

- Song 150 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Jehovah Will Render to Each One According to His Works”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 39:4-7—Zedekiah suffered the consequences of disobeying Jehovah (*it-2* 1228 ¶4)
 Jer 39:15-18—Jehovah showed appreciation to Ebed-melech for demonstrating trust in Him (*w12* 5/1 31 ¶5)
 Jer 40:1-6—Jehovah took care of his faithful servant Jeremiah (*it-2* 482)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 42:1-3; 43:2, 4—What lessons can we learn from Johanan's mistake? (*w03* 5/1 10 ¶10)

 Jer 43:6, 7—What is the significance of the events described in these verses? (*it-1* 463 ¶4)

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 40:11-41:3

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Isa 46:10—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Re 12:7-9, 12—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bh* 153 ¶19-20—Invite the person to the meeting.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 138
- **“Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love” (Ps 71:18):** (15 min.) Discussion. Begin by playing the video *Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love* (video category PROGRAMS AND EVENTS).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 12 ¶16-23, boxes on pp. 125, 128; review box on p. 129
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 103 and Prayer

Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love

WATCH THE VIDEO *JEHOVAH DOES NOT FORGET YOUR LOVE*, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What challenges come with advancing age?

- What good quality often accompanies old age?

- If you have grown old, how do Leviticus 19:32 and Proverbs 16:31 encourage you?

- How does Jehovah view his aged servants whose ministry is now limited?

- What does Jehovah want us to do even when we are older?

- How can older ones encourage younger ones?

- How did an older brother or sister encourage you recently?

150 *Seek God for Your Deliverance*

(Zephaniah 2:3)

1. Nations align as one,
 Opposing Jehovah's Son.
Their time of human rulership
 By God's decree now is done.
Rulers have had their day;
 God's Kingdom is here to stay.
Soon Christ will crush earthly enemies.
 No more will there be delay.

(CHORUS)

*Seek God for your deliverance,
 Yes, look to him with confidence.
Seek his righteousness,
 Show your faithfulness,
For his sov'reignty, take your stand.
 Then see our God deliver you
By his mighty hand.*

2. People on earth now choose,
 Responding to this good news.
We offer to all men the choice
 To hear or proudly refuse.
Trials, although severe,
 Need not fill our hearts with fear.
Jehovah cares for his loyal ones;
 Our cries for help he will hear.

(Chorus)

(See also 1 Sam. 2:9; Ps. 2:2, 3, 9; Prov. 2:8; Matt. 6:33.)

Jeremiah 39-43

39 In the ninth year of King Zed·e·ki'ah of Judah, in the tenth month, King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

² In the 11th year of Zed·e·ki'ah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, they broke through the city wall. ³ And all the princes of the king of Babylon went in and sat down in the Middle Gate, namely, Ner'gal-shar·e'zer the Sam'gar, Ne'bo-Sar'se·chim the Rab'sa·ris, Ner'gal-shar·e'zer the Rab'mag, and all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

⁴ When King Zed·e·ki'ah of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city by night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the double wall, and they continued by the way of the Ar'a·bah. ⁵ But the Chal·de'an army chased after them, and they overtook Zed·e·ki'ah in the desert plains of Jer'i·cho. They captured him and brought him up to King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon at Rib'lah in the land of Ha'math, where he passed sentence on him.

⁶ The king of Babylon had the sons of Zed·e·ki'ah slaughtered before his eyes there at Rib'lah, and the king of Babylon had all the nobles of Judah slaughtered. ⁷ Then he blinded the eyes of Zed·e·ki'ah, after which he bound him with copper fetters to bring him to Babylon.

⁸ The Chal-de'ans then burned down the king's house and the houses of the people, and they tore down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹ Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard took into exile to Babylon the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had defected to him, and anyone who remained.

¹⁰ But Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard left in the land of Judah some of the poorest people, those who had nothing at all. On that day he also gave them vineyards and fields to work.

¹¹ Now King Neb-u-chad-nez'zar of Babylon gave Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard these orders concerning Jeremiah: ¹² "Take him and look after him; do him no harm, and grant whatever he asks of you."

¹³ So Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard, Neb-u-shaz'ban the Rab'sa-ris, Ner'gal-shar-e'zer the Rab'mag, and all the principal men of the king of Babylon sent ¹⁴ and had Jeremiah taken out of the Courtyard of the Guard and handed him over to Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam the son of Sha'phan to be brought to his house. So he lived among the people.

¹⁵ While Jeremiah was confined in the Courtyard of the Guard, the word of Jehovah came to him, saying: ¹⁶ "Go and tell E'bed-mel'ech the E-thi-o'pi-an, 'This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: "Here I am fulfilling my words on this city for calamity and not for good, and in that day you will see it happen.'"

¹⁷ “‘But I will rescue you in that day,’ declares Jehovah, ‘and you will not be handed over to the men you fear.’

¹⁸ “‘For I will surely provide you with escape, and you will not fall by the sword. You will have your life as a spoil, because you trusted in me,’ declares Jehovah.”

40 The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah after Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard let him go free from Ra'mah. He had taken him there bound with handcuffs, and he was among all the exiles of Jerusalem and of Judah who were being deported to Babylon. ² Then the chief of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him: “Jehovah your God foretold this calamity against this place, ³ and Jehovah has brought it about just as he said, because you people sinned against Jehovah and did not obey his voice. That is why this has happened to you. ⁴ Now I am releasing you today from the handcuffs that were on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if you do not want to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See! The entire land is before you. Go wherever you choose.”

⁵ While Jeremiah still had not turned back, Neb-u'zar-ad'an said: “Return to Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam the son of Sha'phan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the cities of Judah, and

stay with him among the people; or go wherever you choose.”

The chief of the guard then gave him a food allowance and a gift and let him go. ⁶ So Jeremiah went to Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam at Miz'pah and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

⁷ In time all the army chiefs who were in the field with their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam over the land and that he had appointed him over the men, women, and children from the poor people of the land who had not been deported to Babylon. ⁸ So they came to Ged-a-li'ah at Miz'pah. They were Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah, Jo-ha'nan and Jon'a-than the sons of Ka-re'ah, Se-rai'ah the son of Tan-hu'meth, the sons of E'phai the Ne-toph'a-thite, and Jez-a-ni'ah the son of the Ma-ac'a-thite, together with their men. ⁹ Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam the son of Sha'phan swore an oath to them and to their men, saying: “Do not be afraid of serving the Chal-de'ans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you. ¹⁰ As for me, I will stay in Miz'pah to represent you to the Chal-de'ans who come to us. But you should gather wine, summer fruits, and oil and put them in your storage containers and settle in the cities that you have taken over.”

¹¹ And all the Jews who were in Mo'ab, Am'mon, and E'dom, as well as those who were in all the other lands, also heard that the king of Babylon had let a remnant stay in Judah and that he had appointed over them Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam the son of Sha'phan.

¹² So all the Jews began returning from all the places to which they had been dispersed, and they came into the land of Judah, to Ged·a·li'ah at Miz'pah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in very great quantity.

¹³ Jo·ha'nan the son of Ka·re'ah and all the army chiefs who were in the field came to Ged·a·li'ah at Miz'pah. ¹⁴ They said to him: “Do you not know that Ba'a-lis, the king of the Am'mon-ites, has sent Ish'ma-el the son of Neth·a·ni'ah to kill you?” But Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam did not believe them.

¹⁵ Then Jo·ha'nan the son of Ka·re'ah secretly told Ged·a·li'ah in Miz'pah: “I want to go and strike down Ish'ma-el the son of Neth·a·ni'ah, and no one will know. Why should he kill you, and why should all the people of Judah who have gathered to you be scattered and the remnant of Judah perish?” ¹⁶ But Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam said to Jo·ha'nan the son of Ka·re'ah: “Do not do this, for what you are saying concerning Ish'ma-el is a lie.”

41 In the seventh month Ish'ma-el son of Neth·a·ni'ah son of E·lish'a·ma, who was of the royal line and one of the principal men of the king, came with ten other men

to Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam at Miz'pah. As they were eating a meal together in Miz'pah, ² Ish'ma·el the son of Neth·a·ni'ah and the ten men who were with him rose up and struck down Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam the son of Sha'phan with the sword. So he put to death the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. ³ Ish'ma·el also struck down all the Jews who were with Ged·a·li'ah in Miz'pah, as well as the Chal·de'an soldiers who were there.

⁴ On the second day after Ged·a·li'ah had been put to death, before anyone knew about it, ⁵ there came 80 men from She'chem, from Shi'loh, and from Sa·mar'i·a. Their beards were shaved off, their garments were ripped apart, they had cut themselves, and they had grain offerings and frankincense in their hand to bring to the house of Jehovah. ⁶ So Ish'ma·el the son of Neth·a·ni'ah went out from Miz'pah to meet them, weeping as he walked along. When he encountered them, he said to them: “Come to Ged·a·li'ah the son of A·hi'kam.” ⁷ But when they came into the city, Ish'ma·el the son of Neth·a·ni'ah and his men slaughtered them and threw them into the cistern.

⁸ But there were ten men among them who said to Ish'ma·el: “Do not put us to death, for we have hidden stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey in the field.” So he refrained from putting them to death along with their brothers. ⁹ Now Ish'ma·el threw all the carcasses of the

men he had killed into a great cistern, the one that King A'sa had made because of King Ba'a-sha of Israel. This was the cistern that Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah filled with the slain men.

¹⁰ Ish'ma-el took captive all the rest of the people in Miz'pah, including the daughters of the king and all the people left in Miz'pah, whom Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard had put in the custody of Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam. Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah took them captive and went off to cross over to the Am'mon-ites.

¹¹ When Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and all the army chiefs who were with him heard about all the evil that Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah had done, ¹² they took all the men and went off to fight against Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah, and they found him by the great waters in Gib'e-on.

¹³ All the people who were with Ish'ma-el rejoiced when they saw Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and all the army chiefs with him. ¹⁴ Then all the people whom Ish'ma-el had taken captive from Miz'pah turned around and went back with Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah. ¹⁵ But Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah and eight of his men escaped from Jo-ha'nan and went to the Am'mon-ites.

¹⁶ Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and all the army chiefs who were with him took with them the rest of the

people from Miz'pah, those whom they had rescued from Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah after he had struck down Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam. They brought the men, the soldiers, the women, the children, and the court officials back from Gib'e-on.¹⁷ So they went and stayed in the lodging place of Chim'ham next to Beth'le-hem, intending to go on into Egypt¹⁸ because of the Chal-de'ans. For they had become afraid of them, since Ish'ma-el the son of Neth-a-ni'ah had struck down Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

42 Then all the army chiefs, and Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah, Jez-a-ni'ah the son of Ho-shai'ah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, approached² and said to Jeremiah the prophet: "Hear, please, our request for favor, and pray in our behalf to Jehovah your God, in behalf of all this remnant, for just a few of many are left, as you can see.³ May Jehovah your God tell us the way we should walk and what we should do."

⁴ Jeremiah the prophet replied to them: "I have heard you, and I am praying to Jehovah your God according to your request; and every word that Jehovah answers you, I will tell you. I will not hold back a word from you."

⁵ They replied to Jeremiah: "May Jehovah be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not do exactly as Jehovah your God instructs us through you."

⁶ Whether good or bad, we will obey the voice of Jehovah our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us because we obey the voice of Jehovah our God.”

⁷ Now ten days later the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah. ⁸ So he called for Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and for all the army chiefs who were with him and for all the people, from the least to the greatest.

⁹ He said to them: “This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, to whom you sent me to present your request for favor before him: ¹⁰ ‘If you will indeed remain in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you, for I will feel regret over the calamity I have caused you.

¹¹ Do not be afraid because of the king of Babylon, whom you fear.’

“‘Do not be afraid because of him,’ declares Jehovah, ‘for I am with you, to save you and to rescue you out of his hand. ¹² And I will show you mercy, and he will have mercy on you and return you to your own land.

¹³ “‘But if you say, “No, we will not remain in this land!” and you disobey the voice of Jehovah your God ¹⁴ by saying, “No, we will go instead to the land of Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the sound of the horn or hunger for bread; there is where we will live,” ¹⁵ then hear the word of Jehovah, O remnant of Judah. This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of

Israel, says: “If you are absolutely determined to go to Egypt and you go there to reside, ¹⁶ then the very sword you are afraid of will catch up with you there in the land of Egypt, and the very famine you fear will follow after you to Egypt, and there you will die. ¹⁷ And all the men who are determined to go to Egypt to reside there will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. None of them will survive or escape the calamity that I will bring on them.”

¹⁸ “For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you if you go to Egypt, and you will become a curse, an object of horror, a malediction, and a reproach, and you will never again see this place.’

¹⁹ “Jehovah has spoken against you, O remnant of Judah. Do not go to Egypt. You should know for a certainty that I have warned you today ²⁰ that your error will cost you your lives. For you sent me to Jehovah your God, saying, ‘Pray in our behalf to Jehovah our God, and tell us everything that Jehovah our God says, and we will do it.’ ²¹ And I told you today, but you will not obey the voice of Jehovah your God or do anything he sent me to tell you. ²² Therefore, know for a certainty that by the sword, by famine, and by

pestilence you will die in the place where you desire to go and reside.”

43 When Jeremiah had finished speaking to all the people all these words from Jehovah their God, every single word that Jehovah their God had sent him to tell them, ² Az-a-ri'ah the son of Ho-shai'ah, Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah, and all the presumptuous men said to Jeremiah: “What you are saying is a lie! Jehovah our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to reside there.’ ³ But Bar'uch the son of Ne-ri'ah is inciting you against us to hand us over to the Chal-de'ans, to put us to death or to take us into exile in Babylon.”

⁴ So Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and all the army chiefs and all the people disobeyed the voice of Jehovah to remain in the land of Judah. ⁵ Instead, Jo-ha'nan the son of Ka-re'ah and all the army chiefs took with them all the remnant of Judah who had returned to reside in the land of Judah from all the nations where they had been dispersed. ⁶ They took the men, the women, the children, the daughters of the king, and everyone whom Neb-u'zar-ad'an the chief of the guard had left with Ged-a-li'ah the son of A-hi'kam the son of Sha'phan, as well as Jeremiah the prophet and Bar'uch the son of Ne-ri'ah. ⁷ And they went into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Jehovah, and they went as far as Tah'pan-hes.

⁸ Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah in Tah'pan·hes, saying: ⁹ “Take in your hand large stones, and hide them in the mortar in the brick terrace at the entrance of the house of Phar'aoh in Tah'pan·hes, with the Jewish men looking on. ¹⁰ Then say to them, ‘This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: “Here I am sending for Neb·u·chad·nez'zar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will place his throne right above these stones that I have hidden, and he will extend his royal tent over them. ¹¹ And he will come in and strike the land of Egypt. Whoever is meant for deadly plague will be for deadly plague, and whoever is meant for captivity will be for captivity, and whoever is meant for the sword will be for the sword. ¹² And I will set the houses of the gods of Egypt on fire, and he will burn them and lead them captive. He will wrap the land of Egypt around himself just as a shepherd wraps himself in his garment, and he will depart from there in peace. ¹³ And he will break to pieces the pillars of Beth·she'mesh in the land of Egypt, and he will burn the houses of the gods of Egypt with fire.”””

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JEREMIAH 39-43 | Jehovah Will Render to Each One According to His Works



39:4-7

Zedekiah disobeyed Jehovah's direction to surrender to Babylon

- Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered before his eyes. He then was blinded, bound with copper fetters, and imprisoned in Babylon until his death



39:15-18

Ebed-melech demonstrated trust in Jehovah and concern for His prophet Jeremiah

- Jehovah promised to safeguard Ebed-melech during Judah's destruction



40:1-6

Jeremiah preached boldly for many years before Jerusalem was destroyed

- Jehovah protected Jeremiah during Jerusalem's siege and arranged for him to be released by the Babylonians



May 15-21

Treasures From God's Word

Jeremiah 39:4-7—Zedekiah suffered the consequences of disobeying Jehovah

Reference: it-2 1228 **paragraph 4**.

Finally (607 B.C.E.), “in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month,” Jerusalem was broken through. By night Zedekiah and the men of war took to flight. Overtaken in the desert plains of Jericho, Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah.

Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered before his eyes. As Zedekiah was only about 32 years of age at the time, the boys could not have been very old. After witnessing the death of his sons, Zedekiah was blinded, bound with copper fetters, and taken to Babylon, where he died in the house of custody.—**2 Kings 25:2-7**; **Jeremiah 39:2-7**; 44:30; 52:6-11; compare **Jeremiah 24:8-10**; **Ezekiel 12:11-16**; 21:25-27.

Jeremiah 39:15-18—Jehovah showed appreciation to Ebed-melech for demonstrating trust in Him

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

Jehovah saw what Ebed-melech did. Did He appreciate it?

Through Jeremiah, God told Ebed-melech that Judah's destruction was imminent. Then God gave Ebed-melech what one scholar calls "a quintuple guarantee of salvation." Jehovah said: "I will deliver you . . . You will not be given into the hand of the men . . . I shall without fail furnish you an escape . . . By the sword you will not fall . . . You will certainly come to have your soul as a spoil." Why did Jehovah promise to keep Ebed-melech safe? Jehovah told him: "Because you have trusted in me." (Jeremiah 39:16-18) Jehovah knew that Ebed-melech had acted not only because of his concern for Jeremiah but also because of his trust and faith in God.

Jeremiah 40:1-6—Jehovah took care of his faithful servant Jeremiah

Reference: it-2 482.

Nebuzaradan, under orders from Nebuchadnezzar, released Jeremiah and spoke to him kindly, letting him choose what he would do, offering to look after him and granting him some supplies. Nebuzaradan was also spokesman for the king of Babylon in appointing Gedaliah governor over those remaining. (**2 Kings 25:22**; **Jeremiah 39:11-14**; 40:1-7; 41:10) About five years later, 602 B.C.E., Nebuzaradan took other Jews into exile, apparently those who had fled to surrounding territories.—**Jeremiah 52:30**.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Jeremiah 42:1-3; 43:2, 4—What lessons can we learn from Johanan's mistake?

Reference: w03 5/1 10 **paragraph 10**.

After Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Babylonian army had departed with the Jewish exiles, Johanan prepared to take into Egypt the small group of Jews that remained in Judah. Their plans were made, but before leaving they asked Jeremiah to pray in their behalf and seek direction from Jehovah. However, when they did not get the answer they wanted, they went right ahead and did what they had planned. (Jeremiah 41:16–43:7) Do you see in these events lessons that can benefit you so that when you seek Jehovah's face, he will let himself be found by you?

Jeremiah 43:6, 7—What is the significance of the events described in these verses?

Reference: it-1 463 **paragraph 4**.

Jerusalem came under final siege in Zedekiah's 9th year (609 B.C.E.), and the city fell in his 11th year (607 B.C.E.), corresponding to Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year of actual rule (counting from his accession year in 625 B.C.E.). (**2 Kings 25:1-8**) In the fifth month of that year (the month of Ab, corresponding to parts of July and August) the city was set afire, the walls were pulled down, and the majority of the

people were led off into exile. However, “some of the lowly people of the land” were allowed to remain, and these did so until the assassination of Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar’s appointee, whereupon they fled into Egypt, finally leaving Judah completely desolate. (2 Kings 25:9-12, 22-26) This was in the seventh month, Ethanim (or Tishri, corresponding to parts of September and October). Hence the count of the 70 years of desolation must have begun about October 1, 607 B.C.E., ending in 537 B.C.E. By the seventh month of this latter year the first repatriated Jews arrived back in Judah, 70 years from the start of the full desolation of the land.—2 Chronicles 36:21-23; Ezra 3:1.

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- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Isa 46:10—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Re 12:7-9, 12—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bh* 153 ¶19-20—Invite the person to the meeting.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 138
- **“Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love” (Ps 71:18):** (15 min.) Discussion. Begin by playing the video *Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love* (video category PROGRAMS AND EVENTS).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 12 ¶16-23, boxes on pp. 125, 128; review box on p. 129
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 103 and Prayer

Jehovah Does Not Forget Your Love

WATCH THE VIDEO *JEHOVAH DOES NOT FORGET YOUR LOVE*, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What challenges come with advancing age?

- What good quality often accompanies old age?

- If you have grown old, how do Leviticus 19:32 and Proverbs 16:31 encourage you?

- How does Jehovah view his aged servants whose ministry is now limited?

- What does Jehovah want us to do even when we are older?

- How can older ones encourage younger ones?

- How did an older brother or sister encourage you recently?

throughout the earth, modern Babylon the Great can properly be identified as the world empire of false religion. And God has foretold that this empire of false religion will come to a sudden end. (Revelation 18:8) Do you see why it is vital that you separate yourself from every part of Babylon the Great? Jehovah God wants you to “get out of her” quickly while there is still time.—Revelation 18:4.

¹⁹ As a result of your decision to quit practicing false religion, some may choose to stop associating with you. By serving Jehovah with his people, however, you will gain far more than you could ever lose. Like Jesus’ early disciples who left other things to follow him, you will come to have many spiritual brothers and sisters. You will become part of a large worldwide family of millions of true Christians, who show you genuine love. And you will have the wonderful hope of everlasting life “in the coming system of things.” (Mark 10:28-30) Perhaps in time, those who abandoned you because of your beliefs will look into what the Bible teaches and become worshipers of Jehovah.

19. What will you gain by serving Jehovah?

²⁰ The Bible teaches that God will soon bring an end to this wicked system of things and will replace it with a righteous new world under the rulership of his Kingdom. (2 Peter 3:9, 13) What a marvelous world that will be! And in that righteous new system, there will be only one religion, one true form of worship. Is it not the course of wisdom for you to take the necessary steps to come into association with true worshipers right now?

20. What does the future hold for those who practice the true religion?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

- There is only one true religion.
—Matthew 7:13, 14.
- True religion is identified by its teachings and practices.—Matthew 7:16, 17.
- Jehovah’s Witnesses practice the worship that God approves.—Isaiah 43:10.

138 *Beauty in Gray-Headedness* (Proverbs 16:31)

1. Here with us are aged ones,
Those whose youth has passed.
Here among us they endure;
Still they're holding fast.
Loss of strength besets them all;
Loss of mates for some.
Father, please confirm their faith
In the life to come.

(CHORUS)

*Father, you remember
How in faith they've run.
Give them your assurance;
May they hear, "Well done!"*

2. Splendid is gray-headedness
Found in ways of right.
Beautiful are faithful ones
In Jehovah's sight.
May we always recognize
They were once young too.
Loyally they gave their best
When their strength was new.

(Chorus)

- Song 150 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Will Render to Each One According to His Works”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 39:4-7—Zedekiah suffered the consequences of disobeying Jehovah (*it-2* 1228 ¶4)
 Jer 39:15-18—Jehovah showed appreciation to Ebed-melech for demonstrating trust in Him (*w12* 5/1 31 ¶5)
 Jer 40:1-6—Jehovah took care of his faithful servant Jeremiah (*it-2* 482)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 42:1-3; 43:2, 4—What lessons can we learn from Johanan’s mistake? (*w03* 5/1 10 ¶10)

Jer 43:6, 7—What is the significance of the events described in these verses? (*it-1* 463 ¶4)

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 40:11–41:3

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Isa 46:10—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
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- How can older ones encourage younger ones?

- How did an older brother or sister encourage you recently?

“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’?

God. (**Read Galatians 6:10.**) In 1908, an article in the *Watch Tower* considered Jesus' admonition: "Shepherd my little sheep." (John 21:15-17) The article told elders: "It is very important that the Master's commission in respect to the flock shall have a prominent place in our hearts, that we shall rightly esteem it a great privilege to feed and to tend the Lord's followers." In 1925, *The Watch Tower* again emphasized the importance of serving as shepherds by reminding elders: "The church of God is his own, . . . and he will hold all responsible for their privilege of serving their brethren."

¹⁷ How has Jehovah's organization helped elders to turn their shepherding skills from 'iron into silver'? By providing training. In 1959, the first Kingdom Ministry School for overseers was held. One class session considered the subject "Giving Personal Attention." Those responsible brothers were encouraged to "work out a schedule for visiting publishers in their homes." The session presented various ways in which shepherds could make such visits upbuilding. In 1966, an updated Kingdom Ministry

17. How have overseers been helped to become capable shepherds?

School began. It considered the subject “Importance of the Shepherding Work.” What was the main point of that class session? Those taking the lead “should share in providing loving care for the flock of God, while not failing to give due attention to their own households and to the field ministry.” In recent years, more schools for elders have been held. What has been the result of the continuing training that Jehovah’s organization has provided? Today, the Christian congregation has thousands of qualified brothers who serve as spiritual shepherds.

¹⁸ Christian elders have been put in place by Jehovah through our King, Jesus, to carry out a weighty task. What is it? To lead God’s sheep through the most critical time in human history. (Eph. 4:11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:1) Jehovah and Jesus have deep affection for hardworking elders because these brothers obey the Scriptural admonition: “Shepherd the flock of God under your care . . . willingly . . . , eagerly . . . , becoming examples to the flock.” (1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Let us consider two of the many ways in which Christian

- 18. (a) With what weighty responsibility have elders been entrusted?**
(b) Why do Jehovah and Jesus have affection for hardworking elders?

shepherds are examples to the flock and greatly contribute to peace and joy in the congregation.

How Elders Today Shepherd the Flock of God

¹⁹ First, elders work with members of the congregation. The Gospel writer Luke stated about Jesus: “He traveled from city to city and from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the Kingdom of God. And the Twelve were *with* him.” (Luke 8:1) Just as Jesus preached alongside his apostles, so exemplary elders today work side by side with their fellow believers in the preaching work. They realize that by doing so, they contribute much to the wholesome spirit of the congregation. How do congregation members feel about such elders? Jeanine, a sister in her late 80’s, notes: “Working together with an elder in field service gives me a fine opportunity to converse with him and to get to know him better.” Steven, a brother in his mid-30’s, says: “When an elder works with me in the door-to-door ministry, I feel he wants to help me. Receiving such help gives me much joy.”

19. How do we feel about elders who accompany us in the ministry?

²⁰ Second, Jehovah’s organization has trained elders to show concern for those who have lost contact with the congregation. (Heb. 12:12) Why should elders help such spiritually weak ones, and how should they go about it? Jesus’ parable about a shepherd and a lost sheep provides the answers. (**Read Luke 15:4-7.**) When the shepherd in the parable notices that a sheep is missing, he searches for the lost sheep as if it were the only one he possesses. How do Christian elders today imitate the example set by that shepherd? Just as the lost sheep remains precious in the eyes of the shepherd, so those who have lost contact with God’s people remain precious in the eyes of the elders. They view a spiritually weak individual as a lost sheep—not a lost cause. Moreover, just as the shepherd decides to “go after the lost one until he finds it,” so elders take the initiative to find and help those who are weak.

²¹ What does the shepherd in the parable do when he finds the sheep? He gently lifts it up, “puts it on his shoulders,” and carries it back to the flock.

20, 21. How can elders imitate the shepherd in Jesus’ parable? Give an example. (See also the box “Fruitful Weekly Visits.”)

FRUITFUL WEEKLY VISITS

MOVED by the desire to help the lost sheep, the elders in a congregation in the United States considered what they could do to help those who had lost contact with the flock. They determined that about 30 individuals who had stopped serving Jehovah decades earlier were still living in the congregation's territory. Most of them were now up in age.

Alfredo, one of the elders, got a list of their names and began visiting them. "Every Friday morning, I knock on the door of an inactive one," he relates. When the inactive one opens the door, Alfredo tries to have a relaxed conversation in which he conveys his heartfelt feelings of concern. He tells the inactive brother or sister that the congregation has not forgotten the fine work the person did in behalf of Jehovah's Kingdom. Says Alfredo, "When I told one elderly inactive brother how many hours he had preached and how many magazines he had placed during the last month that he reported field service in 1976, the brother's eyes welled up with tears." Alfredo also reads Luke 15:4-7, 10 with those whom he visits, and then he asks them, "What happens when a lost sheep returns to the congregation? Jehovah, Jesus, and the angels rejoice—just think of it!"

For the past two years, Alfredo has been reaching out to inactive ones. What has been the result of his patient ef-

forts? He has had the joy of helping two brothers start associating with the congregation again. They now regularly attend the Sunday meeting. “When they entered the Kingdom Hall, it was my turn to shed some tears,” he says with a smile. “Although these inactive ones have started attending meetings,” he adds, “I still contact them on Fridays because they tell me that those weekly visits are moments they look forward to—and I feel the same way!”

Similarly, an elder’s heartfelt expressions of concern may gently lift up a spiritually weak one and help him to return to the congregation. That is what happened to Victor, a brother in Africa who stopped associating with the congregation. He relates: “During the eight years that I was inactive, the elders kept reaching out to me.” What especially touched him? He explains: “One day, John, an elder with whom I had attended the Pioneer Service School, took time to visit me and showed me some pictures he had taken of us during the school. They brought back so many wonderful memories that I began to long for the joy I felt when I served Jehovah.” Shortly after John’s visit, Victor returned to the congregation. Today he again serves as a pioneer. Indeed,

caring Christian elders contribute greatly to our joy.
—2 Cor. 1:24.*[2]

Improved Oversight Strengthens Unity Among God’s People

²² As noted earlier, Jehovah foretold that righteousness and peace would steadily increase among God’s people. (Isa. 60:17) Both of these qualities fortify the unity of the congregations. In what ways? As to righteousness, “God is *one* Jehovah.” (Deut. 6:4) His righteous standards do not differ from congregations in one country to congregations in another country. No, his standards of right and wrong are *one*, and they are the same for “all the congregations of the holy ones.” (1 Cor. 14:33) Hence, a congregation will flourish only when God’s standards are applied. As to peace, our King wants us not only to enjoy peace in the congregation but also to be “peacemakers.” (Matt. 5:9) Therefore, we “pursue the things making for peace.” We take the initiative in resolving differences that may at times arise

*[2] See the article “Christian Elders—‘Fellow Workers for Our Joy,’” in the January 15, 2013, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 27-31.

22. How do righteousness and peace fortify the unity of the Christian congregation? (See also the box “We Were Amazed.”)

among us. (Rom. 14:19) In that way, we contribute to both the peace and the unity of our congregation. —Isa. 60:18.

²³ Back in November 1895, when the *Watch Tower* announced the first elder arrangement, the responsible brothers also expressed their heartfelt desire. What was it? They wished and prayed that this new organizational arrangement would help God’s people to “come speedily to the *unity* of the faith.” Looking back over the decades, we are grateful to note that the gradual refinements in oversight brought about by Jehovah through our King have indeed fortified our unity of worship. (Ps. 99:4) As a result, today all of Jehovah’s people worldwide rejoice as we walk “in the same spirit,” follow “the same footsteps,” and serve the “God of peace” “shoulder to shoulder.” —2 Cor. 12:18; **read Zephaniah 3:9.**

23. As Jehovah’s servants, what do we enjoy today?

How Real Is the Kingdom to You?

- What organizational improvements has the Kingdom brought about?
- How have adjustments in congregation oversight helped you to serve “the God of peace”?
- What words and deeds of an elder have added to your joy?
- How can you personally contribute to both the peace and the unity of the congregation?

103 *Shepherds—Gifts in Men*

(Ephesians 4:8)

1. Help in our lives, Jehovah provides,
 Shepherds to tend his flock.
 By their example they serve as guides,
 Showing us how to walk.

(CHORUS)

*God gives us men who have earned our trust,
Men who are loyal and true.
They show concern for his precious sheep;
Love them for all that they do.*

2. Shepherds who love us care how we feel;
 Gently they guide the way.
 When we are hurt, they help us to heal,
 Kind in the words they say.

(Chorus)

3. Godly advice and counsel they give,
 That we may never stray.
 Thus they assist us, God's way to live,
 Serving him ev'ry day.

(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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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.

PUBLISHERS

40,575

BIBLE STUDIES

25,623

MEMORIAL
ATTENDANCE (2015)

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28 WEEK OF MAY 15-21

Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart!

40 WEEK OF MAY 22-28

Will You Apply Your Heart to the Things Written?

Being imperfect, all of us make mistakes. However, does that mean we cannot please Jehovah? In these two articles, we will discuss the examples of four kings of Judah and the mistakes they made, some of which were very serious. Yet, Jehovah viewed those kings as having a complete heart. Will God view us as having a complete heart, despite mistakes we make?

52 LIFE STORY

I Have Benefited From Walking With Wise Ones

1. We guard our hearts, it means our life;
We shun the path of sin.
God reads the heart, and there he finds
The person deep within.
Sometimes the heart deceives the mind,
And we begin to stray.
So may our mind direct our heart
And keep Jehovah's way.
2. Prepared in heart, we search for God
By means of earnest prayer.
Each day we give him praise and thanks,
Revealing ev'ry care.
The things Jehovah teaches us,
We gladly will obey.
We cultivate a loyal heart,
To please him ev'ry day.
3. Our hearts we shield from harmful thoughts,
We dwell on what is true.
We love God's Word to touch our hearts,
To strengthen and renew.
Jehovah loves his loyal ones;
On this we can depend.
We'll worship him wholeheartedly
Forever as his friend.



ASA



JEHOSHAPHAT



HEZEKIAH



JOSIAH

SONGS:
36, 54

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What does it mean to serve Jehovah with a complete heart?

What impressed you about God’s approval of the four kings of Judah?

Which of the four kings would you like to imitate, and why?

Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart!

“O Jehovah, remember, please, how I have walked before you faithfully and with a complete heart.”—2 KI. 20:3.

BEING imperfect, we are prone to make mistakes. Thankfully, though, Jehovah does not deal with us “according to our sins,” provided that we are repentant

1-3. What is involved in serving Jehovah with “a complete heart”? Illustrate.

and in faith approach him humbly on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (Ps. 103:10) Yet, as David told Solomon, for our daily worship to be acceptable to Jehovah, we have to "serve him with a complete heart." (1 Chron. 28:9) How can we as imperfect humans do so?

² To aid us in this respect, we can compare the life of King Asa with that of King Amaziah. Both Judean kings did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but Asa did so with a complete heart. (2 Chron. 15:16, 17; 25:1, 2; Prov. 17:3) Both kings were imperfect and made mistakes. Yet, Asa basically did not deviate from God's ways, for his heart was "completely devoted" to God. (1 Chron. 28:9, fn.) Amaziah, on the other hand, was not fully devoted to Jehovah. After gaining the victory over God's enemies, he brought back their gods and began worshipping them.—2 Chron. 25:11-16.

³ Serving God with "a complete heart" involves full devotion that does not end. In the Bible, the word "heart" usually refers to a man's inner self. It encompasses his desires, thinking, disposition, attitudes, abilities, motivations, and goals. So a person who serves Jehovah with his whole heart does not render hypocritical service. He does not just

go through the motions of worshipping Jehovah. What about us? Well, if we, though being imperfect humans, continue to be fully devoted to God without hypocrisy, we will be serving God with a complete heart.—2 Chron. 19:9.

⁴ To appreciate what it means to serve God with a complete heart, let us consider the life of Asa as well as that of some other kings of Judah who served God with heartfelt devotion—Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. All four of them made mistakes, but they still gained Jehovah’s approval. Why did God view them as having served him with a complete heart, and how can we imitate them?

ASA’S HEART “WAS COMPLETE WITH JEHOVAH”

⁵ Asa was the third king of Judah after the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel separated. He rid his domain of idolatry and expelled the male temple prostitutes. He even removed his grandmother Maacah from the position of “queen mother, because she had made an obscene idol.” (1 Ki. 15:11-13) Furthermore, Asa urged his people “to

4. What will we now consider?

5. What decisive actions did Asa take?

search for Jehovah . . . and to observe the Law and the commandment.” Yes, he promoted true worship.—2 Chron. 14:4.

⁶ Jehovah blessed Judah with peace for the first ten years of Asa’s reign. Then Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah with 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots. (2 Chron. 14:1, 6, 9, 10) How did Asa react to this crisis? He expressed full confidence in Jehovah. (Read 2 Chronicles 14:11.) In answer to Asa’s heartfelt prayer, God gave Asa a complete victory, annihilating the Ethiopian army. (2 Chron. 14:12, 13) Even when kings were not faithful to him, Jehovah could give them victory over the enemy for the sake of his own name. (1 Ki. 20:13, 26-30) Asa, however, relied on God, and Jehovah answered his prayer. Granted, on later occasions, Asa acted unwisely. For example, he sought help from the king of Syria rather than from Jehovah. (1 Ki. 15:16-22) Still, God’s overall assessment was that Asa’s heart “was complete with Jehovah all his life.” How can we imitate Asa in doing good? —1 Ki. 15:14.

⁷ Each of us can examine his heart to see if

6. How did Asa react when the Ethiopians invaded the land?

7, 8. How can you imitate Asa in serving Jehovah?

it is fully devoted to God. Ask yourself, ‘Am I determined to please Jehovah, to defend true worship, and to protect his people from any corrupting influence?’ Think how much courage Asa had to muster to stand up to Maacah, who was “queen mother” in the land! You probably do not know anyone who acts just like her, but there may be a situation in which you can imitate Asa’s zeal. For example, what if a member of your family or a close friend sins, is unrepentant, and has to be disfellowshipped? Would you take decisive action by ceasing to associate with that person? What would your heart move you to do?

⁸ Like Asa, you can show that you have a complete heart by fully relying on God when you are faced with opposition, even some that may seem insurmountable. You may be teased or ridiculed at school for taking a stand as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Or colleagues at work may taunt you for taking days off for spiritual activities or for not often working overtime. In such situations, pray to God, just as Asa did. Courageously rely on Jehovah, remaining firm for what you know is right and wise. Remember that God strengthened and helped Asa, and He will strengthen you.

⁹ God’s servants go beyond simply thinking about themselves. Asa promoted true worship. We likewise help others “to search for Jehovah.” How pleased Jehovah must be when he sees that we speak to our neighbors and others about him, doing so out of genuine love for him and genuine interest in the everlasting welfare of people!

JEHOSHAPHAT SEARCHED FOR JEHOVAH

¹⁰ Asa’s son Jehoshaphat “kept walking in the way of his father Asa.” (2 Chron. 20:31, 32) How so? Like his father, Jehoshaphat encouraged the people to search for Jehovah. He did so by organizing a teaching campaign that used “the book of Jehovah’s Law.” (2 Chron. 17:7-10) He even went to the territory of the northern kingdom of Israel, to the mountainous region of Ephraim, “to bring them back to Jehovah.” (2 Chron. 19:4) Jehoshaphat was a king “who searched for Jehovah with all his heart.”—2 Chron. 22:9.

¹¹ We can all have a share in the great teaching campaign that Jehovah is having done today. Is it your goal each month to teach the Word of God to

9. When preaching, how can we show that we have a complete heart?

10, 11. How can you follow the course of Jehoshaphat?

others, trying to move their heart to serve God? By your extending yourself and with God's blessing, you may be able to start a Bible study. Is that a goal that you pray about? Are you willing to accept this challenge, even giving up some of what is commonly viewed as free time? And just as Jehoshaphat went to the territory of Ephraim to help people return to true worship, we can reach out to those who have become inactive. In addition, the congregation elders arrange to visit and offer help to disfellowshipped ones in the congregation territory who may have left their past practice of sin.

¹² Like his father, Asa, Jehoshaphat maintained his devotion to God even when threatened by an overwhelming enemy force. (Read 2 Chronicles 20:2-4.) Jehoshaphat did become afraid! Yet, "he resolved to search for Jehovah." In prayer, he humbly admitted that his people were "powerless before this large crowd" and that he and his people did not know what to do. He fully relied on Jehovah, saying: "Our eyes are toward you."—2 Chron. 20:12.

¹³ Sometimes we, like Jehoshaphat, may not

12, 13. (a) When facing a frightening situation, how did Jehoshaphat react? (b) Why should we imitate Jehoshaphat in acknowledging our weaknesses?

know what to do, even being afraid. (2 Cor. 4:8, 9) But remember that Jehoshaphat acknowledged in a public prayer how weak he and his people felt. (2 Chron. 20:5) Those who take the spiritual lead in the family can imitate Jehoshaphat by turning to Jehovah for guidance and strength to cope with the problem they face. Do not feel ashamed to let your family hear such supplications. They will sense your trust in Jehovah. God helped Jehoshaphat, and he will also help you.

HEZEKIAH KEPT DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT

¹⁴ To become known as a king who “held fast to Jehovah,” Hezekiah, unlike Jehoshaphat, had to overcome the bad influence of an idolatrous father. Hezekiah “removed the high places, smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He also crushed the copper serpent that Moses had made,” which by then had been misused for idolatrous purposes. He was fully devoted to Jehovah, for “he *continued* to keep the commandments that Jehovah had given to Moses.”—2 Ki. 18:1-6.

¹⁵ Even when Assyria, the world power at that time, invaded Judah and threatened to annihilate

14, 15. How did Hezekiah show complete reliance on God?

Jerusalem, Hezekiah wholeheartedly relied on Jehovah. The Assyrian King Sennacherib taunted Jehovah and tried to intimidate Hezekiah into surrendering. However, in prayer Hezekiah expressed full trust in Jehovah's saving power. (Read Isaiah 37:15-20.) God answered his prayer by sending an angel to strike down 185,000 Assyrians.—Isa. 37:36, 37.

¹⁶ Hezekiah later became sick to the point of dying. He begged Jehovah to remember how he had walked before Him. (Read 2 Kings 20:1-3.) We know from the Scriptures that we are not living at a time when we can look to God for miraculous healings or an extension of our life. Still, as did Hezekiah, each of us can say to Jehovah in prayer: "I have walked before you faithfully and with a complete heart." Do you believe that Jehovah is capable and willing to sustain you even on a sick-bed?—Ps. 41:3.

¹⁷ Meditating on the example of Hezekiah, we may see a need to remove something that is hindering our relationship with God or diverting our attention from true worship. Clearly, we do not want to imitate those in the world who, using so-

16, 17. How can you imitate Hezekiah as you serve God?

cial media, treat humans as if they were idols. Of course, some Christians may find pleasure in communicating with family or close friends by such means. But many in the world use social media excessively, following men or women whom they do not even know. Or they spend a great deal of time looking at pictures of or reading about such individuals. There is the danger of becoming consumed with what amounts to trivia. A Christian could even become puffed up with pride over how many like his postings, even taking offense if they cease to follow him. Can we imagine the apostle Paul or Aquila and Priscilla occupying themselves each day posting images or following someone outside of the brotherhood? We read that Paul was “intensely occupied with the word.” And Priscilla and Aquila used their time to explain “the way of God more accurately” to others. (Acts 18:4, 5, 26) We can ask ourselves, ‘Do I avoid idolizing humans or using a great deal of valuable time on inconsequential matters?’—Read Ephesians 5:15, 16.

JOSIAH KEPT JEHOVAH’S COMMANDMENTS

¹⁸ King Josiah, Hezekiah’s great-grandson, also resolutely kept Jehovah’s commandments “with all

18, 19. In what ways would you like to be like Josiah?

his heart.” (2 Chron. 34:31) When he was still a teenager, “he started to search for the God of David,” and by the time he was 20, he began to cleanse Judah of idolatry. (Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-3.) Josiah was zealous in doing what pleased God, far more so than many kings of Judah. Still, when what may have been the original writings of the Mosaic Law were found and read to Josiah, he saw the need to do God’s will more fully. He urged others to serve Jehovah. As a result, the people “did not deviate from following Jehovah” throughout Josiah’s lifetime.—2 Chron. 34:27, 33.

¹⁹ Like Josiah, young ones should start to seek Jehovah from an early age. Repentant King Manasseh may have taught Josiah about God’s mercy. Young ones, draw close to faithful older ones in your family and in the congregation and learn how good Jehovah has been to them. Also, remember that the reading of the Scriptures touched Josiah’s heart and moved him to take action. Your reading of the Word of God may move you to take action that will increase your happiness and strengthen your friendship with God as well as spur you on to help others to search for God. (Read 2 Chronicles 34:18, 19.) A study of the Bible may also help you to notice ways that you can improve in your ser-

vice to God. If you do, apply yourself, just as Josiah did.

SERVE JEHOVAH WITH A COMPLETE HEART!

²⁰ Do you see the benefit of reviewing how the four kings of Judah whom we have considered served Jehovah with a complete heart? They were zealous in doing God's will and were fully devoted to accomplishing it. They kept doing God's will. They even did so when they faced formidable foes. Most important, their motive for serving Jehovah was pure.

²¹ As we will see in the next article, the four kings whom we have considered all made mistakes. Yet, when the Examiner of the heart scrutinized them, he saw that their heart was complete toward him. We too are imperfect. As Jehovah examines us, does he conclude that we are serving him with a complete heart? Let us address that matter in the following article.

20, 21. (a) What do the four kings we considered have in common?
(b) What will we discuss in the next article?

“This Is the Way”

(Isaiah 30:20, 21)

1. There is a way of peace,
The way you've come to know.
It is the way you learned,
The way of long ago,
The way that Jesus taught you
When his voice you heard.
This is the way of peace,
Found in Jehovah's Word.

(CHORUS)

*This is the way to life; This is the way.
Don't look aside; Not for a moment stray!
God's voice is calling: 'This is the way;
Do not look back, for yes, this is the way.'*

2. There is a way of love,
No need to look around.
God's voice has shown the way
He lets himself be found.
His love is full and good;
His love is warm and true.
This is the way of love;
It touches all we do.

(Chorus)

3. There is a way of life,
 No need to look behind.
Our God has promised us:
 No better way we'll find,
No higher way to peace,
 No finer way to love.
This is the way to life,
 Thanks to our God above.

(Chorus)



Compassion for a Leper

AS JESUS and his four disciples visit the cities of Galilee, news about the wonderful things he is doing spreads throughout the district. Word of his deeds reaches one city where there is a man sick with leprosy. The physician Luke describes him as being "full of leprosy." In its advanced stages, this dreadful disease slowly disfigures various parts of the body. So this leper is in a pitiful condition.

When Jesus arrives in the city, the leper approaches him. According to God's law, a leper is to call out in warning, "Unclean, unclean!" to protect others from coming too close and risking

infection. The leper now falls upon his face and begs Jesus: "Lord, if you just want to, you can make me clean."

What faith the man has in Jesus! Yet, how pitiful his disease must make him appear! What will Jesus do? What would you do? Moved with compassion, Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the man, saying: "I want to. Be made clean." And immediately the leprosy vanishes from him.

Would you like someone so compassionate as this for your king? The way Jesus treats this leper provides confidence that during his Kingdom rule the Bible prophecy will be fulfilled: "He will

Jesus' Life and Ministry

feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one." Yes, Jesus will then fulfill his heart's desire to help *all* afflicted ones.

Even prior to healing the leper, Jesus' ministry has been creating great excitement among the people. In fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus now orders the healed man: "See that you tell nobody a thing." He then instructs him: "Go show yourself to the priest and offer in behalf of your cleansing the things Moses directed, for a witness to them."

But the man is so happy that he cannot keep the miracle to himself. He goes off and begins spreading the news

everywhere, apparently causing such interest and curiosity among the people that Jesus cannot openly go into a city. Thus Jesus stays in lonely places where nobody lives, and people from all over come there to listen to him and to be cured of their sicknesses. **Luke 5: 12-16; Mark 1:40-45; Matthew 8:2-4; Leviticus 13:45; 14:10-13; Psalm 72:13; Isaiah 42:1, 2.**

- ◆ What effect can leprosy have, and what warning was a leper to give?
- ◆ How did a leper appeal to Jesus, and what can we learn from Jesus' response?
- ◆ How did the healed man fail to obey Jesus, and what were the consequences?

