

- Song 82 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- “Lessons Learned From Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount”: (10 min.)

Mt 5:3—Happiness results from being conscious of our spiritual need (*nwtsty* study note)

Mt 5:7—Happiness results from being merciful and compassionate (*nwtsty* study note)

Mt 5:9—Happiness results from being a peacemaker (*nwtsty* study note; *w07* 12/1 17)

- Digging for Spiritual Gems: (8 min.)

Mt 4:9—Satan tried to tempt Jesus to do what? (*nwtsty* study note)

Mt 4:23—What are two important activities that Jesus engaged in? (*nwtsty* study note)

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) Mt 5:31-48

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- Initial Call: (2 min. or less) See p. 1.
- First Return Visit Video: (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- Talk: (6 min. or less) *w16.03* 31-32—Theme: Did Satan Physically Take Jesus to the Temple When Tempting Him?

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 130
- Happy Are Those Who Have Been Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake: (9 min.) Play the video *The Namgungs: Imprisoned for Their Faith*, and then discuss the lessons learned (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES).
- “First Make Your Peace With Your Brother—How?": (6 min.) Discussion. Consider why only the last action in each list is correct.
- Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) *jy* chap. 3
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 141 and Prayer


MATTHEW 4-5 | Lessons Learned From Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount

5:3

Are you conscious of your spiritual need?

The phrase “those conscious of their spiritual need” literally means “those who are beggars for the spirit.” (Mt 5:3; *ftn.*) We can show our eagerness to receive spiritual help from God by . . .

- reading the Bible every day
- preparing for and attending Christian meetings
- reading our publications and, as time allows, material on our website
- watching each month’s program on JW Broadcasting

 How can I improve my routine of taking in spiritual food?



“Let Your Light Shine”

(Matthew 5:16)

1. Jesus has commanded
That we shine our light,
Like the sun, impartial,
Comforting and bright.
Through the Holy Scriptures,
Thoughts of peace are heard.
May we now reflect his light
As we teach God’s Word.
2. Let God’s Kingdom message
Speak to ev’ry heart;
Let it shine before us
As we play our part.
Light from Scripture guides us
As we bring good news.
Sharing truth with ev’ryone;
Truth is theirs to choose.
3. Light from acts of kindness
Brightens up this world,
To our words adds beauty
Like a priceless pearl.
May our light keep shining
As we do what’s right,
Then our works will always be
Pleasing in God’s sight.

in order to be baptized by him.^a

14 But the latter tried to prevent him, saying: "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me?"

15 Jesus replied to him: "Let it be this time, for in that way it is suitable for us to carry out all that is righteous." Then he quit preventing him. **16** After being baptized, Jesus immediately came up from the water; and look! the heavens were opened up,^b and he saw God's spirit descending like a dove and coming upon him.^c **17** Look! Also, a voice from the heavens^d said: "This is my Son,^e the beloved, whom I have approved."^f

4 Then Jesus was led by the spirit up into the wilderness to be tempted^g by the Devil.^h

2 After he had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, he felt hungry. **3** And the Tempterⁱ approached and said to him: "If you are a son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." **4** But he answered: "It is written: 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from Jehovah's* mouth.'"^j

5 Then the Devil took him along into the holy city,^k and he stationed him on the battlement* of the temple^l **6** and said to him: "If you are a son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written: 'He will give his angels a command concerning you,' and, 'They will carry you on their hands, so that you may not strike your foot against a stone.'"^m **7** Jesus said to him: "Again it is written: 'You must not put Jehovah* your God to the test.'"ⁿ

8 Again the Devil took him along to an unusually high mountain and showed him all the

4:4, 7, 10 *See App. A5. 4:5 *Or "parapet; highest point."

MATTHEW 3:14-4:22

kingdoms of the world and their glory.^a **9** And he said to him: "All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me." **10** Then Jesus said to him: "Go away, Satan! For it is written: 'It is Jehovah* your God you must worship,^b and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'"^c **11** Then the Devil left him,^d and look! angels came and began to minister to him.^e

12 Now when he heard that John had been arrested,^f he withdrew into Gal'i-lee.^g **13** Further, after leaving Naz'a-reth, he came and took up residence in Ca-per'na-um^h beside the sea in the districts of Zeb'u-lun and Naph'ta-li, **14** so as to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, who said: **15** "O land of Zeb'u-lun and land of Naph'ta-li, along the road of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Gal'i-lee of the nations! **16** The people sitting in darkness saw a great light, and as for those sitting in a region of deathly shadow, lightⁱ rose on them."^j **17** From that time on, Jesus began preaching and saying: "Re-pent, for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near."^k

18 Walking alongside the Sea of Gal'i-lee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter,^l and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.^m **19** And he said to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."ⁿ **20** At once they abandoned their nets and followed him.^o **21** Going on from there, he saw two others who were brothers, James the son of Zeb'e-dee and his brother John.^p They were in the boat with Zeb'e-dee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.^q **22** At once they left the boat and their father and followed him.

MATTHEW 4:23-5:21

23 Then he went throughout the whole of Gal'i-lee,^a teaching in their synagogues^b and preaching the good news of the Kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity among the people.^c

24 And the report about him spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all those who were suffering with various diseases and torments,^d those who were demon-possessed^e and epileptic^f and paralyzed, and he cured them. **25** Consequently, large crowds followed him from Gal'i-lee and De·cap'o·lis* and Jerusalem and Ju·de'a and from the other side of the Jordan.

5 When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** Then he opened his mouth and began teaching them, saying:

3 "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need,^{*g} since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.

4 "Happy are those who mourn, since they will be comforted.^h

5 "Happy are the mild-tempered,^{*i} since they will inherit the earth.^j

6 "Happy are those hungering and thirsting^k for righteousness, since they will be filled.^{*l}

7 "Happy are the merciful,^m since they will be shown mercy.

8 "Happy are the pure in heart,ⁿ since they will see God.

9 "Happy are the peace-makers,^{*o} since they will be called sons of God.

10 "Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake,^p since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.

4:25 *Or "the Ten City Region." 5:3

*Or "those who are beggars for the spirit." 5:5 *Or "meek." 5:6 *Or "satisfied." 5:9 *Or "peaceable."

11 “Happy are you when people reproach you^a and persecute you^b and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake.^c **12** Rejoice and be overjoyed,^d since your reward^e is great in the heavens, for in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you.^f

13 “You are the salt^g of the earth, but if the salt loses its strength, how will its saltiness be restored? It is no longer usable for anything except to be thrown outside^h to be trampled on by men.

14 “You are the light of the world.ⁱ A city cannot be hid when located on a mountain.

15 People light a lamp and set it, not under a basket,* but on the lampstand, and it shines on all those in the house.^j **16** Likewise, let your light shine before men,^k so that they may see your fine works^l and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.^m

17 “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill.ⁿ **18** Truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one stroke of a letter to pass away from the Law until all things take place.^o

19 Whoever, therefore, breaks one of these least commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in relation to the Kingdom of the heavens. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in relation to the Kingdom of the heavens. **20** For I say to you that if your righteousness does not surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees,^p you will by no means enter into the Kingdom of the heavens.^q

21 “You heard that it was said to those of ancient times: ‘You must not murder,^r but whoever

5:15 *Or “measuring basket.”

commits a murder will be accountable to the court of justice.’^a **22** However, I say to you that everyone who continues wrathful^b with his brother will be accountable to the court of justice; and whoever addresses his brother with an unspeakable word of contempt will be accountable to the Supreme Court; whereas whoever says, ‘You despicable fool!’ will be liable to the fiery Ge·hen’na.*^c

23 “If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar^d and there you remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away. First make your peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift.^e

25 “Be quick to settle matters with your legal opponent, while you are with him on the way there, so that somehow the opponent may not turn you over to the judge, and the judge to the court attendant, and you get thrown into prison.^f **26** I say to you for a fact, you will certainly not come out of there until you have paid over your last small coin.*

27 “You heard that it was said: ‘You must not commit adultery.’^g **28** But I say to you that everyone who keeps on looking at a woman^h so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.ⁱ **29** If, now, your right eye is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you.^j For it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be pitched into Ge·hen’na.*^k **30** Also, if your right

5:22 * The place for burning refuse outside of Jerusalem. See Glossary. 5:26 * Lit., “the last quadrans.” See App. B14. 5:29, 30 * See Glossary.

MATTHEW 5:22-42

hand is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you.^a For it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to land in Ge·hen'na.^{*b}

31 “Moreover, it was said: ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’^c **32** However, I say to you that everyone divorcing his wife, except on account of sexual immorality,^{*} makes her a subject for adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.^d

33 “Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times: ‘You must not swear without performing,^e but you must pay your vows to Jehovah.’^{*f}

34 However, I say to you: Do not swear at all,^g neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; **35** nor by earth, for it is the footstool of his feet;^h nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.ⁱ **36** Do not swear by your head, since you cannot turn one hair white or black. **37** Just let your word ‘Yes’ mean yes, your ‘No,’ no,^j for what goes beyond these is from the wicked one.^k

38 “You heard that it was said: ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.’^l **39** However, I say to you: Do not resist the one who is wicked, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him.^m **40** And if a person wants to take you to court and get possession of your inner garment, let him also have your outer garment;ⁿ **41** and if someone in authority compels you into service for a mile,^{*} go with him two miles. **42** Give to the one asking you, and do not turn away from one who wants to borrow^{*} from you.^o

5:32 *Greek, *por·nei'a*. See Glossary.

5:33 *See App. A5. 5:41 *See

App. B14. 5:42 *That is, borrow without interest.

MATTHEW 5:43–6:20

43 “You heard that it was said: ‘You must love your neighbor^a and hate your enemy.’ **44** However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies^b and to pray for those who persecute you,^c **45** so that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens,^d since he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good and makes it rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous.^e **46** For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have?^f Are not also the tax collectors doing the same thing? **47** And if you greet your brothers only, what extraordinary thing are you doing? Are not also the people of the nations doing the same thing? **48** You must accordingly be perfect,^{*} as your heavenly Father is perfect.^g

6 “Take care not to practice your righteousness in front of men to be noticed by them;^h otherwise you will have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. **2** So when you make gifts of mercy,^{*} do not blow a trumpet ahead of you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. **3** But you, when making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your gifts of mercy may be in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.ⁱ

5 “Also, when you pray, do not act like the hypocrites,^j for they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to be seen by men.^k Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. **6** But when you pray, go into your pri-

5:48 *Or “complete.” 6:2 *Or “gifts to the poor.” See Glossary.

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4:1

Devil: From the Greek word *di-a'bo-los*, meaning “slanderer.” (Joh 6:70; 2Ti 3:3) The related verb *di-a-bal'lo* means “to accuse; bring charges against” and is rendered “was accused” at Lu 16:1.

4:4

It is written: Jesus uses this expression three times when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures in response to the Devil’s temptations.—Mt 4:7, 10.

Jehovah’s: In this quote from De 8:3, the divine name, represented by four Hebrew consonants (transliterated *YHWH*), occurs in the original Hebrew text.—See App. C.

4:5

holy city: Refers to Jerusalem, which is often called holy because it was the location of Jehovah’s temple.—Ne 11:1; Isa 52:1.

battlement of the temple: Or “highest point of the temple.” Lit., “wing of the temple.” The Greek word for “temple” can refer to the temple sanctuary or to the entire temple complex. Therefore, the expression could refer to the top of the wall surrounding the temple complex.

4:7

Jehovah: In this quote from De 6:16, the divine name, represented by four Hebrew consonants (transliterated *YHWH*), occurs in the original Hebrew text.—See App. C.

4:8

showed him: The ruler of the demons apparently caused Jesus to see a vision that appeared to be real.

kingdoms: Refers in a general sense to any or all human governments.

world: Renders the Greek word *ko'smos*, here referring to unrighteous human society.

4:9

do an act of worship: The Greek verb that can be rendered “to worship” is here in the aorist tense, which indicates a momentary action. Rendering it “do an act of worship” shows that the Devil did not ask Jesus to do constant or continuous worship to him; it was a single “act of worship.”

4:10

Satan: From the Hebrew word *sa-tan'*, meaning “resister.”

Jehovah: In this quote from De 6:13; 10:20, the divine name, represented by four Hebrew consonants (transliterated *YHWH*), occurs in the original Hebrew text.—See App. C.

4:11

look!: See study note on Mt 1:20.

4:12

Now when he heard: Between verse 11 and this verse, about a year has

elapsed, and the events of Joh 1:29 through 4:3 take place during that interval. John's account also adds the detail that when Jesus traveled from Judea **into Galilee**, he went via Samaria, where he met a Samaritan woman at a well near Sychar.—Joh 4:4-43; see App. A7, chart “The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry,” and Map 2.

4:13

Capernaum: From a Hebrew name meaning “Village of Nahum” or “Village of Comforting.” (Na 1:1, ftn.) A city of major importance in Jesus' earthly ministry, it was located at the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee and was called “his own city” at Mt 9:1.

the districts of Zebulun and Naphtali: Refers to regions W and N of the Sea of Galilee in the northern extremity of Palestine and includes the district of Galilee. (Jos 19:10-16, 32-39) Naphtali's territory bordered the entire western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

4:14

to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: See study note on Mt 1:22.

4:15

the road of the sea: Possibly referring to an ancient road that ran along the Sea of Galilee and led to the Mediterranean Sea.

on the other side of the Jordan: In this context, evidently referring to the W side of the Jordan River.

Galilee of the nations: Isaiah may have used this description because Galilee formed the frontier between Israel and surrounding nations. The

location of Galilee and the roads that ran through it resulted in greater interaction with those nations, making it susceptible to invasion and settlement by non-Israelites. By the first century, many non-Jews lived here, making the description even more fitting.

4:16

a great light: In fulfillment of Isaiah's Messianic prophecy, Jesus performed much of his public ministry in Galilee, in the districts of Zebulun and Naphtali. (Mt 4:13, 15) Thus, Jesus brought spiritual enlightenment to those who were thought to be in spiritual darkness and who were held in contempt even by their fellow Jews in Judea.—Joh 7:52.

deathly shadow: Or “shadow of death.” Evidently, the term conveys the idea that death figuratively casts its shadow over people as it approaches them. Jesus, however, brought enlightenment that could remove the shadow and rescue people from death.

4:17

preaching: That is, publicly proclaiming.—See study note on Mt 3:1.

the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near: This message of a new world government was the theme of Jesus' preaching. (Mt10:7; Mr 1:15) John the Baptist started to proclaim a similar message about six months prior to Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:1, 2); yet Jesus could say with added meaning that the Kingdom had “drawn near,” since he was now present as the anointed King- Designate. There is no report that after Jesus' death his disciples continued to proclaim that the Kingdom had “drawn near” or was at hand.

4:18

the Sea of Galilee: A freshwater inland lake in northern Israel. (The Greek word translated “sea” may also mean “lake.”) It has been called the Sea of Chinnereth (Nu 34:11), the lake of Gennesaret (Lu 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberias (Joh 6:1). It lies an average of 210 m (700 ft) below sea level. It is 21 km (13 mi) long from N to S and 12 km (8 mi) wide, and its greatest depth is about 48 m (157 ft).—See App. A7, Map 3B, “Activity at the Sea of Galilee.”

Simon, who is called Peter: Simon was his personal name; Peter (*Pe'tros*) is the Greek form of the Semitic name Cephas (*Ke·phas'*), which Jesus gave him.—Mr 3:16; Joh 1:42; see study note on Mt 10:2.

casting a net: An able fisherman, wading or in a small boat, could toss a circular net in such a way that it would land flat on the water's surface. The net, perhaps 6-8 m (20-25 ft) in diameter, was weighted around its perimeter so that it would sink and trap the fish.

fishermen: Fishing was a common occupation in Galilee. Peter and his brother Andrew were not lone fishermen but were engaged in a fishing business, evidently associated with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.—Mr 1:16-21; Lu 5:7, 10.

4:19

fishers of men: A play on words based on the occupation of Simon and Andrew. It indicates that they would be “catching people alive” for the Kingdom. (Lu 5:10, ftn.) The implication may also be that, like fishing, disciple-making would be strenuous, labor-intensive work that required perseverance but sometimes produced few results.

4:20

followed him: Peter and Andrew had already been Jesus' disciples for some six months to a year. (Joh 1:35-42) Now Jesus invites them to leave their fishing business and follow him full-time.—Lu 5:1-11; see study note on Mt 4:22.

4:21

Zebedee: Possibly Jesus' uncle by marriage to Salome, the sister of Jesus' mother, Mary. If so, John and James were Jesus' cousins.

4:22

At once they left: The Greek word *eu·the'os*, rendered “at once,” occurs both here and in verse 20. Like Peter and Andrew, James and John quickly respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him full-time.

4:23

went throughout the whole of Galilee: This is Jesus' first preaching tour of Galilee.—See App. A7.

teaching . . . preaching: Teaching differs from preaching in that the teacher does more than proclaim; he instructs, explains, uses persuasive arguments, and offers proof.—See study notes on Mt 3:1; 28:20.

synagogues: See Glossary, “Synagogue.”

the good news: First occurrence of the Greek word *eu·ag·ge'li·on*, rendered “gospel” in some English Bibles. A related Greek expression *eu·ag·ge·li·stes'*, rendered “evangelizer,” means “a proclaimer of good news.”—Ac 21:8; Eph 4:11, ftn.; 2Ti 4:5, ftn.

4:24

Syria: That is, the Roman province of Syria, a Gentile region N of Galilee, between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea.

epileptic: The Greek term literally means “be moonstruck.” (Some older translations use “lunatic.”) However, Matthew employs the term in a medical sense, not superstitiously associating the disease with certain phases of the moon. The symptoms that Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe are certainly those associated with epilepsy.

4:25

Decapolis: See Glossary and App. B10.

the other side of the Jordan: In this context, evidently referring to the region E of the Jordan River, also known as Perea (from the Greek word *pe'ran*, meaning “the other side; beyond”).

5:1

on the mountain: Evidently close to Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee. Jesus apparently climbed to a higher spot on the mountain, where he began teaching the crowds spread out on a level place before him.—Lu 6:17, 20.

he sat down: The custom among Jewish teachers, especially for formal teaching sessions.

his disciples: The first occurrence of the Greek word *ma·the·tes'*, a noun rendered “disciple.” It refers to a learner, or one who is taught, and implies a personal attachment to a teacher, an attachment that shapes the

disciple's whole life. Although large crowds were gathered to listen to Jesus, it seems that he spoke mainly for the benefit of his disciples, who sat closest to him.— Mt 7:28, 29; Lu 6:20.

5:2

he opened his mouth: A Semitic idiom meaning that he began his speech. (Job 33:2; Da 10:16) At Ac 8:35 and 10:34, the same Greek expression is rendered “began to speak.”

5:3

Happy: Not simply a state of lightheartedness, as when a person is enjoying a good time. Rather, when used of humans, it refers to the condition of one who is blessed by God and enjoys his favor. The term is also used as a description of God and of Jesus in his heavenly glory.—1Ti 1:11; 6:15.

those conscious of their spiritual need: The Greek expression rendered “those conscious,” literally, “those who are poor (needy; destitute; beggars),” in this context is used about those who have a need and are intensely aware of it. The same word is used in reference to the “beggar” Lazarus at Lu 16:20, 22. The Greek phrase that some translations render those who are “poor in spirit” conveys the idea of people who are painfully aware of their spiritual poverty and of their need for God.

them: Refers to Jesus' followers, since Jesus was primarily addressing them.—Mt 5:1, 2.

5:5

mild-tempered: The inward quality of those who willingly submit to

God's will and guidance and who do not try to dominate others. The term does not imply cowardice or weakness. In the *Septuagint*, the word was used as an equivalent for a Hebrew word that can be translated "meek" or "humble." It was used with reference to Moses (Nu 12:3), those who are teachable (Ps 25:9), those who will possess the earth (Ps 37:11), and the Messiah (Zec 9:9; Mt 21:5). Jesus described himself as a mild-tempered, or meek, person.—Mt 11:29.

inherit the earth: Jesus is likely referring to Ps 37:11, where "the meek" are said to "possess the earth." Both the Hebrew (*'e'rets*) and the Greek (*ge*) words for "earth" can refer to the entire planet or to a specific land area, such as the Promised Land. The Scriptures indicate that Jesus is the foremost example of one who is mild-tempered. (Mt 11:29) Various Bible verses show that as King he would inherit authority over the entire earth, not just a portion of it (Ps 2:8; Re 11:15), and his anointed followers would share in this inheritance (Re 5:10). In another sense, those of his mild-tempered disciples who would be his earthly subjects would "inherit," not the ownership of the earth, but the privilege of enjoying life in Paradise, the earthly realm of the Kingdom.—See study note on Mt 25:34.

5:6

those hungering and thirsting for righteousness: That is, those who long to see corruption and injustice replaced with God's standards of right and wrong; they strive to conform to those standards.

5:7

merciful: The use of the Bible terms rendered "merciful" and "mercy" is not limited to forgiveness or leniency in judgment. It most often describes the feelings of compassion and pity that move a person to take the initiative to assist those in need.

5:8

pure in heart: Inwardly clean, referring to moral and spiritual cleanness, including one's affections, desires, and motives.

see God: Not necessarily to be understood literally, since “no man can see [God] and live.” (Ex 33:20) The Greek word used here for “see” can also mean “see with the mind, perceive, know.” Jehovah's worshippers on earth thus “see God” by gaining insight into his personality through faith-building study of his Word and by observing his actions in their behalf. (Eph 4:18; Heb 11:27) When resurrected to spirit life, anointed Christians will actually see Jehovah “just as he is.”—1Jo 3:2.

5:9

peacemakers: Those who not only maintain peace but also bring peace to where it is lacking.

5:13

salt: A mineral used for preserving and flavoring food. In this context, Jesus likely focused on the preserving quality of salt; his disciples could help others to avoid spiritual and moral decay.

loses its strength: In Jesus' day, salt was often obtained from the Dead Sea area and was contaminated by other minerals. If the salty portion was removed from this mixture, only a tasteless, useless residue remained.

5:14

A city . . . located on a mountain: Jesus did not specify a particular city. In his day, many cities were located on mountains, often to

make them less vulnerable to attack. Such cities were surrounded by large walls, making them visible for miles and impossible to hide. This would have been true even of small villages with their typically whitewashed houses.

5:15

a lamp: In Bible times, a common household lamp was a small earthenware vessel filled with olive oil.

a basket: Used for measuring dry commodities, such as grain. The type of “basket” (Greek, *mo'di-os*) mentioned here had a capacity of about 9 L (or 8 dry qt).

5:16

Father: The first of over 160 occurrences in the Gospels in which Jesus refers to Jehovah God as “Father.” Jesus’ use of the term shows that his listeners already understood its meaning in relation to God by its usage in the Hebrew Scriptures. (De 32:6; Ps 89:26; Isa 63:16) Earlier servants of God used many lofty titles to describe and address Jehovah, including the “Almighty,” “the Most High,” and the “Grand Creator,” but Jesus’ frequent use of the simple, common term “Father” highlights God’s intimacy with his worshippers.—Ge 17:1; De 32:8; Ec 12:1.

5:17

the Law . . . the Prophets: “The Law” refers to the Bible books of Genesis through Deuteronomy. “The Prophets” refers to the prophetic books of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, when these terms are mentioned together, the expression could be understood to include the entire Hebrew Scriptures.—Mt 7:12; 22:40; Lu 16:16.

5:18

Truly: Greek, *a·men'*, a transliteration of the Hebrew *'a·men'*, meaning “so be it,” or “surely.” Jesus frequently uses this expression to preface a statement, a promise, or a prophecy, thereby emphasizing its absolute truthfulness and reliability. Jesus’ use of “truly,” or *amen*, in this way is said to be unique in sacred literature. When repeated in succession (*a·men' a·men'*), as is the case throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus’ expression is translated “most truly.”—Joh 1:51.

sooner would heaven and earth pass away: Hyperbole that is equivalent to “never.” The Scriptures indicate that the literal heavens and earth will remain forever.—Ps 78:69; 119:90.

smallest letter: In the Hebrew alphabet current at that time, the smallest letter was *yod* (י).

one stroke of a letter: Certain Hebrew characters featured a tiny stroke that differentiated one letter from another. Jesus’ hyperbole thus emphasized that God’s Word would be fulfilled down to the smallest detail.

5:21

You heard that it was said: This phrase can refer both to things stated in the inspired Hebrew Scriptures and to teachings of Jewish tradition.—Mt 5:27, 33, 38, 43.

accountable to the court of justice: Subject to trial in one of the local courts located throughout Israel. (Mt 10:17; Mr 13:9) These local courts had the authority to judge murder cases.—De 16:18; 19:12; 21:1, 2.

5:22

continues wrathful: Jesus associates such a wrong attitude with hatred that can lead to actual murder. (1Jo 3:15) Ultimately, God may judge the person as being a murderer.

an unspeakable word of contempt: This expression renders the Greek word *rha·ka'* (possibly derived from Hebrew or Aramaic), meaning “empty” or “empty-headed.” Someone addressing a fellow worshipper with such a derogatory term would not only be nurturing hatred in his heart but also be giving vent to it by contemptible speech.

the Supreme Court: The full Sanhedrin—the judicial body in Jerusalem made up of the high priest and 70 elders and scribes. The Jews considered its rulings to be final.—See Glossary, “Sanhedrin.”

You despicable fool: The Greek word for this expression sounded like a Hebrew term meaning “rebellious” or “mutinous.” It designates a person as morally worthless and an apostate. To address a fellow man in this way was tantamount to saying that he should receive a punishment fit for a rebel against God, that is, everlasting destruction.

Gehenna: This term comes from the Hebrew words *geh hin·nom'*, meaning “valley of Hinnom,” which lay to the W and S of ancient Jerusalem. (See App. B12, map “Jerusalem and Surrounding Area.”) By Jesus’ day, the valley had become a place for burning refuse, so the word “Gehenna” was a fitting symbol of complete destruction.—See Glossary.

5:23

your gift to the altar: Jesus did not limit his comments to particular offerings or specific transgressions. The gift could include any sacrificial offering presented at Jehovah’s temple in fulfillment of the Mosaic Law.

The altar refers to the altar of burnt offering in the priests' courtyard of the temple. Ordinary Israelites were not allowed to enter this courtyard; instead, they handed over their gifts to the priest at the entrance to it.

5:24

leave your gift . . . , and go away: In the scene Jesus describes, a worshipper is at the very point of handing over his sacrifice to the priest. Yet, he first needed to resolve an issue with his brother. Before offering his gift in a way that would be acceptable to God, he needed to go away and find his offended brother, who was likely among the many thousands of pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the seasonal festivals, the usual time for bringing such sacrifices to the temple.—De 16:16.

make your peace: The Greek expression has been defined “to change from enmity to friendship; to become reconciled; to be restored to normal relations or harmony.” So the goal is to effect a change by removing, if possible, ill will from the offended person's heart. (Ro 12:18) Jesus' point is that maintaining good relations with others is a prerequisite for enjoying good relations with God.

5:26

your last small coin: Lit., “the last quadrans,” 1/64 of a denarius. A denarius equaled a full day's wage.—See App. B14.

5:27

You heard that it was said: See study note on Mt 5:21.

5:29

Gehenna: See study note on Mt 5:22 and Glossary.

5:31

certificate of divorce: The Mosaic Law did not encourage divorce. A certificate was provided as a deterrent to a hasty breakup of marriages and as a protection for women. (De 24:1) A husband who wanted to obtain a certificate likely had to consult duly authorized men who might encourage the couple to reconcile.

5:32

sexual immorality: The Greek word *por·nei'a* is a general term for all sexual intercourse that is unlawful according to the Bible. It includes adultery, prostitution, sexual relations between unmarried individuals, homosexuality, and bestiality.—See Glossary.

5:33

you heard that it was said: See study note on Mt 5:21.

Jehovah: Although this is not a direct quote from one specific passage in the Hebrew Scriptures, the two commands that Jesus refers to allude to such scriptures as Le 19:12, Nu 30:2, and De 23:21, which do contain the divine name, represented by four Hebrew consonants (transliterated *YHWH*), in the original Hebrew text.—See App. C.

5:34

Do not swear at all: Jesus did not here prohibit the making of all oaths. God's Law, which allowed for the swearing of oaths or vows on certain serious occasions, was still in force. (Nu 30:2; Ga 4:4) Rather, Jesus was condemning frivolous and indiscriminate swearing that amounted to a perversion of oath-taking.

neither by heaven: In order to add weight to their word, people would swear “by heaven,” “by earth,” “by Jerusalem,” and even “by [the] head,” or life, of another person. (Mt 5:35, 36) But controversy existed among the Jews as to the validity of such oaths based on created things rather than on the name of God, and some evidently felt that they could retract such sworn statements with impunity.

5:35

the great King: That is, Jehovah God.—Mal 1:14.

5:37

what goes beyond these is from the wicked one: Any who feel compelled to go beyond a simple “yes” or “no” by continually swearing to what they say are basically revealing themselves to be untrustworthy. They manifest the spirit of Satan, “the father of the lie.”—Joh 8:44.

5:38

You heard that it was said: See study note on Mt 5:21.

Eye for eye and tooth for tooth: In Jesus’ day, these words from the Law (Ex 21:24; Le 24:20) were misapplied to condone personal vengeance. However, this law was properly applied only after cases came to trial and the appointed judges determined the appropriate punishment.—De 19:15-21.

5:39

slaps you on your right cheek: In this context, the Greek verb *rha-pi'zo*, “to slap,” is used with the meaning “to strike with the open hand.” Such

an action would likely have been intended to provoke or insult rather than to injure. Jesus thus indicated that his followers should be willing to endure personal insult without retaliating.

5:40

let him also have your outer garment: Jewish men often wore two garments, an **inner garment** (Greek, *khi-ton'*, a shirtlike tunic with long sleeves or half sleeves, reaching to the knees or ankles and worn next to the skin) and an **outer garment** (Greek, *hi-ma'ti-on*, a loose robe or coat, possibly consisting of a simple rectangular piece of material). A garment could be used as a pledge to guarantee payment of a debt. (Job 22:6) Jesus is saying that for the sake of peace, his followers should be willing to give up not only their inner garment but also their more valuable outer garment.

5:41

compels you into service: A reference to the compulsory service that the Roman authorities could demand from a citizen. They could, for example, press men or animals into service or commandeer whatever was considered necessary to expedite official business. That is what happened to Simon of Cyrene, whom Roman soldiers “compelled into service” to carry Jesus’ torture stake.—Mt 27:32.

mile: Probably the Roman mile, measuring 1,479.5 m (4,854 ft).—See Glossary and App. B14.

5:42

borrow: That is, borrow without interest. The Law forbade the Israelites to charge interest on loans to a fellow Jew (Ex 22:25), and it encouraged them to lend generously to the needy (De 15:7, 8).

5:43

You heard that it was said: See study note on Mt 5:21.

You must love your neighbor: The Mosaic Law directed the Israelites to love their neighbor. (Le 19:18) While the term “neighbor” simply meant one’s fellow man, some Jews narrowed the meaning to include only fellow Jews, especially those who kept the oral traditions; all other people were to be considered enemies.

hate your enemy: The Mosaic Law contained no such command. Some Jewish rabbis believed that the command to love their neighbor implied that they should hate their enemy.

5:44

Continue to love your enemies: Jesus’ counsel is in harmony with the spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures.—Ex 23:4, 5; Job 31:29; Pr 24:17, 18; 25:21.

5:46

tax collectors: Many Jews collected taxes for the Roman authorities. People hated such Jews because they not only collaborated with a resented foreign power but also extorted more than the official tax rate. Tax collectors were generally shunned by fellow Jews, who put them on the same level as sinners and prostitutes.—Mt 11:19; 21:32.

5:47

greet: Greeting others included expressing good wishes for their welfare and prosperity.

brothers: Refers to the entire nation of Israel. They were brothers, offspring of one common father, Jacob, and they were united in worship of the same God, Jehovah.—Ex 2:11; Ps 133:1.

people of the nations: Refers to non-Jews who had no relationship with God. The Jews viewed them as godless and unclean and as ones to be avoided.

5:48

perfect: The Greek term used here can mean “complete,” “mature,” or it can mean “faultless” according to standards set by an authority. Only Jehovah is perfect in an absolute sense, so when the term is applied to humans, it describes relative perfection. In this context, “perfect” refers to the completeness of a Christian’s love for Jehovah God and for fellow humans, something that is possible, even though a person is sinful.

Mt 5:9—Happiness results from being a peacemaker (w07 12/1 17)

Christian parents are keenly interested in training their children to “seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Peter 3:11) The happiness that results from being a peacemaker is worth all the effort needed to conquer feelings of suspicion, frustration, and animosity. If you are a parent, how can you teach your children to be peaceable?

- Song 82 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Lessons Learned From Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount”:** (10 min.)
Mt 5:3—Happiness results from being conscious of our spiritual need (*nwtsty* study note)
Mt 5:7—Happiness results from being merciful and compassionate (*nwtsty* study note)
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Mt 4:23—What are two important activities that Jesus engaged in? (*nwtsty* study note)

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) Mt 5:31-48

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) See p. 1.
- **First Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **Talk:** (6 min. or less) *w16.03* 31-32—Theme: Did Satan Physically Take Jesus to the Temple When Tempting Him?

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- Song 130
- **Happy Are Those Who Have Been Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake:** (9 min.) Play the video *The Namgungs: Imprisoned for Their Faith*, and then discuss the lessons learned (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES).
- **“First Make Your Peace With Your Brother—How?”:** (6 min.) Discussion. Consider why only the last action in each list is correct.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jy* chap. 3
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 141 and Prayer


MATTHEW 4-5 | Lessons Learned From Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount

5:3

Are you conscious of your spiritual need?

The phrase “those conscious of their spiritual need” literally means “those who are beggars for the spirit.” (Mt 5:3; *ftn.*) We can show our eagerness to receive spiritual help from God by . . .

- reading the Bible every day
- preparing for and attending Christian meetings
- reading our publications and, as time allows, material on our website
- watching each month’s program on JW Broadcasting

 How can I improve my routine of taking in spiritual food?





Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

●○○ INITIAL CALL

Question: Is the Bible still relevant today?

Scripture: 2Ti 3:16

Link: What is the Bible's message?



○●○ FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: What is the Bible's message?

Scripture: Mt 6:10

Link: What will God's Kingdom do?



○○● SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: What will God's Kingdom do?

Scripture: Da 2:44

Link: How will this affect the earth?

Starting this month, the midweek meeting will no longer feature three different sample presentations. Instead, the *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook* will have sample conversations consisting of an opening question, a scripture, and a linking question to pave the way for a return visit. Only one sample conversation video will be played per week. Each publisher can decide which publication from our Teaching Toolbox to use and when to introduce it—whether on an initial call or a return visit. In addition, the workbook will contain ideas for two follow-up conversations. This approach will help us focus on our goal of teaching “all those who [are] rightly disposed for everlasting life.”—Ac 13:48.

Student Assignments: Unless the instructions indicate otherwise, students should demonstrate the sample conversations.

in behalf of true worship to the extent that they were able to do so. Some of them endeavored to produce Bibles in the languages of the common people. Others declared the truths that they had discovered in the pages of God's Word.

Then, in the late 1800's, Charles Taze Russell and his associates worked zealously to restore Bible truths. It was as if symbolic flesh and skin were starting to be put on spiritual skeletons. *Zion's Watch Tower* and other publications helped honesthearted ones to discover spiritual truths. Later, such tools as the "Photo-Drama of Creation" in 1914 and the book *The Finished Mystery* in 1917 also strengthened God's people. Finally, in 1919, God's people were given life, spiritually speaking, and were settled in their new spiritual land. As time has progressed, this remnant of anointed ones has been joined by those with an earthly hope, and together they have become "an

extremely large army."—Ezek. 37:10; Zech. 8:20-23.*

Given these facts, it becomes clear that God's people went into captivity to Babylon the Great with the growth of the apostasy in the second century C.E. This was a dark period of time, similar to what the ancient Israelites experienced while in exile. How happy we can be, though, that after God's people experienced centuries of spiritual oppression, we are living in the time when "those having insight will shine . . . brightly" and "many will cleanse themselves" and they "will be refined"!—Dan. 12:3, 10.

* Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Revelation 11:7-12 each speak of a spiritual restoration that took place in 1919. However, the prophecy in Ezekiel foretold the eventual spiritual restoration of *all of God's people* after an extremely long period of captivity. On the other hand, the prophecy in Revelation refers to the spiritual rebirth of a *small group of anointed brothers who have taken the lead* after a relatively short period of forced inactivity.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Did Satan physically take Jesus to the temple when tempting him?

■ Put simply, we cannot be certain whether Jesus actually stood in the temple or he did so only by means of a vision. At times, both possibilities have been presented in our publications.

Consider first what the Bible record says. In his Gospel account of this event, the apostle Matthew was inspired to write: "Then the Devil *took him* [Jesus] along into the holy city, and he *stationed him* on the battlement ["parapet; highest point," *ftn.*] of the temple." (Matt. 4:5) Luke's parallel account puts it this way: "He then *led him* into Jerusalem and *stationed him* on the battlement of the temple."—Luke 4:9.

In the past, our publications have reasoned that this event may not have happened literally.

For example, in the issue of March 1, 1961, *The Watchtower* explained: "It does not seem reasonable to place a literal construction on all that appears in the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Certainly there is no mountain from which one could be shown 'all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.' So too, we must reasonably conclude that Satan did not literally, bodily, physically, take Jesus 'along into the holy city' and station him 'upon the battlement of the temple.' Such was not at all necessary for the temptation to have force." However, in subsequent issues of this journal, we have observed that Christ's complying with Satan's request could have resulted in Jesus' suicide.

Some have stated that, as a non-Levite, Jesus was not authorized to stand on top of the temple sanctuary. So it was assumed that Jesus may have been ‘taken along’ to the temple by means of a vision. That is similar to what happened centuries earlier to the prophet Ezekiel.—Ezek. 8:3, 7-10; 11:1, 24; 37:1, 2.

However, if this temptation occurred only in the form of a vision, the following questions arise:

- Was the *temptation* real or imaginary?
- If the other temptations were efforts to lure Jesus into carrying out physical actions such as turning literal stones into bread or performing a real act of worship before Satan, would not this temptation have been similar—requiring Jesus physically to jump from the temple?

On the other hand, if Jesus did stand physically on the battlement of the temple, other questions arise:

- Did Jesus violate the Law by standing on top of the sanctuary?
- How did Jesus get from the wilderness to Jerusalem?

Further research helps us to see some possibilities that may answer these last two questions.

First, Professor D. A. Carson notes that the Greek word *hi-e-ron'*, translated “temple” in both accounts, “probably refers to the entire complex, not the sanctuary itself.” So Jesus would not necessarily have had to stand on top of the sanctuary itself. He could have stood, for example, on the southeastern corner of the temple area. From that location, there was a drop of some 450 feet (137 m) to the floor of the Kidron Valley. The southeast structure had a flat roof with a parapet and was the highest in the temple. The ancient historian Josephus stated that if a person stood

there and looked down, he “would become dizzy” because of the height. As a non-Levite, Jesus would have been allowed to stand in that location, and his doing so would not have caused any commotion.

But how could Jesus have been taken along to the temple when he was in the wilderness? The basic answer is that we cannot know for certain. The brief description of the temptations does not state how long a period was involved or where Jesus was in the wilderness. We cannot rule out the possibility that Jesus may have walked back to Jerusalem, even though doing so may have taken some time. The account does not specifically say that Jesus remained in the wilderness throughout the time of the temptations. Rather, it merely says that he was taken into Jerusalem.

What, though, of the temptation wherein Jesus was shown “all the kingdoms of the world”? Obviously, he did not literally see all the kingdoms; there is no literal mountain from which all of them can be seen. So Satan may have used some sort of vision to show these to Jesus, similar to the way a projector and a screen can be used to show someone pictures of various places on earth. However, although a vision may have been used, the “act of worship” would have been real, not imaginary. (Matt. 4:8, 9) It could be argued, then, that the temptation to jump off the battlement of the temple involved a real action with real consequences—adding a greater seriousness to this temptation than would be the case were it a mere vision.

The fact is, as stated at the outset, we cannot be dogmatic about this matter. Hence, we cannot rule out the possibility that Jesus actually went to Jerusalem and stood on the battlement of the temple. But one thing we can be sure about is that these temptations were real and that Jesus gave a conclusive answer to the Devil in each case.



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1. Lovingly Jehovah

Made provision through his Son
For our sins to be forgiven
And for death to be undone.

If we truly are repentant,

His forgiveness we can claim
On the basis of Christ's ransom,
Asking pardon in his name.

2. We receive such mercy

When we act like God above
And forgive each other freely,
Showing empathy and love.

Putting up with one another,

Putting hurtfulness away;
Showing honor to our brother,
Showing love's surpassing way.

3. Mercy is a virtue

That we all should cultivate.

It will keep us from resentment,
From the bitterness of hate.

When we imitate Jehovah,

Who is unsurpassed in love,
We will truly be forgiving;
We will be like God above.

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 How can I improve my routine of taking in spiritual food?



First Make Your Peace With Your Brother—How?

Imagine that you are living in Galilee during Jesus' time. You have traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Booths. The city is bustling with fellow worshippers who are visiting from far and wide. You want to present an offering to Jehovah. So with a goat in tow, you begin to make your way through the crowded alleys of the city toward the temple. When you arrive, the temple is packed with others who also wish to present a sacrifice. Finally, it is your turn to hand your goat over to the priests. At that moment, you remember that your brother, who could be anywhere in the crowd or in the city, has something against you. Jesus explains what you should do. **(Read Matthew 5:24.)** How can you and your offended brother pursue peace as Jesus directs? In each of the lists below, put a check mark next to the correct answer.



YOU SHOULD . . .

- speak with your brother only if you think that he has a valid reason for being upset
- try to correct your brother's thinking if you feel that he is overly sensitive or shares the blame for the problem
- listen patiently as your brother expresses himself, and even if you do not fully understand, sincerely apologize for the hurt he feels or for the unintended consequences of your actions

YOUR BROTHER SHOULD . . .

- seek the support of others in the congregation by telling them how you wronged him
- berate you, review every detail of the offense, and require you to admit fault
- recognize the humility and courage it took for you to approach him and forgive freely from the heart

- ▶ Although our worship today no longer includes animal sacrifices, what was Jesus teaching about the connection between peace with our brother and acceptable worship to God?



3

SOMEONE TO PREPARE THE WAY IS BORN

LUKE 1:57-79

- JOHN THE BAPTIST IS BORN AND NAMED
 - ZECHARIAH FORETELLS JOHN'S FUTURE ROLE
-

Elizabeth is almost ready to have her baby. For three months, her relative Mary has been staying with her. Now it is time for Mary to say good-bye and make the long trip north to her home in Nazareth. In about six months, she too will have a son.

Soon after Mary leaves, Elizabeth gives birth. What joy there is that the birth is successful and that Elizabeth and the baby are in good health! When Elizabeth shows her little son to neighbors and relatives, they rejoice with her.

God's Law to Israel said that on the eighth day after his birth, a baby boy must be circumcised, and he was also named then. (Leviticus 12:2, 3) Some feel that Zechariah's son should be named after him. However, Elizabeth speaks up, saying: "No!

but he will be called John.” (Luke 1:60) Recall that the angel Gabriel said that this baby should be named John.

The neighbors and relatives protest: “Not one of your relatives is called by this name.” (Luke 1:61) Using gestures, they ask Zechariah what he wants to name his son. Zechariah asks for a tablet and writes his answer: “John is his name.”—Luke 1:63.

With that, Zechariah’s speech is miraculously restored. You may recall that he lost his ability to speak when he did not believe what the angel said—namely, that Elizabeth would have a son. So now, when Zechariah speaks, his neighbors are amazed and ask themselves: “What will this young child turn out to be?” (Luke 1:66) They see God’s hand in the way John was given his name.

Then, filled with holy spirit, Zechariah declares: “Let Jehovah be praised, the God of Israel, because he has turned his attention to his people and has brought them deliverance. And he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant.” (Luke 1:68, 69) By “horn of salvation,” he means the Lord Jesus, who is yet to be born. By

means of that One, Zechariah says, God will “grant us, after we have been rescued from the hands of enemies, the privilege of fearlessly rendering sacred service to him with loyalty and righteousness before him all our days.”—Luke 1:74, 75.

Regarding his son, Zechariah foretells: “As for you, young child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go ahead of Jehovah to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender compassion of our God. With this compassion a daybreak will visit us from on high, to give light to those sitting in darkness and death’s shadow and to guide our feet in the way of peace.” (Luke 1:76-79) How encouraging that prophecy is!

By this time Mary, who evidently is not yet married, has arrived home in Nazareth. What will happen to her when it becomes obvious that she is pregnant?

- ◇ What is the difference in age between John and Jesus?
- ◇ What happens when John is eight days old?
- ◇ John will have what assignment from God?

The Miracle of Life

(Psalm 36:9)

1. Ev'ry newborn child, Ev'ry drop of rain,
Ev'ry golden ray of sun, Each head of grain—
All are gifts from God; They reveal his way.
Miracles performed by him sustain us each day.

(CHORUS)

*So, what are we to do with a gift so rare
But to love the One who gave it and show him we care.
No matter what we do, We never can earn it.
This gift is still a gift—The miracle of life.*

2. Others may give up, Lose their will to try,
Echoing the wife of Job: “Curse God and die.”
We are not that way; Praise to God we give,
Thanking him for ev'ry precious moment we live.

(CHORUS)

*So, what are we to do with a gift so rare
But to love the ones around us and show them we care.
No matter what we do, We never can earn it.
This gift is still a gift—The miracle of life.*

NOVEMBER 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
DECEMBER 25, 2017–
JANUARY 28, 2018

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COVER IMAGE:

NICARAGUA

Two Christian sisters share the Bible's message with a merchant in the town of Tipitapa

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125 *“Happy Are the Merciful!”*

(Matthew 5:7)

1. Our happy God is merciful,
His mercy not just dutiful.
He takes delight in kindly deeds
And freely grants our daily needs.
Repentant ones can be assured
Their plea for mercy will be heard.
Remembering that we are dust,
He’s merciful and kind and just.
2. When we have sinned and feel distressed,
When God’s forgiveness we request,
Our Lord, Christ Jesus, showed the way
To ask for mercy when we pray:
“Forgive our debts, we beg of you,
As we forgive our debtors too.”
We then can let resentment go,
And peace of mind and heart we’ll know.
3. When gifts of mercy we bestow,
The giving spirit we should show.
We give without desiring praise,
Content with joy our gift conveys.
Then God, who sees all things we do,
Will be the One repaying you.
Yes, happy are the merciful,
In God’s eyes they are beautiful.



SONGS:
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CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

How may we imitate Jehovah's mercy when others need our forgiveness?

How do we show that we share Jehovah's view of life?

How should elders reflect divine justice when judging cases of wrongdoing?

Imitate Jehovah's Justice and Mercy

“Judge with true justice, and deal with one another in loyal love and mercy.”—ZECH. 7:9.

JESUS loved the Mosaic Law. And no wonder! That Law came from the most important Person in Jesus' life—his Father, Jehovah. Jesus' deep affection for the law of God was prophetically expressed

1, 2. (a) How did Jesus feel about God's Law? (b) How did the scribes and Pharisees misrepresent the Law?

at Psalm 40:8: “To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is deep within me.” By word and deed, Jesus affirmed that God’s Law was perfect, beneficial, and sure to be fulfilled.—Matt. 5: 17-19.

² How pained Jesus must have been, then, when he saw the scribes and Pharisees misrepresent his Father’s Law! They meticulously obeyed some of its smallest details, for Jesus acknowledged: “You give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin.” So, what was the problem? He added: “But you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness.” (Matt. 23:23) Unlike those self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus grasped the spirit behind the Law, the divine qualities reflected in each commandment.

³ As Christians, we are not under the Law covenant. (Rom. 7:6) Yet, Jehovah preserved that Law for us in his Word, the Bible. He wants us, not to obsess over the details of the Law, but to discern and apply its “weightier matters,” the lofty principles that underpin its commandments. For example, what principles might we discern in the arrangement of cities of refuge? The preceding article outlined

3. What will this article consider?

Cities of refuge in Israel had:

- Convenient locations (1)
- Well-maintained roads (2)



lessons learned from the steps taken by the *fugitive*. But from the cities of refuge, we also learn about *Jehovah* and how we may reflect his qualities. Therefore, this article will answer three questions: How do the cities of refuge reveal Jehovah's mercy? What do they teach us about his view of life? How do they reflect his perfect justice? In each case, look for ways that you can imitate your heavenly Father. —**Read Ephesians 5:1.**



“CITIES CONVENIENT FOR YOURSELVES” —AN EXPRESSION OF MERCY

⁴ The six cities of refuge were easy to access. Jehovah commanded Israel to distribute the cities evenly on both sides of the Jordan River. Why? So that any fugitive could find refuge quickly and

4, 5. (a) How and why were the cities of refuge made easily accessible? (b) What does this teach us about Jehovah?

conveniently. (Num. 35:11-14) Roads leading to the cities of refuge were kept in good repair. (Deut. 19:3) According to Jewish tradition, guideposts were erected to direct fugitives to the cities. Since the cities of refuge were available, an unintentional manslayer was not forced to flee to a foreign land, where he might be tempted to take up false worship.

⁵ Think of it: Jehovah—the very One who had mandated capital punishment for willful murderers—gave unintentional manslaughterers ample opportunity to receive compassion and protection! “Every thing was made as plain, as simple, and as easy as possible,” wrote one commentator. “Such was God’s gracious way.” Jehovah is not a heartless judge who is eager to punish his servants. Rather, he is “rich in mercy.”—Eph. 2:4.

⁶ The Pharisees, in contrast, were reluctant to extend mercy. For example, according to tradition, they were unwilling to forgive the same offense more than three times. Jesus highlighted their attitude toward offenders by relating an illustration of a Pharisee who prayed: “O God, I thank you that I am not like everyone else—extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers—or even like this tax collector”—a

6. How was the Pharisees’ attitude in contrast with God’s mercy?

tax collector who was humbly praying for God’s mercy. Why were the Pharisees so unwilling to show mercy? The Bible says that they “considered others as nothing.”—Luke 18:9-14.

⁷ Imitate Jehovah, not the Pharisees. Show compassion. (Read Colossians 3:13.) One way to do

7, 8. (a) When someone sins against you, how can you imitate Jehovah? (b) Why is forgiveness a test of humility?

Is the “road” to your forgiveness open and in good repair? Be approachable

(See paragraphs 4-8)



so is to make it easy for others to seek your forgiveness. (Luke 17:3, 4) Ask yourself: ‘Is my forgiveness within reach of people who have wronged me, even repeatedly? Am I *eager* to restore peace with someone who has offended me or who has hurt me?’

⁸ Forgiveness is really a test of humility. The Pharisees failed that test because they considered others to be inferior. As Christians, however, we must humbly “consider others superior” to us, as worthy of our forgiveness. (Phil. 2:3) Will you imitate Jehovah and pass the test of humility? Keep the “road” to your forgiveness open and in good repair. Be quick to extend mercy and slow to take offense. —Eccl. 7:8, 9.

RESPECT LIFE, AND “NO BLOODGUILT WILL COME UPON YOU”

⁹ A key purpose of the cities of refuge was to protect the Israelites from bloodguilt. (Deut. 19:10) Jehovah loves life, and he hates murderous “hands that shed innocent blood.” (Prov. 6:16, 17) A just and holy God, he could not ignore even accidental

9. How did Jehovah impress on the Israelites the sanctity of human life?

bloodshed. True, an unintentional manslayer was shown mercy. Even so, he had to present his case before the elders, and if his deed was judged accidental, he had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. This might mean spending the rest of his life there. These serious consequences impressed on all Israelites the sanctity of human life. To honor their Life-Giver, they needed to avoid any action or inaction that could endanger the life of their fellow man.

¹⁰ Unlike Jehovah, the scribes and Pharisees showed a careless disregard for life. How so? “You took away the key of knowledge,” Jesus told them. “You yourselves did not go in, and you hinder those going in!” (Luke 11:52) They were supposed to unlock the meaning of God’s Word and help others to walk on the road to eternal life. Instead, they directed people away from “the Chief Agent of life,” Jesus, leading them toward a course that could end in eternal destruction. (Acts 3:15) Proud and selfish, the scribes and Pharisees cared little for the life and welfare of their fellow humans. How cruel and unmerciful!

10. According to Jesus, how did the scribes and Pharisees show a careless disregard for life?

¹¹ How can we avoid the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees and imitate Jehovah? We should respect and treasure the gift of life. The apostle Paul did that by giving a thorough witness. As a result, he could say: “I am clean from the blood of all men.” (Read Acts 20:26, 27.) Still, neither guilt nor duty moved Paul to preach. Rather, he loved people, and their lives were precious to him. (1 Cor. 9:19-23) We should likewise strive to cultivate a godly view of life. Jehovah “desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9) Do you? You may find that kindling a merciful attitude in your heart will motivate you to increase your zeal in the ministry and fill you with more joy as you do so.

¹² We also share Jehovah’s view of life by cultivating a proper attitude toward safety. We must drive and work safely, even when we are building, maintaining, or traveling to places of worship. Never put production, finances, or schedules ahead of safety and health. Our just God *always* does what is right and proper. We want to be like him. Elders in particular strive to be conscious of both their own safety and the safety of those working around them.

11. (a) How did the apostle Paul show that he shared God’s view of life? (b) What will help us to share Paul’s attitude toward the ministry?

12. Why is safety important to God’s people?

(Prov. 22:3) If an elder reminds you of safety rules and standards, therefore, accept his counsel. (Gal. 6:1) View life as Jehovah views it, and “no blood-guilt will come upon you.”

“JUDGE . . . IN HARMONY WITH THESE JUDGMENTS”

¹³ Jehovah commissioned Israelite elders to imitate his high standard of justice. First, the elders needed to establish the facts. Further, they had to weigh carefully a manslayer’s motive, attitude, and previous conduct when deciding whether to show mercy. To reflect divine justice, they had to determine whether the fugitive acted “out of hatred” and “with malicious intent.” (Read Numbers 35:20-24.) If the testimony of witnesses was considered, at least two witnesses had to substantiate a charge of intentional murder.—Num. 35:30.

¹⁴ Thus, after establishing the facts of the case, the elders had to look at the *person*, not just the action. They needed insight, the ability to look beyond the obvious and to see into a matter. Above all, they needed Jehovah’s holy spirit, which would enable them to reflect his insight, mercy, and justice.—Ex. 34:6, 7.

13, 14. How could Israelite elders reflect Jehovah’s justice?

¹⁵ The Pharisees focused solely on what a sinner had done rather than on who a sinner was at heart. When Pharisees saw Jesus attending a banquet at Matthew's home, they asked his disciples: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus replied: "Healthy people do not need a physician, but those who are ill do. Go, then, and learn what this means: 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners." (Matt. 9:9-13) Was Jesus excusing serious wrongdoing? Not at all. In fact, Jesus' principal message included the call to repent from sin. (Matt. 4:17) Nevertheless, Jesus insightfully noted that at least some of these "tax collectors and sinners" wanted to change. They were not at Matthew's home simply to eat. Rather, "there were many of them who were following [Jesus]." (Mark 2:15) Sadly, most Pharisees failed to see in such ones what Jesus saw. Unlike the just and merciful God they claimed to worship, the Pharisees labeled their fellow men sinners, condemning them as hopeless.

¹⁶ Elders today must be sure to imitate Jehovah, who "loves justice." (Ps. 37:28) First, they need to make "a thorough investigation and inquiry" to es-

15. Contrast the way Jesus and the Pharisees viewed sinners.

16. What does a judicial committee endeavor to discern?

establish if wrong has been done. If it has, they will then handle the case according to Scriptural guidelines. (Deut. 13:12-14) When they serve on judicial committees, they must carefully determine whether a Christian guilty of serious sin is repentant. Repentance—or the lack of it—is not always obvious. It involves a person’s viewpoint, disposition, and heart condition. (Rev. 3:3) A sinner must be repentant if he is to receive mercy.*

¹⁷ Unlike Jehovah and Jesus, elders cannot read hearts. If you are an elder, then, how can you meet the challenge of discerning heartfelt repentance? First, pray for wisdom and discernment. (1 Ki. 3:9) Second, consult God’s Word and publications from the faithful slave to help you distinguish “sadness of the world” from “sadness in a godly way,” genuine repentance. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) See how the Scriptures portray both repentant and unrepentant ones. How does the Bible describe their feelings, their attitude, and their conduct?

¹⁸ Finally, endeavor to see the whole person. Take into consideration a wrongdoer’s background, his

* See “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower*, September 15, 2006, p. 30.

17, 18. How can elders discern heartfelt repentance? (See opening picture.)

motives, and his limitations. Regarding the head of the Christian congregation, Jesus, the Bible prophesied: “He will not judge by what appears to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to what his ears hear. He will judge the lowly with fairness, and with uprightness he will give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth.” (Isa. 11:3, 4) You elders are Jesus’ undershepherds, and he will help you to judge as he judges. (Matt. 18:18-20) Are we not grateful that we have caring elders who endeavor to do that? How we appreciate their tireless efforts to promote mercy and justice in our congregations!

¹⁹ The Mosaic Law reflected a “framework of the knowledge and of the truth” about Jehovah and his righteous principles. (Rom. 2:20) The cities of refuge, for example, teach elders how to “judge with true justice,” and they teach all of us how to “deal with one another in loyal love and mercy.” (Zech. 7:9) We are no longer under the Law. Yet, Jehovah does not change, and the qualities of justice and mercy are still important to him. What a privilege to worship a God in whose image we are made, whose qualities we can imitate, and in whom we can take refuge!

19. What lesson from the cities of refuge do you plan to apply?

Make Me Know Your Ways

(Psalm 25:4)

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

(CHORUS)

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

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

(Chorus)

