

- Song 125 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?”:** (10 min.)
 Eze 18:19, 20—Jehovah holds each person responsible for his own actions (w12 7/1 18 ¶2)
 Eze 18:21, 22—Jehovah is ready to forgive repentant ones and will never again hold their sins against them (w12 7/1 18 ¶3-7)
 Eze 18:23, 32—Jehovah destroys the wicked only as a last resort (w08 4/1 8 ¶4; w06 12/1 27 ¶11)

- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Eze 18:29—Why did the Israelites develop a wrong viewpoint about Jehovah, and how can we avoid making the same mistake? (w13 8/15 11 ¶9)

Eze 20:49—Why did the people think that Ezekiel was “speaking in riddles,” and what warning does this provide for us? (w07 7/1 14 ¶3)

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) Eze 20:1-12

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) 1Jo 5:19—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Ge 3:2-5—Teach the Truth. Lay the groundwork for the next visit. (See mwb16.08 8 ¶2.)
- **Talk:** (6 min. or less) w16.05 32—Theme: How Can the Congregation Express Its Joy When an Announcement Is Made That Someone Has Been Reinstated?

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 130
- **“Do You Forgive Yourself?”:** (10 min.) Discussion. Begin by playing the video *Loyally Uphold Jehovah’s Judgments—Be Forgiving*.
- **Young People Ask—How Can I Deal With My Mistakes?:** (5 min.) Discussion of the article “Young People Ask—How Can I Deal With My Mistakes?” Begin by playing the audio recording of the section “What Would You Do?” (Go to jw.org, and look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > TEENAGERS.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 15 ¶9-17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 33 and Prayer

Do You Forgive Yourself?

It can be difficult to forgive ourselves for past mistakes that Jehovah has already forgiven. This matter was considered at the 2016 “Remain Loyal to Jehovah!” Regional Convention by means of a talk and a video. Use the *JW Library* app to watch the video again, and then answer the following questions:

How long was Sonja disfellowshipped?

What scripture did the elders share with Sonja, and how did it help her?



How did the congregation treat Sonja when she was reinstated?

What feelings did Sonja struggle with, and how did her father help her?

"Happy Are the Merciful!"

(Matthew 5:7)

E \flat *E \flat /G* *F \flat /A \flat* *B \flat 7*

Our hap - py God is mer - ci - ful, His
 When we have sinned and feel dis - tressed, When
 When gifts of mer - cy we be - stow, The

F \flat *B \flat 7* *A \flat /E \flat* *E \flat $^\circ$* *E \flat*

mer - cy not just du - ti - ful. He
 God's for - give - ness we re - quest, Our
 giv - ing spir - it we should show. We

E \flat /G *F \flat /A \flat* *C7/G*

takes de - light in kind - ly deeds And
 Lord, Christ Je - sus, showed the way To
 give with - out de - sir - ing praise, Con -

F \flat *B \flat 9* *B \flat 7* *E \flat $^\circ$* *E \flat*

free - ly grants our dai - ly needs. Re -
 ask for mer - cy when we pray: "For -
 tent with joy our gift con - veys. Then

“Happy Are the Merciful!”

E \flat Eb/G Fm/A \flat B \flat 7

pen - tant ones can be as - sured Their
 give our debts, we beg of you, As
 God, who sees all things we do, Will

Fm B \flat 7 A \flat /E \flat E \flat $^\circ$ E \flat

plea for mer - cy will be heard. Re -
 we for - give our debt - ors too." We
 be the One re - pay - ing you. Yes,

E \flat 7 B \flat m7 E \flat +5 A \flat A $^\circ$

mem - ber - ing that we are dust, He's
 then can let re - sent - ment go, And
 hap - py are the mer - ci - ful, In

E \flat /B \flat A \flat B \flat E \flat sus4 E \flat

mer - ci - ful and kind and just.
 peace of mind and heart we'll know.
 God's eyes they are beau - ti - ful.

17 And the great army and numerous troops of Phar'aoah will be of no help in the war,^a when siege ramparts are raised and siege walls are built to destroy many lives.* 18 He has despised an oath and broken a covenant. Even though he gave his promise,* he has done all these things, and he will not escape.”

19 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “As surely as I am alive, I will bring upon his head the consequences of despising my oath^b and breaking my covenant. 20 I will cast my net over him, and he will be caught in my hunting net.^c I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there because of the unfaithfulness he committed against me.^d 21 All the fugitives of his troops will fall by the sword, and those remaining will be scattered in every direction.^e Then you will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have spoken.”^f

22 “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “I will take a shoot from the top of the lofty cedar^g and plant it, from the top of its twigs I will pluck a tender shoot,^h and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.ⁱ 23 On a high mountain of Israel I will plant it; and its branches will grow, and it will produce fruit and become a majestic cedar. And every kind of bird will live beneath it and reside in the shadow of its foliage. 24 And all the trees of the field will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree; I have dried up the green tree and made the dry tree blossom.^k I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.”^l

17:17 *Or “souls.” 17:18 *Lit., “gave his hand.” 17:21 *Lit., “to every wind.”

CHAP. 17

a Jer 37:7, 8
La 4:17
Eze 29:6

b De 5:11

c Eze 12:13

d Eze 20:36

e Eze 12:14

f Eze 6:13

g Isa 11:1
Jer 23:5

h Isa 53:2

i Ps 2:6

j Isa 9:6
Eze 21:26, 27
Da 4:17
Am 9:11

k 1Sa 2:7, 8
Lu 1:52

Second Col.

CHAP. 18

a Jer 31:29, 30

b De 12:2
Jer 3:6

c Le 20:10

d Le 18:19
Le 20:18

e Pr 14:21

f De 24:12, 13

g Le 6:2, 4

h De 15:11

i Isa 58:6, 7
Jas 2:15, 16

j Ex 22:25
Ps 15:5
Lu 6:34, 35

k Le 19:35

l Le 19:15
Le 25:14
De 1:16

m Le 18:5

n Le 19:13

o Ge 9:6
Ex 21:12

18 And the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: 2 “What does this proverb that you quote in the land of Israel mean, ‘Fathers have eaten sour grapes, but the teeth of the sons are set on edge’?^a

3 “‘As surely as I am alive,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘you will not continue to quote this saying in Israel. 4 Look! All the souls*—to me they belong. As the soul of the father so also the soul of the son—to me they belong. The soul^h who sins is the one who will die.

5 “‘Suppose that a man is righteous and does what is just and right. 6 He does not eat idolatrous sacrifices on the mountains;^b he does not look up to the disgusting idols* of the house of Israel; he does not defile his neighbor’s wife^c or have relations with a woman who is menstruating;^d 7 he does not mistreat anyone,^e but he returns what a debtor has given him in pledge;^f he does not rob anyone,^g but he gives his own food to the hungry one^h and covers the naked one with a garment;ⁱ 8 he does not charge interest or engage in usury,^j but he refrains from acting with injustice;^k he executes true justice between one man and another;^l 9 and he keeps walking in my statutes and observing my judicial decisions in order to act in faithfulness. Such a man is righteous and will surely keep living,^m declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

10 “‘But suppose that he has become father to a son who is a robberⁿ or a murderer^o or who

18:4 *Or “lives.” See Glossary. #Or “person.” See Glossary. 18:6 *The Hebrew term may be related to a word for “dung” and is used as an expression of contempt. 18:10 *Lit., “shedder of blood.”

does any of these other things **11** (though the father has not done any of these things)—he eats idolatrous sacrifices on the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, **12** mistreats the needy and the poor,^a takes things by robbery, does not return a pledge, looks up to the disgusting idols,^b engages in detestable practices,^c **13** engages in usury and charges interest^d—then the son will not keep living. Because of all these detestable things that he has done, he will surely be put to death. His own blood will be upon him.

14 “But suppose that a father has a son who sees all the sins his father has committed, and though he sees them, he does not do such things. **15** He does not eat idolatrous sacrifices on the mountains; he does not look up to the disgusting idols of the house of Israel; he does not defile his neighbor's wife; **16** he does not mistreat anyone; he does not seize what was pledged; he does not take anything in robbery; he gives his own food to the hungry one and covers the naked one with a garment; **17** he refrains from oppressing the poor; he does not engage in usury or charge interest; and he carries out my judicial decisions and walks in my statutes. Such a man will not die because of the error of his father. He will surely keep living. **18** But because his father practiced fraud, robbed his brother, and did what was wrong among his people, he will die for his error.

19 “But you will say: “Why does the son not bear guilt because of his father's error?” Since the son has done what is just and righteous, has kept all my statutes and has observed them, he will surely keep living.^e

CHAP. 18

a De 15:7, 8

b Le 26:30

c 2Ki 21:11

d Eze 22:12

e De 16:20
Ro 10:5

Second Col.

a De 24:16

Jer 31:30

Eze 18:4

b Isa 3:10, 11

Ga 6:7

c Isa 55:7

Eze 3:21

Eze 33:12, 19

Ac 3:19

d 2Ch 33:12, 13

Ps 25:7

Isa 43:25

e Eze 33:16

f La 3:33

Eze 33:11

1Ti 2:3, 4

2Pe 3:9

g Mic 7:18

h Eze 33:12, 18

Heb 10:38

2Jo 8

i Pr 21:16

Eze 3:20

j Job 35:2

Pr 19:3

Eze 33:17, 20

k De 32:4

l Isa 55:9

Jer 2:17

20 The soul* who sins is the one who will die.^a A son will bear no guilt because of the error of his father, and a father will bear no guilt because of the error of his son. The righteousness of the righteous one will be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked one will be accounted to him alone.^b

21 “Now if someone wicked turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps my statutes and does what is just and righteous, he will surely keep living. He will not die.^c **22** None of the transgressions that he has committed will be held* against him.^d He will keep living for doing what is righteous.^e

23 “Do I take any pleasure at all in the death of a wicked person?^f declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. ‘Do I not prefer that he turn away from his ways and keep living?’^g

24 “But when someone righteous abandons his righteousness and does what is wrong,* doing all the detestable things the wicked do, will he live? None of the righteous acts that he did will be remembered.^h For his unfaithfulness and the sin he has committed, he will die.ⁱ

25 “But you will say: “The way of Jehovah is unjust.”^j Please listen, O house of Israel! Is it my way that is unjust?^k Is it not your ways that are unjust?^l

26 “When someone righteous abandons his righteousness and does what is wrong and dies because of it, he will die for his own wrongdoing.

27 “And when someone wicked turns away from the wickedness that he has committed and begins to do what is just and

18:20 *Or “person.” 18:22 *Lit., “remembered.” 18:24 *Or “does injustice.”

righteous, he will preserve his own life.*^a **28** When he realizes and turns away from all the transgressions that he has committed, he will surely keep living. He will not die.

29 “But the house of Israel will say: “The way of Jehovah is unjust.” Is it really my ways that are unjust, O house of Israel?^b Is it not your ways that are unjust?”

30 “Therefore, I will judge each one of you according to his ways,^c O house of Israel,” declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. “Turn away, yes, turn completely away from all your transgressions, so that they will not be a stumbling block bringing guilt upon you. **31** Rid yourselves of all the transgressions you have committed^d and acquire* a new heart and a new spirit,^e for why should you die,^f O house of Israel?”

32 “I do not take any pleasure in the death of anyone,^g declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. ‘So turn back and live.’”^h

19 “You must sing a dirge* concerning the chieftains of Israel **2** and say,

‘What was your mother?

A lioness among lions.

She lay down among strong young lions* and reared her cubs.

3 She raised one of her cubs, and he became a strong young lion.ⁱ

He learned how to tear prey apart,

He even devoured humans.

4 Nations heard about him and caught him in their pit, And they brought him to the land of Egypt with hooks.^j

18:27 *Or “soul.” See Glossary. **18:31** *Lit., “make for yourselves.” **19:1** *Or “song of mourning.” **19:2** *Or “among maned young lions.”

CHAP. 18

a Isa 55:7
1Ti 4:16

b Ge 18:25
Ps 145:17
Isa 40:14

c Job 34:11
Ro 2:6

d Ps 34:14
Isa 1:16

e Ps 51:10
Jer 32:39
Eze 11:19
Eph 4:23, 24

f De 30:15
Pr 8:36
Ac 13:46

g Jer 29:11
La 3:33
Eze 33:11
Lu 15:10
2Pe 3:9

h De 30:16

CHAP. 19

i 2Ch 36:1

j 2Ki 23:31-34
2Ch 36:4
Jer 22:11, 12

Second Col.

a Jer 22:17

b Pr 28:15

c Ps 80:8
Isa 5:7

d Isa 5:5
Eze 15:6

5 She waited and eventually saw that there was no hope for his return.

So she took another of her cubs and sent him out as a strong young lion.

6 He also walked about among the lions and became a strong young lion.

He learned how to tear prey apart, and he even devoured humans.^a

7 He prowled among their fortified towers and devastated their cities, So that the desolate land was filled with the sound of his roaring.^b

8 Nations from the surrounding districts came against him to cast their net over him,

And he was caught in their pit.

9 With hooks they put him in a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. There they confined him, so that his voice would no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.

10 Your mother was like a vine^c in your blood,* planted by waters.

It bore fruit and was full of branches because of the abundant water.

11 It developed strong branches,* fit for the scepters of rulers.

It grew and towered over the other trees, And it became visible because of its height and because of the abundance of its foliage.

12 But in fury she was uprooted^d and thrown to the earth, And an east wind dried up her fruit.

19:10 *Or possibly, “like a vine in your vineyard.” **19:11** *Or “rods.”

Her strong branches were torn off and became dry,^a and fire consumed them.^b

13 Now she is planted in the wilderness,

In a waterless, thirsty land.^c

14 The fire spread from her branches* and consumed her shoots and her fruit, And there was no strong branch left, no scepter for ruling.^d

“That is a dirge, and it will serve as a dirge.”

20 Now in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, some of the elders of Israel came and sat down before me to inquire of Jehovah. **2** Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: **3** “Son of man, speak with the elders of Israel, and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Are you coming to inquire of me? ‘As surely as I am alive, I will not respond to your inquiry,^e declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”’

4 “Are you ready to judge them? Are you ready to judge them, son of man? Make them know the detestable things that their forefathers did.^f **5** Tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “In the day I chose Israel,^g I also swore* to the offspring^h of the house of Jacob, and I made myself known to them in the land of Egypt.^b Yes, I swore to them and said, ‘I am Jehovah your God.’ **6** In that day I swore that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt to a land that I had searched out* for them, one flowing with milk and honey.ⁱ It was the most beautiful^j of

19:14 *Or “rods.” **20:4** *Or “to pronounce judgment on them?” **20:5** *Lit., “raised my hand.” #Lit., “seed.” **20:6** *Or “spied out.” #Or “the decoration.”

CHAP. 19

a 2Ki 23:34
2Ki 24:6
2Ki 25:5-7

b De 32:22
Eze 15:4

c De 28:48
Jer 17:5, 6
Jer 52:27

d Eze 17:16, 18

CHAP. 20

e Isa 1:12, 15
Eze 14:3

f Eze 16:51
Eze 22:2
Lu 11:47

g De 7:6

h Ex 4:31
Ex 6:7, 8

i Ex 3:8

Second Col.

a Le 18:3
De 29:16, 17
Jos 24:14

b Le 20:7

c Ex 32:4

d Nu 14:13-16
De 9:27, 28
1Sa 12:22

e Ex 32:11, 12
Jos 2:9, 10
Jos 9:3, 9
1Sa 4:7, 8

f Ex 13:17, 18
Ex 15:22

g De 4:8

h De 8:3
De 30:16

i Ex 20:8-10
Le 23:3, 24
Le 25:4, 11

j Ex 31:13
Ex 35:2

k Ex 32:8
Nu 14:22, 23

l Nu 14:11, 12

all the lands. **7** I then said to them, ‘Each of you must throw away the detestable things that are before your eyes; do not defile yourselves with the disgusting idols* of Egypt.^a I am Jehovah your God.’^b

8 ““But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. They did not throw away the detestable things that were before them, and they would not abandon the disgusting idols of Egypt.^c So I promised to pour out my rage on them and to unleash my anger fully against them in the land of Egypt. **9** But I acted for the sake of my name so that it would not be profaned before the nations among whom they were living.^d For I made myself known to them* before these nations when I brought them* out of the land of Egypt.^e **10** So I brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them into the wilderness.^f

11 ““I then gave them my statutes and made my judicial decisions known to them,^g so that the man who follows them may have life by them.^h **12** I also gave my sabbaths to themⁱ as a sign between me and them,^j so that they would know that I, Jehovah, am the one sanctifying them.

13 ““But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness.^k They did not walk in my statutes, and they rejected my judicial decisions, which if a man follows them, he will have life by them. They utterly profaned my sabbaths. So I promised to pour out my fury on them in the wilderness to exterminate them.^l **14** I acted for the sake of my own name so

20:7 *The Hebrew term may be related to a word for “dung” and is used as an expression of contempt. **20:9** *That is, Israel.

that it would not be profaned before the nations, in whose sight I brought them* out.^a **15** I also swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them^b—a land flowing with milk and honey,^c the most beautiful* of all the lands— **16** because they rejected my judicial decisions, they did not walk in my statutes, and they profaned my sabbaths, for their heart was following after their disgusting idols.^d

17 ““But I* felt sorry for them, and I did not destroy them; I did not exterminate them in the wilderness. **18** I said to their sons in the wilderness,^e ‘Do not walk in the regulations of your forefathers^f or keep their judgments or defile yourselves with their disgusting idols. **19** I am Jehovah your God. Walk in my statutes, and keep my judicial decisions, and carry them out.^g **20** And sanctify my sabbaths,^h and they will serve as a sign between me and you for you to know that I am Jehovah your God.’ⁱ

21 ““But the sons began to rebel against me.^j They did not walk in my statutes, and they did not observe and carry out my judicial decisions, which if a man follows them, he will have life by them. My sabbaths they profaned. So I promised to pour out my rage on them and to unleash my anger against them fully in the wilderness.^k **22** But I refrained^l and acted for the sake of my own name,^m so that it should not be profaned before the nations, in whose sight I brought them* out. **23** Also, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them

CHAP. 20

- a Jos 7:9
Eze 36:22
- b Nu 14:30
Ps 95:11
Ps 106:26, 27
- c Nu 13:26, 27
- d Ex 32:1, 4
Nu 25:1, 2
Ac 7:42
- e Nu 14:33
- f Ps 78:8
- g De 4:1
- h Jer 17:22
- i Ex 31:13
- j Nu 25:1
De 9:23
- k Isa 63:10
- l Ps 78:38
- m Ps 25:11
Ps 79:9
Jer 14:7
Da 9:19

Second Col.

- a Le 26:33
Ps 106:26, 27
- b Le 26:15, 16
- c Jer 2:7
- d Ps 81:12
- e Le 18:21
Jer 7:31
- f Jos 23:5
- g De 12:2
- h Eze 16:24, 25
- i Jg 2:19
2Ch 21:13
Jer 13:26, 27

- j De 18:10, 12
Ps 106:36-38
Jer 7:31

among the lands,^a **24** because they did not carry out my judicial decisions and they rejected my statutes,^b they profaned my sabbaths, and they followed after* the disgusting idols of their forefathers.^c **25** I also allowed them to follow regulations that were not good and judicial decisions by which they could not have life.^d **26** I let them become defiled by their own sacrifices—when they made every firstborn child pass through the fire^e—in order to make them desolate, so that they would know that I am Jehovah.”

27 “So speak to the house of Israel, O son of man, and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “In this way also, your forefathers blasphemed me by acting unfaithfully against me. **28** I brought them into the land that I swore to give them.^f When they saw all the high hills and leafy trees,^g they began offering their sacrifices and their offensive offerings. They presented the pleasing* aromas of their sacrifices and poured out their drink offerings there. **29** So I asked them, ‘What is the meaning of this high place to which you go? (It is still called High Place to this day.)’”^h

30 “Now say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Are you defiling yourselves the same way your forefathers did by going after their disgusting idols to commit spiritual prostitution with them?’ⁱ **31** And are you still defiling yourselves to this day by offering sacrifices to all your disgusting idols, making your sons pass through the fire?^j Should I at the same time re-

20:14, 22 *That is, Israel. 20:15 *Or “the decoration.” 20:17 *Lit., “my eye.”

20:24 *Lit., “their eyes were after.” 20:28 *Or “appeasing; soothing.” Lit., “restful.”

spond to your inquiry, O house of Israel?"^a

"As surely as I am alive,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'I will not respond to your inquiry.^b 32 And what you have in mind* when you say, "Let us become like the nations, like the families of the other lands, who worship[#] wood and stone,"^c it will never happen."

33 "As surely as I am alive,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'I will rule as king over you with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of rage.^d 34 I will bring you out from the peoples and collect you together out of the lands where you have been scattered with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of rage.^e 35 I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and enter into judgment with you there face-to-face.^f

36 "Just as I entered into judgment with your forefathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 37 'I will make you pass under the shepherd's staff^g and bring you under obligation to* the covenant. 38 But I will remove from you the rebels and those transgressing against me.^h For I will bring them out of the land of their foreign residence, but they will not enter the land of Israel;ⁱ and you will have to know that I am Jehovah.'

39 "As for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Each of you go and serve his disgusting idols.^j But afterward if you do not listen to me, you will no longer be able to profane my

CHAP. 20

a Isa 1:15

b Zec 7:13

c Jer 44:17

d Jer 21:5
Eze 8:18

e Isa 27:13
Eze 34:16

f Jer 2:9

g Le 27:32
Eze 34:17

h Eze 34:20, 21

i Eze 13:9

j Jg 10:14
Ps 81:12

Second Col.

a Isa 1:13
Eze 23:39

b Isa 2:2, 3
Isa 66:20

c Isa 56:7
Zec 8:22

d Mal 3:4

e Isa 11:11
Jer 23:3

f Isa 5:16
Eze 38:23

g Eze 36:23

h Eze 11:17

i Le 26:40
Eze 6:9
Eze 16:61

j Jer 31:18

holy name by your sacrifices and your disgusting idols.^a

40 "For in my holy mountain, on a high mountain of Israel,^b declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'is where the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve me in the land.^c I will take pleasure in them there, and I will require your contributions and the firstfruits of your offerings, all your holy things.^d

41 Because of the pleasing* aroma, I will take pleasure in you when I bring you out from the peoples and collect you together from the lands to which you have been scattered;^e and I will be sanctified among you before the eyes of the nations.^f

42 "And you will have to know that I am Jehovah^g when I bring you to the land of Israel,^h into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. 43 And there you will remember your conduct and all your deeds by which you defiled yourselves,ⁱ and you will loathe yourselves* because of all the bad things that you did.^j 44 Then you will have to know that I am Jehovah when I deal with you for the sake of my name,^k not according to your wicked conduct or according to your corrupted dealings, O house of Israel,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."

45 And the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: 46 "Son of man, turn your face in the direction of the southern quarter and proclaim to the south, and prophesy to the forest of the field of the south. 47 Say to the forest of the south, 'Hear the word of Jehovah. This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "Here I am setting a fire ablaze against

20:32 *Lit., "spirit." #Or "minister to; serve." 20:37 *Lit., "into the bond of."

k Ps 79:9
Eze 36:22, 23

20:41 *Or "appeasing; soothing." Lit., "restful." 20:43 *Lit., "your faces."

you,^a and it will consume every green tree and every dry tree in you. The burning flame will not be extinguished,^b and every face will be scorched by it, from south to north. **48** And all flesh* will see that I myself, Jehovah, have set it afire, so that it will not be extinguished.”^c

49 And I said: “Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! They are saying about me, ‘Is he not just speaking in riddles?’”^d

21 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** “Son of man, turn your face toward Jerusalem, and make a proclamation against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. **3** Say to the land of Israel, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am against you, and I will bring my sword out of its sheath^d and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. **4** Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be drawn from its sheath against all flesh,* from south to north. **5** All people will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have drawn my sword from its sheath. It will not go back again.”’^e

6 “And you, son of man, sigh while you* tremble, yes, sigh bitterly before them.^f **7** And if they say to you, ‘Why are you sighing?’ you will say, ‘Because of a report.’ For it will certainly come, and every heart will melt with fear and every hand will hang limp and every spirit will become dejected and every knee will drip with water.*^g ‘Look! It will certainly come—it will take place,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

20:48; 21:4 *Or “people.” 20:49 *Or “proverbial sayings?” 21:6 *Lit., “your hips.” 21:7 *That is, from urination as a result of fear.

CHAP. 20

a De 32:22
Jer 21:14

b Isa 66:24

c 2Ch 7:20
La 2:17

CHAP. 21

d Le 26:33

e Jer 23:20

f Isa 22:4
Jer 4:19
Eze 9:8

g Eze 7:15-17

Second Col.

a Isa 66:16
Jer 12:12
Am 9:4

b Ge 49:10
2Sa 7:12, 14

c Jer 25:9
Jer 51:20

d Eze 9:8
Mic 1:8

e Eze 19:1

f Jer 6:27

g 2Ki 25:7
Eze 19:14
Eze 21:26

h 2Ki 25:1, 2

i Eze 21:7

j Isa 1:24
Eze 5:13
Eze 16:42

8 The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **9** “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Say, ‘A sword! A sword^a is sharpened, and it is polished. **10** It is sharpened to inflict a great slaughter; it is polished to flash like lightning.”’^b

“Should we not rejoice?”

“Will it* reject the scepter of my own son,^b as it does every tree?

11 “‘It is given to be polished and to be wielded with the hand. This sword is sharpened and polished, to be put into the hand of an executioner.’^c

12 “‘Cry out and wail,^d son of man, for it has come against my people; it is against all the chieftains of Israel.^e These will be victims of the sword along with my people. So strike your thigh in grief. **13** For an examination has been made,^f and what will happen if the sword rejects the scepter? It* will cease to exist,^g declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

14 “And you, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands and repeat ‘A sword!’ three times. It is the sword of the slain victims, the sword of great slaughter, that surrounds them.^h

15 Their hearts will melt with fearⁱ and many will fall at their city gates; I will inflict a slaughter by the sword. Yes, it flashes like lightning and is polished for a slaughter! **16** Cut sharply to the right! Swing to the left! Go wherever your blade is directed! **17** I will also clap my hands and satisfy my rage.^j I myself, Jehovah, have spoken.”

18 And the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **19** “As for you, son of man,

21:10 *That is, Jehovah’s sword. 21:13 *Or “The scepter.”

- Song 125 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?”:** (10 min.)
 Eze 18:19, 20—Jehovah holds each person responsible for his own actions (w12 7/1 18 ¶2)
 Eze 18:21, 22—Jehovah is ready to forgive repentant ones and will never again hold their sins against them (w12 7/1 18 ¶3-7)
 Eze 18:23, 32—Jehovah destroys the wicked only as a last resort (w08 4/1 8 ¶4; w06 12/1 27 ¶11)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Eze 18:29—Why did the Israelites develop a wrong viewpoint about Jehovah, and how can we avoid making the same mistake? (w13 8/15 11 ¶9)

Eze 20:49—Why did the people think that Ezekiel was “speaking in riddles,” and what warning does this provide for us? (w07 7/1 14 ¶3)

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) Eze 20:1-12

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

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- **Talk:** (6 min. or less) w16.05 32—Theme: How Can the Congregation Express Its Joy When an Announcement Is Made That Someone Has Been Reinstated?

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 130
- **“Do You Forgive Yourself?”:** (10 min.) Discussion. Begin by playing the video *Loyally Uphold Jehovah’s Judgments—Be Forgiving*.
- **Young People Ask—How Can I Deal With My Mistakes?:** (5 min.) Discussion of the article “Young People Ask—How Can I Deal With My Mistakes?” Begin by playing the audio recording of the section “What Would You Do?” (Go to jw.org, and look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > TEENAGERS.)
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EZEKIEL 18-20 | When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?

18:21, 22

When Jehovah forgives our sins, he will never hold those sins against us in the future. The following Bible examples help us to trust in Jehovah's forgiveness.

 Write your answers in the spaces provided.



King David

Wrongdoing:

Basis for forgiveness:

Evidence of Jehovah's forgiveness:



King Manasseh

Wrongdoing:

Basis for forgiveness:

Evidence of Jehovah's forgiveness:



Apostle Peter

Wrongdoing:

Basis for forgiveness:

Evidence of Jehovah's forgiveness:

I can imitate Jehovah's forgiveness by:

July 17-23

Treasures From God's Word

Ezekiel 18:19, 20—Jehovah holds each person responsible for his own actions

Reference: *w12 7/1 18* paragraph 2.

Using the prophet Ezekiel as a spokesman, Jehovah proclaimed judgment against unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem. The nation as a whole had abandoned Jehovah's worship and filled the land with violence. Jehovah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. But in the midst of the judgment, Jehovah provided a message of hope. Each individual had a choice; each one was responsible for his own course of action.—**Verses 19, 20.**

Ezekiel 18:21, 22—Jehovah is ready to forgive repentant ones and will never again hold their sins against them

Reference: *w12 7/1 18* paragraphs 3-7.

What, then, if someone changed from doing bad to doing good? Jehovah said: "As regards someone wicked, in case he should turn back from all his sins that he has committed and he should actually keep all my statutes and execute justice and righteousness, he will positively keep living. He will not die." (Verse 21) Yes, Jehovah was "ready to forgive" a sinner who turned back from his wayward course, manifesting true repentance.—Psalm 86:5.

What about the sins he had committed? "All his transgressions that he has committed—they will not be remembered against him," Jehovah explained. (Verse 22) Notice that the repentant one's sins would "not be remembered *against him.*" Why is this significant?

In the Bible, the Hebrew word translated "remember" can mean more than just to recall the past. Regarding this word, one reference work says: "Quite often, in fact, [it] implies an action or appears in combination with verbs of action." Thus, "to remember" can mean "to act." Hence, when Jehovah says of a repentant sinner that his sins "will not be remembered against him," He is saying that He will not thereafter *act against the individual* because of those sins, such as by accusing or punishing him.

The words of **Ezekiel 18:21, 22** paint a touching picture of the extent of God's forgiveness. When Jehovah forgives our sins, he will never hold those sins against us in the future. Instead, he puts the sins of repentant ones behind him. (Isaiah 38:17) It is as if he wipes out the record of those sins.—Acts 3:19.

As imperfect humans, we need God's mercy. After all, we sin many times. (Romans 3:23) But Jehovah wants us to know that if we are sincerely repentant, he is willing to forgive. And when he forgives, he forgets—that is, he will not rehash our sins in order to accuse or punish us ever again. What a comforting thought! Does God's mercy move you to want to draw closer to him?

Ezekiel 18:23, 32—Jehovah destroys the wicked only as a last resort

Reference: *w08 4/1 8* paragraph 4.

Since God is the Judge, we can be sure that in every case the judgments against the wicked will be righteous. "Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" asked Abraham. The answer, Abraham learned, is that Jehovah is *always* right! (Genesis 18:25) Furthermore, the Bible assures us that Jehovah finds no delight in destroying the wicked; he does so only as a last resort.—Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

Reference: w06 12/1 27 paragraph 11.

In showing love to those who do not serve God, we can do no better than to imitate Jehovah himself. Though he is no lover of wickedness, he shows loving-kindness to all by extending to them the opportunity to turn back from their bad ways and receive everlasting life. (Ezekiel 18:23) Jehovah “desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) It is his will that “all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) That is why Jesus commissioned his followers to preach and to teach and to “make disciples of people of all the nations.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) By our participation in this work, we show love for both God and neighbor, yes, including even our enemies!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Ezekiel 18:29—Why did the Israelites develop a wrong viewpoint about Jehovah, and how can we avoid making the same mistake?

Reference: w13 8/15 11 paragraph 9.

We do not know all the facts. Because of not having all the facts, the Israelites in Ezekiel’s day felt that Jehovah’s way was “not adjusted right.” (Ezekiel 18:29) It was as if they had set themselves up as judges of God, putting their own standards of justice above Jehovah’s and judging him based on their own limited understanding of events. If we at times do not fully understand a Bible account or the way events develop in our own life, could we perhaps feel in our heart that the way of Jehovah is unfair, “not adjusted right”?—Job 35:2.

Ezekiel 20:49—Why did the people think that Ezekiel was “speaking in riddles,” and what warning does this provide for us?

Reference: w07 7/1 14 paragraph 3.

The response of the older men of Israel shows that they were skeptical about what Ezekiel had said. May we never develop a doubting attitude toward divine warnings.

- Song 125 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?”:** (10 min.)
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July 17-23

Apply Yourself to the Field Ministry

Return Visit: Teach the Truth

Reference: *mwb16.08* 8 paragraph 2.

If we discern interest, we can build anticipation for our next visit by leaving a publication or by showing a video from jw.org. We should try to return within a few days to build on the previous discussion. The new presentations and student assignments will be based on chapter summaries found in the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* There we can find additional questions and scriptures to help us make return visits or to conduct a study using only the Bible.

Talk: How Can the Congregation Express Its Joy When an Announcement Is Made That Someone Has Been Reinstated?

Reference: *w16.05* 32.

□ In Luke chapter 15, we find Jesus' powerful illustration about a man who had a flock of 100 sheep. When one of the sheep was missing, the man left the 99 behind in the wilderness and went after the lost sheep 'until he found it.' Jesus continued: "When he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he gets home, he calls his friends and his neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'" In conclusion, Jesus said: "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one *sinner* who repents than over 99 righteous ones who have no need of repentance."—Luke 15:4-7.

The context shows that Jesus spoke these words in order to correct the thinking of the scribes and the Pharisees, who criticized him for associating with tax collectors and sinners. (Luke 15:1-3) Jesus pointed out that there is joy in heaven when a sinner has come to repentance. We ask, 'Since there is joy in heaven, should there not also be joy on earth when a sinner has repented, turned around, and made straight paths for his feet?'—[Hebrews 12:13](#).

When someone is reinstated in the congregation, we have good reason to rejoice. The person will have to keep on maintaining his integrity to God, but he had to be repentant in order to be reinstated, and we are glad that he repented. Accordingly, there may well be spontaneous, dignified applause when the elders make an announcement of a reinstatement.

Be Forgiving

(Psalm 86:5)

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

Lov - ing - ly Je - ho - vah Made pro - vi - sion through his Son
 We re - ceive such mer - cy When we act like God a - bove
 Mer - cy is a vir - tue That we all should cul - ti - vate.

B \flat /D Cm11 B \flat /D E \flat F7sus4

For our sins to be for - giv - en And for death to be un - done.
 And for - give each oth - er free - ly, Show - ing em - pa - thy and love.
 It will keep us from re - sent - ment, From the bit - ter - ness of hate.

F7 B \flat Cm7 B \flat /D F/E \flat E \flat Cm Dm7 Cm/E \flat Cm7 F

If we tru - ly are re - pen - tant, His for - give - ness we can claim
 Put - ting up with one an - oth - er, Put - ting hurt - ful - ness a - way;
 When we im - i - tate Je - ho - vah, Who is un - sur - passed in love,

D7sus4 D7 Gm9 Gm E \flat m/G \flat B \flat /F F7sus4 F7 B \flat

On the ba - sis of Christ's ran - som, Ask - ing par - don in his name.
 Show - ing hon - or to our broth - er, Show - ing love's sur - pass - ing way.
 We will tru - ly be for - giv - ing; We will be like God a - bove.

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- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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July 17-23
Living as Christians
Young People Ask
How Can I Deal With My Mistakes?

What would I do?

Three reasons to admit your mistakes

How to learn from your mistakes

What would *you* do?

Read what happened to Karina, and imagine that it's happening to you. What would *you* do in her situation?

Karina: "I was driving too fast on my way to school, and a policeman pulled me over and gave me a ticket. I was so upset! I told Mom, and she told me that I'd have to tell Dad—which I did *not* want to do."

What would you do?

Option A: Keep it quiet, and hope that Dad never finds out.

Option B: Tell Dad exactly what happened.

You could be tempted to select Option A. After all, maybe your mom will just assume that you went to your dad and confessed. But there are good reasons for you to come clean about your mistakes—whether they involve a traffic ticket or anything else.

8 A wave of persecution followed. (**Read 2 Timothy 3: 12.**) Witnesses faced harassment and assault. Religious literature was confiscated; renting or building houses of worship was severely restricted. Imagine how our brothers and sisters felt as they faced those hardships! The Witnesses had applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2001, and they submitted additional information to the Court in 2004. In 2010, the ECHR reached its decision. The Court saw clearly that religious intolerance was behind Russia’s ban on the Witnesses and ruled that there was no reason to uphold the decisions of the lower courts, since there had been no evidence of wrongdoing on the part of any Witnesses. The Court further noted that the ban was designed to strip the Witnesses of their legal rights. The Court’s decision upheld the Witnesses’ right of freedom of religion. Although various Russian authorities have failed to comply with the ECHR ruling, God’s people in that land have drawn great courage from such victories.

9 Greece. In 1983, Titos Manoussakis rented a room in Heraklion, Crete, so that a small group of Jehovah’s Witnesses could meet there for worship. (Heb. 10:24, 25) Soon, though, an Orthodox priest filed a complaint with government authorities, protesting the Witnesses’ use of the room for worship. Why? Simply because the Witnesses’ beliefs differ from those of the Orthodox Church! Authorities initiated criminal proceedings against Titos Manoussakis and three other local Witnesses. They were fined and sentenced to two months’ imprisonment. As loyal citizens of God’s Kingdom, the Witnesses considered the court’s judgment to be a violation of their freedom to worship, so they pursued their case through the domestic courts and eventually applied to the ECHR.

10 Finally, in 1996, the ECHR delivered a stunning blow to opposers of pure worship. The Court noted that “Jehovah’s Witnesses come within the definition of ‘known religion’ as provided for under Greek law” and that the lower courts’ decisions had a “direct effect on applicants’ freedom of religion.” The Court further found that it was not up to the government of Greece to “determine whether religious beliefs or the means used to express such beliefs are legitimate.” The sentences against the Witnesses were overturned, and their freedom of worship was upheld!

11 Did that victory settle matters in Greece? Sadly, no. In 2012, a similar case was finally settled in Kassandria, Greece, after a nearly 12-year-long legal battle. In this

9-11. In Greece, how have Jehovah’s people struggled for the freedom to worship together, and what have been the results?



Titos Manoussakis
(See paragraph 9)

12, 13. In France, how have opposers tried to frame “trouble in the name of the law,” and with what result?

14. How can you play a part in the fight for freedom of worship?

You can pray regularly for your spiritual brothers and sisters who are currently suffering on account of legal injustices

case the opposition was mounted by an Orthodox bishop. The Council of State, the highest administrative court of Greece, settled the matter in favor of God’s people. The decision cited Greece’s own constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and refuted the oft repeated charge that Jehovah’s Witnesses are not a known religion. The Court stated: “The doctrines of ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’ are not hidden and, consequently, they profess a known religion.” Members of the small congregation in Kassandreia rejoice that they are now able to hold meetings for worship in their own Kingdom Hall.

12 France. Some opposers of God’s people have used the tactic of “framing trouble in the name of the law.” (**Read Psalm 94:20.**) For example, in the mid-1990’s, tax authorities in France began an audit of the finances of the *Association Les Témoins de Jéhovah* (ATJ), one of the legal entities under which Jehovah’s Witnesses operate in France. The minister of the budget revealed the true objective of the audit: “The audit could lead to judicial liquidation or criminal proceedings . . . , which would likely destabilize the association’s operations or force it to cease its activities in our territory.” Although the audit turned up no irregularities, the tax authorities levied a crippling tax against ATJ. If successful, the tactic would have left our brothers with little choice but to close the branch office and sell the buildings in order to pay the huge tax. It was a heavy blow, but God’s people did not give up. The Witnesses vigorously protested this unjust treatment, ultimately submitting the case to the ECHR in 2005.

13 The Court handed down its judgment on June 30, 2011. It reasoned that the right to freedom of religion should prevent the State, except in extreme cases, from assessing the legitimacy of religious beliefs or the way they are expressed. Further, the Court stated: “The taxation . . . had the effect of cutting off the association’s vital resources, thereafter preventing it from ensuring its adherents the free exercise of their worship in its practical aspects.” The Court unanimously decided in favor of Jehovah’s Witnesses! To the delight of Jehovah’s people, the French government finally returned the tax levied against ATJ with interest and, in compliance with the Court’s order, removed the liens on the branch property.

14 Like Esther and Mordecai of old, Jehovah’s people today fight for the freedom to worship Jehovah in the way that

he has commanded. (Esther 4:13-16) Can you have a part? Yes. You can pray regularly for your spiritual brothers and sisters who are currently suffering on account of legal injustices. Such prayers can be a powerful aid to our brothers and sisters under hardship and persecution. **(Read James 5:16.)** Does Jehovah act on such prayers? Our victories in court suggest that he certainly does!—Heb. 13:18, 19.

Freedom to Choose Medical Treatment in Harmony With Our Beliefs

15 As we noted in Chapter 11, citizens of God’s Kingdom have received clear Scriptural guidance to avoid the misuse of blood, which has become so common today. (Gen. 9:5, 6; Lev. 17:11; **read Acts 15:28, 29.**) Although we do not accept blood transfusions, we want the best medical care possible for ourselves and our loved ones as long as such treatment does not conflict with God’s laws. The highest courts of many nations have recognized that people have the right to choose or to refuse medical treatment as their conscience and religious beliefs require. In some lands, however, God’s people have faced daunting challenges in this regard. Consider some examples.

16 Japan. Misae Takeda, a 63-year-old housewife in Japan, needed major surgery. As a loyal citizen of God’s Kingdom, she made clear to her doctor that she wanted to be treated without blood. Yet, months later, she was shocked to learn that she had been given a blood transfusion during her surgery. Feeling violated and deceived, Sister Takeda filed a lawsuit against the doctors and the hospital in June 1993. This modest, soft-spoken woman had unshakable faith. She gave bold testimony before a full courtroom, remaining on the witness stand for over an hour despite her failing strength. She appeared in court for the last time just a month before she died. Do we not admire her courage and faith? Sister Takeda said that she constantly petitioned Jehovah for his blessing on her fight. She was confident that her prayers would be answered. Were they?

17 Three years after Sister Takeda died, the Supreme Court of Japan ruled in her favor—agreeing that it was wrong to give her a blood transfusion against her express wishes. The February 29, 2000, decision stated that “the right to decide” in such cases “must be respected as personal rights.” Thanks to Sister Takeda’s determination to fight for her freedom to choose medical treatment in harmony with her Bible-trained conscience, Witnesses in Japan

15. What factors do God’s people take into account regarding the use of blood?

16, 17. What medical treatment did a sister in Japan receive that proved shocking to her, and how were her prayers answered?



Pablo Albarracini
(See paragraphs 18 to 20)

18-20. (a) How did a court of appeals in Argentina uphold a person's right to refuse blood transfusions through use of a medical directive? (b) Regarding the misuse of blood, how might we show submission to Christ's leadership?

21-24. (a) How did the Supreme Court of Canada come to make a remarkable decision regarding minors and the use of blood? (b) How might this case encourage young servants of Jehovah?



April Cadoreth
(See paragraphs 21 to 24)

can now receive medical treatment without the fear of a forced blood transfusion.

18 Argentina. How can citizens of the Kingdom prepare in case a medical decision needs to be made while they are unconscious? We can carry on our person a legal document that will speak for us, as Pablo Albarracini did. In May 2012, he was the victim of an attempted robbery and was shot multiple times. He was admitted to the hospital unconscious and was thus unable to explain his stand regarding blood transfusions. However, he had with him a duly executed medical directive he had signed more than four years earlier. Although his condition was serious and some doctors felt that to save his life, blood transfusion was necessary, the medical staff was prepared to honor his wishes. However, Pablo's father, who was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, obtained a court order to overturn his son's wishes.

19 The attorney representing Pablo's wife immediately filed an appeal. Within hours, the court of appeals overturned the lower court's order and ruled that the patient's wishes, as expressed in the medical directive, should be respected. Pablo's father appealed to Argentina's Supreme Court. However, the Supreme Court could find "no reasons to doubt that [Pablo's medical directive expressing his refusal of a blood transfusion] was formulated with discernment, intention and freedom." The Court stated: "Every capable and adult person has the ability to grant advance directives on [his] health, and may accept or reject certain medical treatments . . . These directives must be accepted by the doctor in charge."

20 Brother Albarracini has since recovered fully. He and his wife are grateful that he had completed a medical directive. By taking that simple—yet important—step, he showed his submission to Christ's rulership through God's Kingdom. Have you and your family taken similar measures?

21 Canada. Generally, courts recognize the rights of parents to determine the best medical care for their children. At times, courts have even ruled that a mature minor should be accorded respect when it comes to making medical decisions. That was true of April Cadoreth. At the age of 14, April was admitted to a hospital with severe internal bleeding. A few months earlier, she had completed an Advance Medical Directive card with written instructions that blood transfusions should not be administered to her even in the event of an emergency. The attending physician chose to ignore April's clearly expressed wishes and sought

Throw Your Burden on Jehovah

(Psalm 55)

Eb Eb/G Abma7 Fm/Ab Eb/Bb Bb Ebsus4 Eb
 "Lis - ten to my prayer," Je - ho - vah.
 Had I wings just as a dove has,
 Com - fort from our God, Je - ho - vah,

Ab Bb/Ab Eb/G Fm/Bb Bb Ab/Eb Bb7/Eb Eb
 Let your - self be found by me.
 Far from dan - ger I would fly,
 Al - ways brings us peace of mind.

Eb Fm/D G7 Cm G7/B Eb/Bb F/A
 Feel the an - guish deep in - side me;
 Safe from those who seek to hurt me,
 He will help us bear our bur - den.

Eb/Bb Eb/G Abma7 Fm/Ab Eb/Bb Bb7 Ebsus4 Eb
 Help me un - a - fraid to be.
 Shel - tered from their hate - ful cry.
 He is lov - ing; he is kind.

Throw Your Burden on Jehovah

Chorus

B B^o C#m7 F# B/D# F#7sus4 F#7 E/B B C#m/B B

Throw your bur - den on Je - ho - vah;

Ema7 F#9/E B/D# F#7sus4 F#7 Bsus4 B Bb7sus4 Bb7

Trust in him to sus - tain and save you.

Eb Abma7 Bb/Ab Eb/G Bb7/F Eb Fm7 Fm6

He will al - ways give pro - tec - tion.

Eb/G Abma7 Fm/Ab Eb/Bb Bb7 Eb

He is loy - al; he is true.

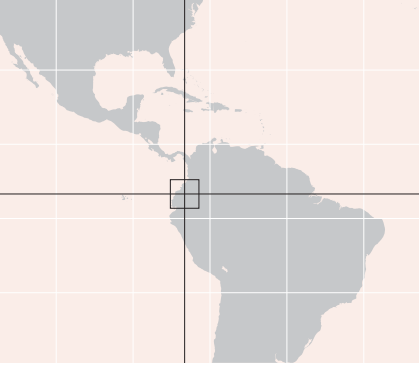
MAY 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JULY 3-30, 2017



COVER IMAGE:
ECUADOR

A regular pioneer shares the Bible's message in the Quichua (Imbabura) language with a vendor at a crafts market in the city of Otavalo in northern Ecuador.

PUBLISHERS
90,110

BIBLE STUDIES
148,637

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2016)
274,593

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 WEEK OF **JULY 3-9**
**Helping “Foreign Residents”
to “Serve Jehovah With Rejoicing”**

8 WEEK OF **JULY 10-16**
**Helping the Children
of “Foreign Residents”**

The first of these articles discusses the difficult situation of our brothers and sisters who have become refugees, and it provides practical suggestions on how we can best help them. The second article considers how applying Bible principles will help immigrant parents to make decisions that will benefit their children.

13 LIFE STORY
**Being Deaf Has Not Held Me Back
From Teaching Others**

17 WEEK OF **JULY 17-23**
Do Not Let Your Love Grow Cold

22 WEEK OF **JULY 24-30**
“Do You Love Me More Than These?”

Living in this system of things is not easy for any of Jehovah's servants. These articles show how we can fight against the selfish spirit of the world by preserving our love for Jehovah, for Bible truth, and for our brothers. The articles also discuss how we can have affection for Christ rather than for the things of this world.

27 **How Gaius Helped His Brothers**

30 **The Joy of Leading a Simple Life**

31 FROM OUR ARCHIVES

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May 2017

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He Will Make You Strong

(1 Peter 5:10)

D Bm G A D

There was a rea - son why God brought the truth to you And
God gave his own be - lov - ed Son in your be - half; On

G A Bm Em7 Asus4 A

called you from the dark - ness to the light. With - in your
this ac - count, He wants you to suc - ceed. If He did

D Bm G Em/G F#sus4 F#

heart, he saw the long - ing that you had To
not with - hold the gift of His dear Son, Then

Bm9 Bm Bm9/A Bm/A G

search for him and prac - tice what is right. You
nev - er doubt He'll give the strength you need. He

He Will Make You Strong

G D/F# Em Em/D

prom - ised him in prayer to do his will; He
won't for - get the faith and love you've shown; He

Em/C# F#7+5 Bm D/A G Dma7/F# Em11 A7sus4 *Chorus*

helped you then, and he will help you still. With
will not fail to care for all His own.

D Em11 D/F# G D/F#

Je - sus' blood He bought you, to God you now be - long. So

Em/C# F#7 Bm D/E E7 G/A A7

he will make you firm, and he will make you strong. He'll

He Will Make You Strong

D A/C# Bm7 D/A A/G G Dadd9/F#

guide you and pro - tect you, as he has all a - long. Yes,

Gadd9/B Gm/Bb D/A A7sus4 A7

he will make you firm, and he will make you

D

strong.



Do Not Let Your Love Grow Cold

“Because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold.”—MATT. 24:12.

ONE facet of the sign that Jesus gave regarding “the conclusion of the system of things” was that “the love of the greater number [would] grow cold.” (Matt. 24:3, 12) In the first century, the Jews, who claimed to be God’s people, allowed their love for God to grow cold.

² On the other hand, most Christians at that time kept busy “declaring the good news about the Christ” and showing love for God, for fellow Christians, and for unbelievers. (Acts 2:44-47; 5:42) Nevertheless, some of Jesus’ followers in the first century did allow their love to grow cold.

³ Speaking to first-century Christians living in Ephesus, the resurrected Jesus Christ said: “I hold this against you, that you have left the love you had at first.” (Rev. 2:4) What may have been one reason for this? These early disciples of Christ

- 1, 2. (a) To whom did Jesus’ words at Matthew 24:12 initially apply? (b) How does the book of Acts indicate that most early Christians kept showing love? (See opening picture.)
3. What may have caused the love of some Christians to grow cold?

SONGS: 38, 128

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How can we keep our love for Jehovah strong?

How can we deepen our love for Bible truth?

Why is it important to have affection for our brothers?

may have been influenced by the fleshly-minded world. (Eph. 2:2, 3) Like many cities today, first-century Ephesus was filled with vice. It was a fabulously wealthy city in which people placed much emphasis on luxuries, leisure, and comfortable living. Selfish pleasures evidently crowded out unselfish love. In addition, brazen conduct and gross immorality were rampant.

⁴ Jesus' prophecy about diminishing love extends to our day. People today have less and less love for God. Millions have turned their backs on him and look to human institutions to solve mankind's problems. Hence, among people who do not worship Jehovah God, love continues to grow cold. Still, as conditions in the first-century congregation in Ephesus illustrate, true Christians today could become complacent and allow *their* love to falter. We will now consider three areas in which our love could be tested: (1) Love for Jehovah, (2) love for Bible truth, (3) and love for our brothers.

LOVE FOR JEHOVAH

⁵ Earlier on the same day that Jesus warned about the loss of love, he emphasized the most important love of all. He said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment." (Matt. 22:37, 38) Indeed, having deep love for God helps us to obey Jehovah's commandments, to endure, and to hate what is bad. **(Read**

4. (a) In what ways has love grown cold in our day? (b) In what three areas could our love be tested?

5. Why must we have love for God?

Psalm 97:10.) However, Satan and his world strive to undermine our love for God.

⁶ The world around us has a distorted view of love. Rather than direct love to the Creator, people are "lovers of themselves." (2 Tim. 3:2) This world ruled by Satan fosters "the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life." (1 John 2:16) The apostle Paul warned fellow Christians against pleasing the flesh, saying: "Setting the mind on the flesh means death . . . because setting the mind on the flesh means enmity with God." (Rom. 8:6, 7) Indeed, those who have spent their lives on pursuing material things or gratifying sexual desires have ended up disappointed and deeply hurt.—1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10.

⁷ In some lands, outspoken atheists, agnostics, and evolutionists promote ideas designed to erode not just love for God but also belief in him. They have convinced many that a person must be either naive or unintelligent to believe in a Creator. At the same time, scientists are revered, which draws the attention of the people away from our Creator. (Rom. 1:25) If we give ear to such teachings, we could drift away from Jehovah, and our love could grow cold.—Heb. 3:12.

⁸ Succumbing to discouragement can also weaken our faith and cause our love for God to grow cold. In this wicked sys-

6. What has resulted from the loss of love for God?

7. What dangers are faced by Christ's followers today?

8. (a) Many of Jehovah's people face what discouraging circumstances? (b) What assurance do we find in Psalm 136?

tem controlled by Satan, all of us at times face discouraging circumstances. (1 John 5:19) Perhaps we are presently confronted with problems caused by old age, poor health, or economic pressures. Or we may be struggling with feelings of inadequacy, with unfulfilled expectations, or with personal failings. Yet, we should never allow such circumstances or feelings to convince us that Jehovah has left us. Instead, we should meditate on reassuring words about Jehovah's enduring love for us. We find such words at Psalm 136:23, which states: "He remembered us when we were low, for his loyal love endures forever." Indeed, Jehovah's loyal love for his servants is constant. Therefore, we can be sure that he hears our "pleas for help" and responds to them.—Ps. 116:1; 136:24-26.

⁹ Like the psalmist, Paul found strength in reflecting on Jehovah's constant support. Paul wrote: "Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6) That firm confidence in Jehovah's loving care helped Paul to grapple with life's problems. He did not allow negative circumstances to weigh him down. In fact, while he was a prisoner, Paul wrote several encouraging letters. (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:7; Philem. 1) Yes, even when he was sorely tried, Paul maintained his love for God. What gave him the strength to do so? He kept leaning on "the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials." (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) How can we imitate Paul's example and keep our love for Jehovah strong?

9. What gave Paul the strength to maintain his love for God?

¹⁰ One principal way to keep our love for Jehovah strong is stated by Paul himself. He wrote to fellow believers: "Pray constantly." Later he wrote: "Persevere in prayer." (1 Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12) Communication through prayer is the foundation of a close relationship with God. (Ps. 86:3) When we take sufficient time to express to Jehovah our deepest thoughts and innermost feelings, we cannot help but be drawn closer to our heavenly Father, the "Hearer of prayer." (Ps. 65:2) In addition, when we discern that Jehovah answers our prayers, our love for him grows. We come to realize ever more that "Jehovah is near to all those calling on him." (Ps. 145:18) That confidence in Jehovah's loving support will help us to cope with further tests of faith.

LOVE FOR BIBLE TRUTH

¹¹ As Christians, we cherish and embrace truth. God's Word is the ultimate source of truth. In prayer to his Father, Jesus said: "Your word is truth." (John 17:17) Therefore, love for truth starts with gaining an accurate knowledge of God's Word. (Col. 1:10) However, more is involved than simply acquiring head knowledge. Note how the inspired writer of Psalm 119 helps us to understand what it means to love Bible truth. (**Read Psalm 119:97-100.**) Do we take the time to ponder, or dwell on, Scriptural passages throughout the day? Our appreciation for Bible truth will grow when we meditate on ways we benefit from applying it in our lives.

10. How can we keep our love for Jehovah strong?

11, 12. How can we develop a deep love for Bible truth?



Show love for Jehovah
(See paragraph 10)



Show love for Bible truth
(See paragraph 14)

¹² The psalmist went on to say: “How sweet your sayings are to my palate, more so than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103) Similarly, we can savor the tasty Bible-based spiritual food that we receive from God’s organization. We can allow it to linger on our figurative palate so that we can recall the “delightful words” of truth and use them to help others.—Eccl. 12:10.

¹³ The prophet Jeremiah loved Scriptural truth. Notice the effect that God’s words had on his heart. “Your words were found, and I ate them; and your word became to me the exultation and the rejoicing of my heart, for your name has been called on me, O Jehovah God of armies.” (Jer. 15:16) Jeremiah figuratively ate and digested God’s precious words by meditating on them. In that way he developed a heartfelt appreciation for the privilege of having God’s name called on him. Has our love for Bi-

13. What helped Jeremiah to love Scriptural truth, and how did it affect him?

ble truth moved us to recognize the unique privilege we have to bear God’s name and to proclaim his Kingdom in this time of the end?

¹⁴ Besides reading the Bible and our Bible-based publications, how else can we develop a deep love for Bible truth? We can enhance our love for Bible truth by regularly attending congregation meetings. The weekly study of the Bible with the help of *The Watchtower* is a principal means by which we are taught. To get the sense of the subject that is considered, we need to prepare well for each *Watchtower* Study. One way we can do so is by looking up each of the cited Bible texts. Nowadays, *The Watchtower* can be downloaded from the *jw.org* website or viewed on the *JW Library* app in many languages. Some electronic formats allow us to access quickly the cited texts from each study article. But whatever method we use, reading

14. How can we enhance our love for Bible truth?



Show love for the brothers and sisters
(See paragraph 17)

these scriptures carefully and meditating on them will deepen our love for Bible truth.—**Read Psalm 1:2.**

LOVE FOR OUR BROTHERS

¹⁵ On his last night on earth, Jesus said to his disciples: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:34, 35.

¹⁶ Having love for our brothers and sisters is linked to the love we have for Jehovah. In fact, we cannot have one without the other. The apostle John wrote: “The one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20) Furthermore, our love for Jehovah and our brothers is linked to our love for

15, 16. (a) According to John 13:34, 35, what obligation do we have? (b) How is the love we have for our brothers linked to our love for God and the Bible?

the Bible. Why? Because love for Bible truth moves us to obey from the heart the Scriptural commandments to love God and to love our brothers.—1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:21.

¹⁷ **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 10.** What are some examples of practical ways in which we can show love in our congregation? An elderly brother or sister may be in need of transportation to Christian meetings. A widow may need help with some repairs on her home. (Jas. 1:27) Whether young or old, brothers and sisters who are discouraged or depressed or who face other trials need our attention, encouragement, and comfort. (Prov. 12:25; Col. 4:11) We give proof that we truly love our brothers when we show by words and deeds that we have deep concern for “those related to us in the faith.”—Gal. 6:10.

¹⁸ The Bible foretold that “the last days” of this wicked system of things would be marked by a spirit of selfishness and greed. (2 Tim. 3:1, 2) As Christians, we must therefore work hard to grow in our love for God, for Bible truth, and for one another. True, we may at times have minor disagreements with fellow believers. However, what a blessing it is for all in the congregation when love motivates us to settle any differences in a loving manner! (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:14) So may we never allow our love to grow cold! Rather, may we continue to have intense love for Jehovah, his Word, and our brothers.

17. What are some ways in which we can show love?

18. What will help us to overcome minor disagreements with fellow believers?

Enduring to the End

(Matthew 24:13)

E♭ B♭7 E♭ B♭7/D E♭ E♭sus4 E♭ E♭/G Fm/A♭ A♭ B♭7 E♭

God's Word and all it prom - is - es Give rea - son to en - dure.
Main - tain the love you had at first, Which some - how could be lost.
All those en - dur - ing to the end Are those who will be saved.

B♭7 E♭ D°7 Cm/E♭ G7/D Cm Fm/A♭ A♭ma7 B♭ B♭7 E♭

The things you've learned and come to love Are all well - found - ed and sure.
De - spite the tri - als you will meet, En - dure no mat - ter the cost.
The book of life will list their names, A rec - ord clear - ly en - graved.

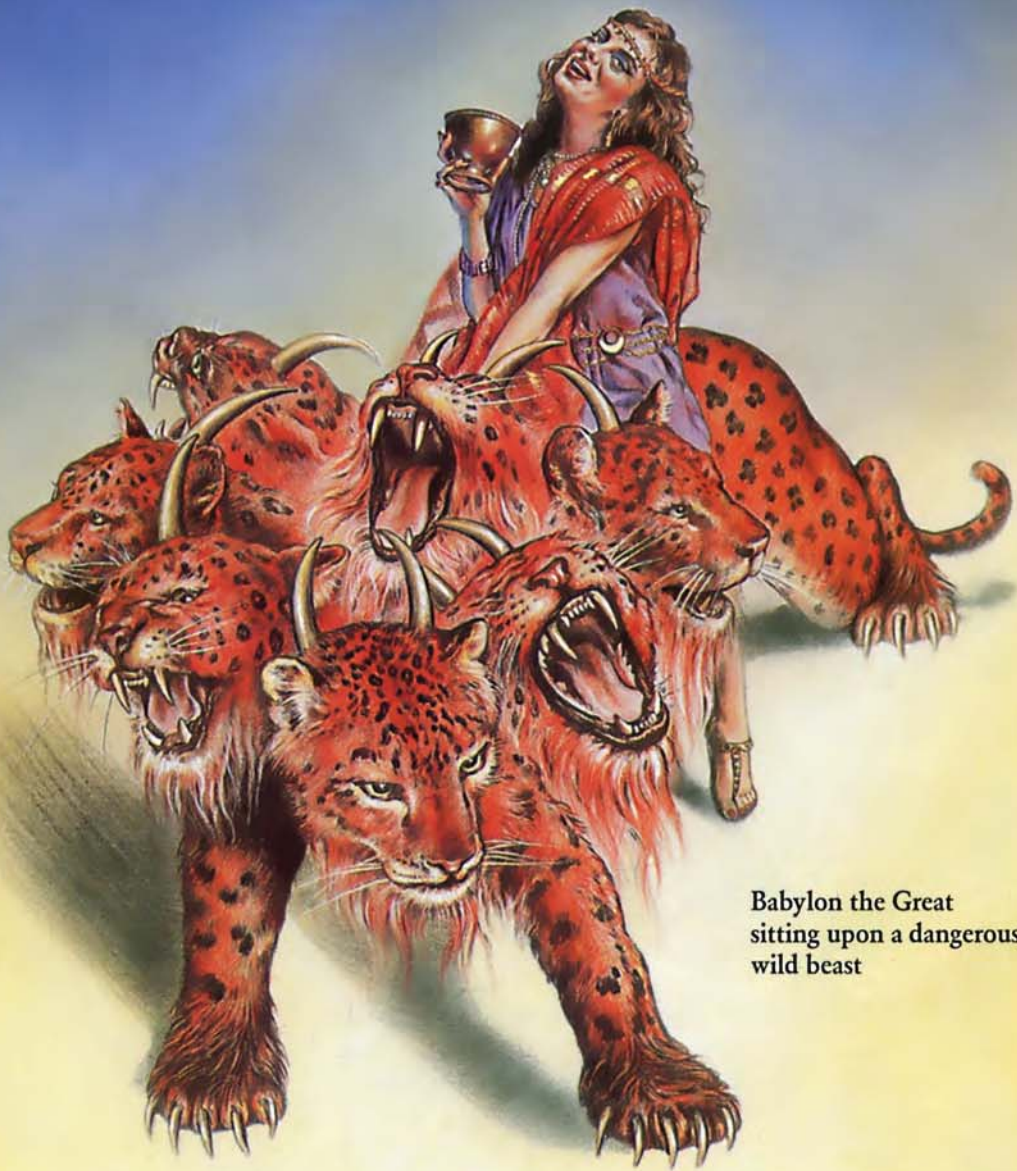
A♭ E♭/B♭ A♭/C A° E♭/B♭ B♭7 E♭ Fm/C C7 Fm E♭/G Fm/A♭ F7/A B♭

Be sta - bi - lized in ho - ly faith, Keep - ing God's day close in mind.
What - ev - er test may come your way, Nev - er yield to doubt or fear.
So let en - dur - ance be your aim; Let it have its work com - plete.

B♭7/D E♭ B♭7 E♭ B♭7/D E♭ E♭sus4 E♭ A♭ E♭/G Fm/A♭ E♭/B♭ B♭7 E♭

Stand firm in your in - teg - ri - ty; By tests you will be re - fined.
Je - ho - vah will pro - vide es - cape, Our God ev - er will be near.
Je - ho - vah's fa - vor you will know; With joy you will be re - plete.

(See also Heb. 6:19; Jas. 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:12; Rev. 2:4.)



**Babylon the Great
sitting upon a dangerous
wild beast**

wild beast. (Revelation 13:14, 15) John now sees the living, breathing image. It pictures the League of Nations organization that the two-horned wild beast brought to life in 1920. U.S. President Wilson had envisioned that the League “would be a forum for the dispensation of justice for all men and wipe out the threat of war forever.” When it was resurrected after the second world war as the United Nations, its chartered purpose was “to maintain international peace and security.”

JUDGING THE INFAMOUS HARLOT

¹⁷ In what way is this symbolic wild beast full of blasphemous names? In that men have set up this multinational idol as a substitute for God’s Kingdom—to accomplish what God says his Kingdom alone can accomplish. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 12:18, 21) What is remarkable about John’s

17. (a) In what way is the symbolic scarlet-colored wild beast full of blasphemous names? (b) Who is riding the scarlet-colored wild beast? (c) How did Babylonish religion link itself with the League of Nations and its successor right from the beginning?

241