelation. Some are scared by it. Others are intrigued. Note what the Bible says about such prophecies:

“Happy is the one who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy.”—Revelation 1:3.

This issue of *The Watchtower* explains how the ride of the four horsemen can mean good news for us.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN —HOW THEIR RIDE AFFECTS YOU

- 3 The Four Horsemen and You
- 4 The Four Horsemen—Who Are They?

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I Loved Baseball More Than Anything!

12 IMITATE THEIR FAITH | SARAH

“What a Beautiful Woman You Are”

16 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



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The Book of Revelation —What Does It Mean?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)



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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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How Can We Help Maintain Our Kingdom Hall?

Every Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses bears God’s holy name. Therefore, we feel that sharing in keeping the building clean, presentable, and in good repair is a privilege and an important part of our sacred worship. All can participate.



Estonia

Volunteer after a meeting to do some cleaning. After each meeting, brothers and sisters happily do a light cleaning to tidy up the Kingdom Hall. Once a week, a more thorough cleaning is done. An elder or a ministerial servant coordinates the work, usually following a checklist of things to do. Depending on the need, individuals volunteer to sweep, mop, or vacuum the floor, do dusting, straighten the chairs, clean and disinfect the bathrooms, wash windows and mirrors, dispose of trash, or do exterior cleaning and care for the yard. At least once a year, a day is set aside to do a major cleaning. By including our children in some duties, we teach them to respect our place of worship.—Ecclesiastes 5:1.



Zimbabwe

Lend a hand in making any needed repairs. Every year, a detailed inspection is made of the Kingdom Hall, inside and out. Based on this inspection, regular maintenance work is done to keep the hall in good repair, helping to avoid unnecessary expenses. (2 Chronicles 24:13; 34:10) A clean and well-maintained Kingdom Hall is a worthy place in which to worship our God. By having a share in this work, we show how close Jehovah and our place of worship are to our heart. (Psalm 122:1) This also creates a favorable impression in the community.—2 Corinthians 6:3.



Mongolia

- Why should we not neglect our place of worship?
- What arrangements are made to keep the Kingdom Hall clean?



Puerto Rico

92 *A Place Bearing Your Name*

(1 Chronicles 29:16)

1. How great is the honor, Jehovah,
 To build you a place for your name!
We offer it now with rejoicing
 To add to your glory and fame.
Whatever the things we may give you,
 They rightly were yours from the start.
Our labor, our skill, our possessions,
 We joyfully give from the heart.

(CHORUS)

*May we present this place to you,
 And here may your name be known.
We dedicate this place to you;
 Please accept it as your own.*

2. And now may we honor you, Father,
 By filling this place with your praise.
May glory ascend with the increase
 Of those who are learning your ways.
Committing this place to your worship,
 We give it our generous care.
And long may it stand as a witness,
 Supporting the message we bear.

(Chorus)

- Song 55 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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Caring for Our Places of Worship

Our Kingdom Halls are more than just buildings; they are places of worship dedicated to Jehovah. How can each of us share in caring for the Kingdom Hall? Discuss the following questions after watching the video *Caring for Our Places of Worship*.

1. What purposes do Kingdom Halls serve?

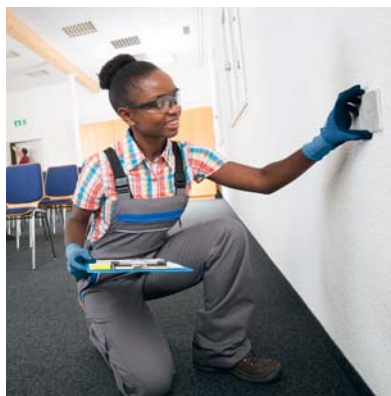
2. Why should we keep the Kingdom Hall clean and well-maintained?

3. Who cares for Kingdom Hall maintenance?

4. Why is safety important, and what examples of safety did you observe in the video?

5. How can we honor Jehovah by our donations?

I PLAN TO HAVE A SHARE BY:



himself. And ever since Jesus was installed as King, Jehovah has brought about these improvements by means of his Son. How do we benefit from these changes? The same scripture states that these improvements will result in “peace” and “righteousness.” As we accept God’s guidance and make adjustments, peace prevails among us and love of righteousness moves us to serve Jehovah, whom the apostle Paul described as “the God of peace.”—Phil. 4:9.

9 Regarding Jehovah, Paul also wrote: “God is a God *not of disorder but of peace.*” (1 Cor. 14:33) Note that Paul did not contrast disorder with order, but he contrasted it with peace. Why? Consider this: Order in itself does not invariably result in peaceful conditions. For example, a group of soldiers may march in an orderly way toward the front lines, but their orderly advance results in war, not peace. Hence, as Christians, we want to keep a key fact in mind: Any structure of order that does not have peace as its foundation will sooner or later collapse.

9. What is the proper foundation for order and unity in the congregation, and why?

In contrast, godly peace promotes the kind of order that lasts. Therefore, how grateful we are that our organization is guided and refined by “the God who gives peace”! (Rom. 15:33) God-given peace forms the foundation for the beneficial order and the heartfelt unity that we enjoy and appreciate so much in our congregations worldwide.—Ps. 29:11.

¹⁰ The box “How the Manner of Oversight Improved” gives an overview of the beneficial and orderly changes that occurred in our organization during the early years. But what changes ‘from copper to gold’ has Jehovah brought about more recently through our King? How have those adjustments in oversight fortified the peace and unity of the congregations worldwide? How are they helping you personally to serve “the God of peace”?

How Christ Leads the Congregation

¹¹ From 1964 to 1971, the governing body supervised an extensive Bible study project that examined,

10. (a) What improvements occurred in our organization during the early years? (See the box “How the Manner of Oversight Improved.”)

(b) What questions will now be considered?

11. (a) A study of the Scriptures led to what adjustment in understanding? (b) What were the brothers of the governing body determined to do?

HOW THE MANNER OF OVERSIGHT IMPROVED

“We voted for the elders by raising the right hand. Then, a brother walked up the aisle counting the votes.”—Sister Rose Swingle, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

1881—To establish contacts among Bible Students living in the same area, Brother Russell asks those who regularly hold meetings to inform the Watch Tower office where they meet.

1895—All congregations are instructed to choose from among themselves brothers who can serve as elders.

1919—In each congregation a service director is appointed theocratically by the branch office. His responsibilities include organizing the preaching work and encouraging participation in the field ministry. Some of the congregation elders do not support the arrangement of having a service director.

1932—The annual election of elders by the congregation is eliminated. Instead, the congregation elects a service committee made up of brothers who zealously share in the preaching work and who live up to the newly adopted name Jehovah’s *Witnesses*. One of their number, nominated by the congregation, is appointed by the Society or branch office to be the service director.

1937—Brothers who are part of the great crowd can serve on service committees alongside their anointed brothers.

1938—Congregations adopt a resolution requesting that all congregation servants be appointed theocratically. This marks the end of democratic elections in the congregations.

To learn more about historical developments in organizational structure, see *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, pages 204-235.

among many other subjects, how the first-century Christian congregation functioned.*^[1] As to organization structure, it was learned that the oversight of congregations in the first century was carried out by a body of elders instead of just by one elder, or overseer. (**Read Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 4:14.**) When that point was better understood, the governing body realized that their King, Jesus, was guiding them in making improvements in the organizational structure of God's people—and the brothers of the governing body were determined to yield to the King's direction. They promptly made adjustments

***[1]** The results of that extensive research were published in the reference work *Aid to Bible Understanding*.

to bring the organization into fuller harmony with the elder arrangement set out in the Scriptures. What are some adjustments that were made in the early 1970's?

¹² The first adjustment applied to the governing body itself. Until that time, that group of anointed brothers was made up of the seven members of the board of directors of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. However, in 1971, the governing body was enlarged from 7 to 11 members and was no longer identified with the board of directors. The members considered themselves equals and started an annual rotation of the chairmanship in alphabetical order.

¹³ The next adjustment affected each congregation. In what way? From 1932 to 1972, congregation oversight had been carried out mainly by one brother. Until 1936, such an appointed brother was called the service director. Thereafter, the name was changed

12. (a) What adjustment was made within the governing body? (b) Describe how the Governing Body is now organized. (See the box "How the Governing Body Cares for Kingdom Interests," pages 233-235.)

13. (a) What arrangement had been in effect for 40 years? (b) What did the Governing Body do in 1972?

to company servant, then to congregation servant, and finally to congregation overseer. Those appointed brothers cared zealously for the spiritual welfare of the flock. The congregation overseer usually made decisions for the congregation without consulting other servants in the congregation. However, during the year 1972, the Governing Body prepared the way for a historic change. What did that change involve?

¹⁴ Instead of having one brother serve as the congregation overseer in each congregation, other brothers who were Scripturally qualified would now also be theocratically appointed to serve as Christian elders. Together they would form a body of elders that would oversee the local congregation. That new elder arrangement went into effect on October 1, 1972. Today the coordinator of a body of elders views himself, not as a first among equals, but “as a lesser one.” (Luke 9:48) What a blessing such humble brothers are for the worldwide brotherhood!—Phil. 2:3.

**14. (a) What new arrangement went into effect on October 1, 1972?
(b) How does the coordinator of a body of elders apply the counsel found at Philippians 2:3?**

¹⁵ The arrangement of sharing congregation responsibility among members of bodies of elders has proved to be a great improvement. Consider these three benefits: First and foremost, the arrangement helps all elders—no matter how weighty their congregation responsibilities—to be very conscious that Jesus is the Head of the congregation. (Eph. 5:23) Second, as Proverbs 11:14 states: “There is success through many advisers.” As elders consult together on matters that affect the spiritual well-being of the congregation and consider one another’s suggestions, they are helped to reach decisions that harmonize with Bible principles. (Prov. 27:17) Jehovah blesses such decisions, and these lead to success. Third, by having more qualified brothers serve as elders, the organization has been able to keep up with the growing need for oversight and shepherding care within the congregations. (Isa. 60:3-5) Just think of it—the number of congregations worldwide increased from over 27,000 in 1971 to more than 113,000 in 2013!

15. (a) The arrangement for congregations to have a body of elders has yielded what benefits? (b) What shows that our King acted with foresight?

“WE WERE AMAZED”

A MISSIONARY couple in Asia were assigned to a congregation that had not seen growth in many years. They noticed that the local brothers were loving but did not follow organizational instructions. After the missionaries had developed friendships with the publishers, the missionary brother set out step-by-step to bring the congregation structure in line with the way Jehovah’s people are organized worldwide. What was the result? Within two years, meeting attendance doubled, new ones began to share in the preaching work, and more than 20 got baptized. “We were amazed,” recount the couple. “Jehovah blessed us superabundantly! Seeing the results of applying the instructions of God’s organization has given joy to all in the congregation.”

Clearly, with foresight, our King has provided the needed shepherds for his followers at the right time.—Mic. 5:5.

“Becoming Examples to the Flock”

¹⁶ Back in the early days of the Bible Students, the elders already understood that they had a responsibility to help fellow believers to remain servants of

16. (a) What responsibility do elders have? (b) How did the Bible Students view Jesus’ admonition to ‘shepherd the sheep’?

HOW THE GOVERNING BODY CARES FOR KINGDOM INTERESTS

THE Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses is made up of brothers who are anointed servants of Jehovah God. As a group, they form “the faithful and discreet slave.” They have the responsibility of providing spiritual food and giving direction and impetus to the Kingdom-preaching work throughout the earth.—Matt. 24:14, 45-47.

Governing Body meetings are held each week, usually on Wednesday. This enables these brothers to work together in unity. (Ps. 133:1) The members of the Governing Body also serve on various committees. In caring for Kingdom interests, each committee has its area of oversight. Here is a summary of their responsibilities.

Coordinators’ Committee

The brothers serving on this committee oversee legal matters as well as the use of the media when it is necessary to convey an accurate picture of our beliefs. They also respond to disasters, outbreaks of persecution, and other emergencies affecting our brotherhood anywhere in the world.

Personnel Committee

This committee is entrusted with the oversight of arrangements for the physical and spiritual welfare and assistance

of members of Bethel families earth wide. It oversees the selecting and inviting of new members of Bethel families and handles questions regarding their Bethel service.

Publishing Committee

Those serving on this committee supervise the printing and shipping of Bible literature worldwide. They oversee printeries and properties owned and operated by the various corporations used by Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as all construction worldwide, including the work of building Kingdom Halls. They arrange for the best use of funds donated for the Kingdom work.

Service Committee

The brothers who make up this committee oversee all areas of the evangelizing work and matters affecting congregations, publishers, pioneers, elders, traveling overseers, and missionaries. They supervise, among numerous other things, the activities of Hospital Liaison Committees.

Teaching Committee

This committee oversees the instruction provided at assemblies, conventions, and congregation meetings. It also has oversight of Gilead School, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, and the Pioneer Service School, as well as other schools. In addition, this committee oversees the

preparation of *Our Christian Life and Ministry—Meeting Workbook* and the development of audio and video programs.

Writing Committee

The brothers serving on this committee supervise the preparation of spiritual food in written and electronic form for fellow believers and the general public. It also cares for the organization's Web site and oversees the translation work done throughout the earth. Additionally, this committee responds to questions about the meaning of certain scriptures and points presented in the publications.

*Loyally Submitting
to Theocratic Order*
(1 Corinthians 14:33)

1. As Jehovah's people sound throughout the earth
Truths about the Kingdom and its priceless worth,
Theocratic order they must all obey
And remain united, loyalty display.

(CHORUS)

*Loyal submission in recognition,
This to our God we owe.
He gives protection, tender affection,
Loyalty to him we show.*

2. God provides his steward and his active force.
These will ever guide us in our Christian course.
So may we be steadfast, seeking God to please,
Loyally proclaiming all his wise decrees!

(Chorus)

MARCH 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
MAY 1-28, 2017

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

ROMANIA

This elder and his wife find that Sunday after the meeting is a good time to reach sheeplike people in northern Romania. These include two neighbors who are combing the wool from literal sheep in that area.

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4 WEEK OF MAY 1-7

Give Honor to Whom It Is Due

Christians need to have a balanced view of how to show respect and honor. To whom is honor due? Why? This article will help us to answer those questions, and it also highlights the benefits of rendering honor to those to whom it is due.

16 WEEK OF MAY 8-14

Exercise Faith—Decide Wisely!

According to the Bible, we should not be unsteady, unable to decide. But why do we need to make wise decisions? What will help us to do so? And should we at times change a decision that we have made? This article will help us to answer those questions.

1. Because we are imperfect, O Jehovah,
The inclination of our heart is flawed.
There is a sin that easily ensnares us—
A lack of faith in you, the living God.

(CHORUS)

*Give us more faith, we beg of you, Jehovah.
Please help us out according to our need.
Give us more faith, according to your mercy,
That we may honor you in word and deed.*

2. Apart from faith, no one can fully please you.
We must believe our faith will be repaid.
And as a shield, our faith provides a refuge.
We face the future firm and unafraid.

(Chorus)



SONGS:
118, 35

**HOW WOULD YOU
ANSWER?**

Why should we accept that making decisions is part of life?

Why should others not make decisions for us?

Why might we sometimes have to change a decision already made?

Exercise Faith Decide Wisely!

“Keep asking in faith, not doubting at all.”—JAS. 1:6.

CAIN had a choice, a decision to make: Get the mastery over his sinful emotions or let his emotions rule his actions. Whichever way he decided, there would be consequences that would affect the rest of his life. You know

1. What affected Cain’s ability to make a wise decision, and with what result?

what Cain decided; he did not choose well. His decision and its resulting action cost his faithful brother Abel his life. And Cain's decision affected his relationship with his Creator.—Gen. 4:3-16.

² We too have choices and decisions to make. Not every one of our decisions is a life-and-death matter. However, many of our decisions, the choices we make, can have a profound effect on us. Hence, the ability to make good decisions can help us to live a relatively smooth, peaceful life rather than one that is full of chaos, controversy, and disappointment.—Prov. 14:8.

³ What will help us to make wise decisions? We certainly need faith in God, not doubting his willingness and ability to help us to be wise. We also need faith in Jehovah's Word and in his way of doing things, trusting God's inspired counsel. (Read James 1:5-8.) As we draw close to him and grow in love for his Word, we come to trust his judgment. Accordingly, we develop the habit of consulting God's Word before making decisions. But how can we improve our decision-making skills? And

2. How important is our ability to choose wisely?

3. (a) To make wise decisions, we should have faith in what? (b) What questions will we consider?

does being willing to decide mean sticking to our choices no matter what?

LIFE REQUIRES MAKING DECISIONS

⁴ From the start of human existence, men and women have had to make important decisions. Adam had to choose to listen either to his Creator or to Eve. He was willing to make a decision, but what do you think of the decision he made? His misled wife influenced him to make an extremely poor choice, one that cost him life in Paradise and eventually his very life. And that was just the beginning of the overall cost. We are still suffering the consequences of Adam's terrible decision.

⁵ Some might think that life would be more pleasant if we did not have to make decisions. Do you feel that way? Remember, Jehovah did not create humans to be robots, incapable of thinking and making choices. The Bible actually teaches us how to make wise decisions. While Jehovah wants us to make decisions, this is not to our detriment. Reflect on some evidence of that.

4. What choice did Adam have to make, and with what consequences?

5. How should we view the need to make decisions?

⁶ Once settled in the Promised Land, the ancient Israelites had a very basic, vital choice: Worship Jehovah or serve some other god (or gods). (Read Joshua 24:15.) That might seem to have been a simple decision. Yet, their choice could come down to a matter of life or death. Repeatedly during the time of the Judges, the Israelites chose unwisely. They turned away from Jehovah and worshipped false gods. (Judg. 2:3, 11-23) Or think of an instance later in the history of God’s people when they were obliged to make a decision. The prophet Elijah clearly outlined the choices: Serve Jehovah or serve the false god Baal. (1 Ki. 18:21) Elijah rebuked the people for being indecisive. You might think that this was a simple choice because it is always wise and beneficial to serve Jehovah. In fact, no reasonable person should be attracted to or attached to Baal. Still, those Israelites were “limping between two different opinions.” Wisely, Elijah urged them to choose the superior way of worship—the worship of Jehovah.

⁷ Why might it have been so difficult for those Israelites to make a wise decision? First, they had basically lost faith in Jehovah and refused to listen

6, 7. What choice did the ancient Israelites have, and why was it difficult for them to decide wisely? (See opening picture.)

to his voice. They had not built a foundation of accurate knowledge or godly wisdom; nor did they trust in Jehovah. Acting in accord with accurate knowledge would have helped them to make wise decisions. (Ps. 25:12) Moreover, they had allowed others to influence them or even to make decisions for them. The people in the land who were not worshippers of Jehovah influenced the Israelites' thinking, moving them to follow that pagan crowd. Jehovah had long before warned that such a thing could happen.—Ex. 23:2.

SHOULD OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS FOR US?

⁸ The above-mentioned examples convey to us a clear lesson. It is up to each of us to make decisions, and the wise, right choices are based on sound Scriptural knowledge. Galatians 6:5 reminds us: “Each one will carry his own load of responsibility.” (Ftn.) We should not give someone else the responsibility to make decisions for us. Rather, we should personally learn what is right in God's eyes and choose to do it.

⁹ How might we give in to the danger of letting

8. What important lesson about decision-making do we learn from Israel's history?

9. Why can it be dangerous to let others decide for us?

others choose for us? Peer pressure could sway us to make a bad decision. (Prov. 1:10, 15) Still, no matter how others try to pressure us, it is our responsibility to follow our Bible-trained conscience. In many respects, if we let others make our decisions, we are essentially deciding to “follow them.” It is still a choice, but a potentially disastrous one.

¹⁰ The apostle Paul clearly alerted the Galatians to the danger of letting others make personal decisions for them. (Read Galatians 4:17.) Some in the congregation wanted to make personal choices for others in order to alienate them from the apostles. Why? Those selfish ones were seeking prominence. They overstepped proper bounds and did not respect their fellow Christians’ responsibility to make their own decisions.

¹¹ Paul set a fine example of respecting his brothers’ right of free will to make decisions. (Read 2 Corinthians 1:24.) Today, when giving counsel on matters involving personal choice, the elders should follow that pattern. They are happy to share Bible-based information with others in

10. Of what did Paul have to warn the Galatians?

11. How can we help others as they make personal decisions?



Loving elders help others learn to make their own decisions
(See paragraph 11)

the flock. Still, the elders are careful to allow individual brothers and sisters to make their own decisions. That is logical because those individuals will bear the responsibility for the results. Here is an important lesson: We can show helpful interest in others and call attention to Scriptural principles or counsel. Still, others have a right and responsibility to make their own decisions. When they do this wisely, they benefit. Clearly, we should avoid any tendency to think that we are authorized to make decisions for other brothers and sisters.

MAKING DECISIONS WHEN EMOTIONS RULE

¹² A popular philosophy or common adage is: Follow your heart. But doing that can be dangerous. And in a sense, doing so is unscriptural. The Bible warns us not to let our imperfect heart or mere sentiment rule when we are making decisions. (Prov. 28:26) And Bible accounts show the sad consequences of following one's heart. The core problem is that in imperfect humans, "the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate." (Jer. 3:17; 13:10; 17:9; 1 Ki. 11:9) So, what could it mean for us if we simply follow our heart?

¹³ A Christian's heart is important, for we are commanded to love Jehovah with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-39) But the Scriptural passages cited in the preceding paragraph highlight the danger of letting emotions dictate our thinking and actions. For example, what might happen if we make decisions when we are angry? The answer may be obvious if we have done this in times past.

12, 13. Why is it dangerous simply to follow our heart if we are angry or discouraged?

(Prov. 14:17; 29:22) Or is it likely that we will make sound decisions when we are discouraged? (Num. 32:6-12; Prov. 24:10) Bear in mind that God's Word shows the wisdom of being "a slave to God's law." (Rom. 7:25) Clearly, we could easily be deceived by our emotions if we allow them to prevail when we are making important decisions.

WHEN TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

¹⁴ We need to make wise decisions. However, that does not mean that we should refuse to change a decision once we have made it. There are times when we will do well to reconsider a decision and perhaps change it. Note Jehovah's example with regard to the Ninevites in Jonah's day. "When the true God saw what they did, how they had turned back from their evil ways, he reconsidered the calamity that he said he would bring on them, and he did not bring it." (Jonah 3:10) After observing the Ninevites' repentant, changed attitude, Jehovah adjusted his decision. In doing so, he manifested reasonableness, humility, and compassion. Furthermore, God does not determine his course of action based on a momentary flare-up of

14. How do we know that changing one's decisions might be appropriate?

anger, the type of emotional outburst that many humans display.

¹⁵ There may be occasions when it would be good for us to reconsider a choice or decision. It could be when the prevailing circumstances change. Jehovah altered his decision at times when circumstances changed. (1 Ki. 21:20, 21, 27-29; 2 Ki. 20:1-5) Or new information may provide us with a valid reason to adjust a decision. King David was given faulty information about Saul's grandson Mephibosheth. When David later received accurate information, he amended his decision. (2 Sam. 16:3, 4; 19:24-29) At times, it may be wise for us to do similarly.

¹⁶ God's Word counsels us not to be hasty when we need to make an important decision. (Prov. 21:5) When we take the time to weigh carefully all the aspects or facts related to a decision, we will likely be more successful. (1 Thess. 5:21) Before determining a course of action, a family head ought to take the time to research the Scriptures and Christian publications, as well as to

15. What might lead us to change a decision?

16. (a) What are some helpful guidelines for making wise decisions?
(b) Why and how should we view past decisions?

consider the opinions or views of others in his family. Recall that God urged Abraham to listen to what his wife had to say. (Gen. 21:9-12) Elders too should take time to do research. And if they are reasonable, modest men, they will not fear losing respect if new, relevant information comes to their attention that indicates a need to reconsider what they had already decided. They should be ready to adjust their thinking and decisions when appropriate, and all of us do well to follow that example. This can promote peace and order in the congregation.—Acts 6:1-4.

FOLLOW THROUGH WITH DECISIONS

¹⁷ Some decisions are weightier than others. The weightier ones call for more thought and prayerful consideration, which may take time. Some Christians face decisions about whether to marry and whom to marry. Another serious decision that holds the potential for many blessings is how and when to enter the full-time ministry. In such areas, it is important to have full trust that Jehovah can and does provide wise guidance. (Prov. 1:5) Thus, it is vital to draw on the Bible as the best source of

17. How can we be more successful in making decisions?

advice and to seek Jehovah's guidance in prayer. And bear in mind that Jehovah can give us the qualities we need to make decisions that are in harmony with his will. When facing important decisions, make it a practice to ask: 'Will this decision give evidence of my love for Jehovah? Will it bring joy and peace to my family? And will it show that I am patient and kind?'

¹⁸ Jehovah does not coerce us into loving him and serving him. That is our choice. In line with the free will that he grants us, he respects our responsibility and right to 'choose for ourselves' whether we will serve him. (Josh. 24:15; Eccl. 5:4) But he expects us to follow through on other decisions that we make based on his guidance. With faith in Jehovah's way of doing things and the principles that he has kindly provided, we can make wise decisions and prove ourselves steady in all our ways.—Jas. 1:5-8; 4:8.

18. Why does Jehovah expect us to make our own decisions?

*“Make Sure of the
More Important Things”*
(Philippians 1:10)

1. How great our need today for discernment,
To know the things that are true,
To know which things have greater importance,
To know which things we must do!

(CHORUS)

*Love what is good; Hate what is bad.
Make God’s heart glad;
Oh, what rich blessings it brings when we learn,
When we discern,
And when we do the important things!*

2. And what could be of greater importance
Than sharing Kingdom good news,
To search for those who hunger for truth
And to help them God’s way to choose?

(Chorus)

3. If we take care to do what’s important,
Then true contentment we’ll find.
The peace surpassing all understanding
Will guard our heart and our mind.

(Chorus)



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