

- Song 13 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Pick Up Your Torture Stake and Keep Following Me”:** (10 min.)
 Mr 8:34—In order to follow Christ, we must disown ourselves (*nwtsty* study note; *w92* 8/1 17 ¶14)
 Mr 8:35-37—Jesus asks two thought-provoking questions that help us to focus on priorities (*w08* 10/15 25-26 ¶3-4)
 Mr 8:38—Courage is needed to follow Christ (*jy* 143 ¶4)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Mr 7:5-8—Why was handwashing an issue for the Pharisees? (*w16.08* 30 ¶1-4)

 Mr 7:32-35—How is Jesus’ consideration for this deaf man an example for us? (*w00* 2/15 17-18 ¶9-11)

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) Mr 7:1-15

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call Video:** (4 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bhs* 165-166 ¶6-7

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

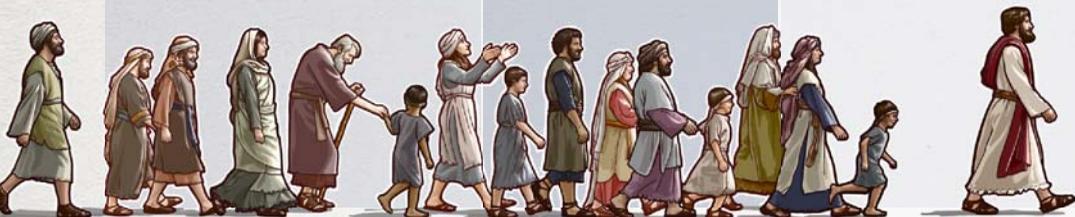
- Song 51
- **Local Needs:** (5 min.)
- **“Prepare Your Children to Follow Christ”:** (10 min.) Discussion.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jy* chap. 19 ¶10-16, box on p. 50
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 60 and Prayer

MARK 7-8 | Pick Up Your Torture Stake and Keep Following Me

8:34 

Jesus said: “Keep following me.” Therefore, we must endure. How can you strive to do that when it comes to . . .

prayer?	
study?	
the ministry?	
meeting attendance?	
commenting at meetings?	



Christ, Our Model

(1 Peter 2:21)

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

MARK 6:43-7:12

touch just the fringe of his outer garment.^a And all those who touched it were made well.

7 Now the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him.^b **2** And they saw some of his disciples eat their meal with defiled hands, that is, unwashed ones.* **3** (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands up to the elbow, clinging to the tradition of the men of former times, **4** and when they come from the market, they do not eat unless they wash themselves. There are many other traditions that they have received and cling to, such as baptisms of cups, pitchers, and copper vessels.)^c **5** So these Pharisees and scribes asked him: “Why do your disciples not observe the tradition of the men of former times, but they eat their meal with defiled hands?”^d **6** He said to them: “Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me.’^e **7** It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, for they teach commands of men as doctrines.’^f **8** You let go of the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men.”^g

9 Further, he said to them: “You skillfully disregard the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.”^h **10** For example, Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ⁱ and, ‘Let the one who speaks abusively of* his father or mother be put to death.’^j **11** But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother: “Whatever I have that could benefit you is corban (that is, a gift dedicated to God),”’ **12** you no longer

7:2 *That is, not ceremonially cleansed.

7:10 *Or “reviles.”

MARK 7:13-37

let him do a single thing for his father or his mother.^a **13** Thus you make the word of God invalid by your tradition that you have handed down.^b And you do many things like this.”^c **14** So calling the crowd to him again, he said to them: “Listen to me, all of you, and understand the meaning.^d **15** Nothing from outside a man that enters into him can defile him; but the things that come out of a man are the things that defile him.”^e

16 *—

17 Now when he had entered a house away from the crowd, his disciples began to question him about the illustration.^f

18 So he said to them: “Are you also without understanding like them? Are you not aware that nothing from outside that enters into a man can defile him, **19** since it enters, not into his heart, but into his stomach, and it passes out into the sewer?”

Thus he declared all foods clean.

20 Further, he said: “That which comes out of a man is what defiles him.^g **21** For from inside, out of the heart of men,^h

come injurious reasonings, sexual immorality,* thefts, murders,

22 acts of adultery, greed, acts of wickedness, deceit, brazen conduct,* an envious eye, blasphemy, haughtiness, and unreasonableness. **23** All these wicked things come from within and defile a man.”

24 He rose up from there and went into the region of Tyre and Si'don.ⁱ There he entered into a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice. **25** Immediately, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit

7:16 *See App. A3. 7:21 *Plural of the Greek *por-nei'a*. See Glossary. 7:22 *Or “shameless conduct.” Greek, *a-sel'-gei-a*. See Glossary.

heard about him and came and fell down at his feet.^a **26** The woman was a Greek, a Sy-ro-phoe-ni'cian by nationality;* and she kept asking him to expel the demon from her daughter. **27** But he said to her: "First let the children be satisfied, for it is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to the little dogs."^b **28** But she replied to him: "Yes, sir, and yet even the little dogs underneath the table eat of the crumbs of the little children." **29** At that he said to her: "Because you said this, go; the demon has gone out of your daughter."^c **30** So she went away to her home and found the young child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.^d

31 When Jesus returned from the region of Tyre, he went through Si'don to the Sea of Gal'i-lee, through the region of De-cap'o-lis.*^e **32** Here they brought him a deaf man with a speech impediment,^f and they pleaded with him to lay his hand on him. **33** And he took him aside privately, away from the crowd. Then he put his fingers into the man's ears, and after spitting, he touched his tongue.^g **34** And looking up into heaven, he sighed deeply and said to him: "*Eph'pha-tha,*" that is, "**Be opened.**" **35** At this his ears were opened,^h and his speech impediment was removed, and he began speaking normally. **36** With that he ordered them not to tell anyone,ⁱ but the more he would order them, the more they would proclaim it.^j **37** Indeed, they were astounded beyond measure,^k and they said: "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the speechless speak."^l

7:26 *Or "by birth." 7:31 *Or "the Ten City Region."

8 In those days, there was again a large crowd, and they had nothing to eat. So he summoned the disciples and said to them: **2** "I feel pity for the crowd,^a because they have already stayed with me for three days and they have nothing to eat.^b **3** If I send them off to their homes hungry,* they will give out on the road, and some of them are from far away." **4** But his disciples answered him: "From where will anyone get enough bread in this isolated place to satisfy these people?" **5** At this he asked them: "How many loaves do you have?" They said: "Seven."^c **6** And he instructed the crowd to recline on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them, and began giving them to his disciples to serve, and they served them to the crowd.^d **7** They also had a few small fish, and blessing these, he told them to serve these also. **8** So they ate and were satisfied, and they took up seven large baskets* full of leftover fragments.^e **9** Now there were about 4,000 men. Then he sent them away.

10 Immediately he boarded the boat with his disciples and came into the region of Dal-manu'tha.^f **11** Here the Pharisees came and started disputing with him, demanding from him a sign from heaven, to put him to the test.^g **12** So he sighed deeply in his spirit and said: "Why does this generation seek a sign?^h Truly I say, no sign will be given to this generation."ⁱ **13** With that he left them, got aboard again, and went to the opposite shore.

14 However, they forgot to take bread along, and they had nothing with them in the boat

8:3 *Or "fasting." 8:8, 20 *Or "provision baskets."

MARK 8:1-28

except for one loaf.^a **15** And he warned them in no uncertain terms: **“Keep your eyes open; look out for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”**^b **16** So they began arguing with one another over the fact that they had no bread. **17** Noting this, he said to them: **“Why do you argue over your having no bread? Do you not yet perceive and understand? Are your hearts still dull in understanding?”** **18** ‘Though having eyes, do you not see; and though having ears, do you not hear?’ Do you not remember **19** when I broke the five loaves^c for the 5,000 men, how many baskets full of fragments you collected?” They said to him: **“Twelve.”**^d **20** **“When I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000 men, how many large baskets* full of fragments did you take up?”** And they said to him: **“Seven.”**^e **21** With that he said to them: **“Do you not yet understand?”**

22 Now they put in at Beth-sa'i-da. Here people brought him a blind man, and they pleaded with him to touch him.^f **23** And he took the blind man by the hand and brought him outside the village. After spitting on his eyes,^g he laid his hands on him and asked him: **“Do you see anything?”** **24** The man looked up and said: **“I see people, but they look like trees walking about.”** **25** Again he laid his hands on the man's eyes, and the man saw clearly. His sight was restored, and he could see everything distinctly. **26** So he sent him home, saying: **“Do not enter into the village.”**

27 Jesus and his disciples now left for the villages of Caesa-re'a Phi-lip'pi, and on the way he began to question his disciples, saying: **“Who are people saying that I am?”**^h **28** They said to him: **“John the Baptist,ⁱ**

MARK 8:29-9:14

but others say E·li'jah,^a and still others, one of the prophets.”

29 And he put the question to them: “You, though, who do you say I am?” Peter answered him:

“You are the Christ.”^b **30** At that he strictly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.^c

31 Also, he began teaching them that the Son of man must undergo many sufferings and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed,^d and rise three days later.^e

32 Indeed, he was making that statement openly. But Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.^f **33** At this he turned, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying: “Get behind me, Satan! because you think, not God’s thoughts, but those of men.”^g

34 He now called the crowd to him with his disciples and said to them: “If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake* and keep following me.^h **35** For whoever wants to save his life* will lose it, but whoever loses his life* for my sake and for the sake of the good news will save it.ⁱ

36 Really, what good will it do a man to gain the whole world and to lose his life? ^{*j} **37** What, really, would a man give in exchange for his life? ^{*k}

38 For whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous* and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him^l when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”^m

9 Furthermore, he said to them: “Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here who will not taste death at all until first they see the Kingdom of God already having come in power.”ⁿ **2** Six days later Je-

8:34 *See Glossary. **8:35-37** *Or “soul.” **8:38** *Or “unfaithful.”

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MARK 7-8 | Pick Up Your Torture Stake and Keep Following Me

8:34 

Jesus said: “Keep following me.” Therefore, we must endure. How can you strive to do that when it comes to . . .

prayer?	
study?	
the ministry?	
meeting attendance?	
commenting at meetings?	



May 7-13

Treasures From God's Word

w92 8/1 17 paragraph 14

“If anyone wants to come after me,” said Jesus Christ to a gathering of disciples and others, “let him disown himself (or, “he must say, ‘No’ to self,” *Charles B. Williams*) and pick up his torture stake and follow me continually.” (Mark 8:34) When we accept this invitation, we must be prepared to do so “continually,” not because there is some special merit in self-denial, but because one moment’s indiscretion, one lapse in good judgment, may undo all that has been built up, even jeopardizing our eternal welfare. Spiritual progress is usually made at a rather slow pace, but how quickly it can be nullified if we are not on guard constantly!

w08 10/15 25-26 paragraphs 3-4

3 On that same occasion, Jesus asked two thought-provoking questions: “Of what benefit is it for a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul?” and, “What, really, would a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36, 37) The answer to the first question is obvious from a human standpoint. It is of no benefit for a man to gain the whole world if he loses his life, his soul. Possessions are useful only if one is alive to enjoy them. Jesus’ second question: “What, really, would a man give in exchange for his soul?” might have reminded his listeners of Satan’s allegation in the days of Job: “Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul.” (Job 2:4) For some who do not worship Jehovah, Satan’s words might be true. Many would do anything, abandon any principle, just to stay alive. Christians, though, view things differently.

4 We know that Jesus did not come to earth to give us health, wealth, and a long life in this world. He came to open up the opportunity of living forever in the new world, and the prospect of that life is what we value highly. (John 3:16) A Christian would understand Jesus’ first question to mean, “Of what benefit is it for a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his hope of

everlasting life?” The answer is, Of no benefit at all. (1 John 2:15-17) To help us answer Jesus’ second question, we might well ask ourselves, ‘How much am I willing to sacrifice now to make my hope of life in the new world sure?’ Our answer to that question, as seen in our life course, reveals the strength of that hope in our hearts.—Compare John 12:25.

143 paragraph 4

Yes, to prove worthy of Jesus’ favor, his followers must be courageous and self-sacrificing. Jesus states: “Whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38) Yes, when Jesus thus comes, “he will repay each one according to his behavior.”— Matthew 16:27.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

w16.08 30 paragraphs 1-4

This was just one of many issues in which Jesus’ enemies found fault with him and his disciples. The Mosaic Law included a number of commands on ceremonial purity regarding such matters as bodily discharges, leprosy, and dealing with human and animal corpses. It also gave instructions on how impurities could be removed. This could be done by sacrifice, washing, or sprinkling.—Leviticus, chapters 11-15; Numbers, chapter 19.

The Jewish rabbis expounded on every detail of these laws. One source says that each cause for impurity would be subjected “to questioning concerning the circumstances in which it may be contracted, how and to what extent it may be transmitted to others, the utensils and objects capable and incapable of becoming unclean, and finally, the means and rituals required for purification.”

Jesus’ opponents asked him: “Why do your disciples not observe the tradition of the men of former times, but they eat their meal with defiled hands?” (Mark 7:5) Those religious enemies were not referring to the taking

of sanitary measures. As a ritual, the rabbis required that water be poured over their hands prior to eating. The above-quoted source adds: “It is also debated which vessels are to be used for the pouring, which kind of water is suitable, who should pour, and how much of the hands should be covered with water.”

Jesus’ reaction to all these man-made laws was simple. He told the first-century Jewish religious leaders: “Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me [Jehovah]. It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, for they teach commands of men as doctrines.’ You let go of the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men.”—Mark 7:6-8.

w00 2/15 17-18 paragraphs 9-11

9 The man was deaf and hardly able to talk. Jesus may have sensed this man’s particular nervousness or embarrassment. Jesus then did something a bit unusual. He took the man aside, away from the crowd, to a private place. Then Jesus used some signs to convey to the man what he was about to do. He “put his fingers into the man’s ears and, after spitting, he touched his tongue.” (Mark 7:33) Next, Jesus looked up to heaven and uttered a prayerful sigh. These demonstrative actions would say to the man, ‘What I am about to do for you is due to power from God.’ Finally, Jesus said: “Be opened.” (Mark 7:34) At that, the man’s hearing was restored, and he was able to speak normally.

10 What consideration Jesus showed for others! He was sensitive to their feelings, and this sympathetic regard, in turn, moved him to act in ways that spared their feelings. As Christians, we do well to cultivate and demonstrate the mind of Christ in this regard. The Bible admonishes us: “All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind.” (1 Peter 3:8) This certainly calls for us to speak and act in ways that take the feelings of others into consideration.

11 In the congregation, we can show consideration for the feelings of others by according them dignity, treating them as we would like to be treated. (Matthew 7:12) That would include being careful about what we say as well

as how we say it. (Colossians 4:6) Remember that 'thoughtless words can stab like a sword.' (Proverbs 12:18) What about in the family? A husband and wife who truly love each other are sensitive to each other's feelings. (Ephesians 5:33) They avoid harsh words, unrelenting criticism, and biting sarcasm—all of which can cause hurt feelings that are not easily healed. Children too have feelings, and loving parents take these into consideration. When correction is needed, such parents give it in ways that respect the dignity of their children and spare them needless embarrassment. (Colossians 3:21) When we thus demonstrate consideration for others, we show that we have the mind of Christ.

MARK

Study Notes—Chapter 7

7:2

with defiled hands, that is, unwashed ones: Mark's explanation here and in verses 3 and 4 would benefit readers who were not familiar with the term "defiled hands" or the Jewish practice of handwashing. (See "Introduction to Mark.") This practice was a ceremonial cleansing to adhere to tradition rather than a concern for hygiene. Later, the Babylonian Talmud (*Sotah 4b*) puts eating with unwashed hands on par with having relations with a prostitute, and it states that those who lightly esteem handwashing will be "uprooted from the world."

7:3

wash their hands: The Mosaic Law required that the priests wash their hands and their feet before ministering at the altar or entering the tent of meeting. (Ex 30:18-21) However, as shown in the study note on Mr 7:2, the Pharisees and other Jews in Jesus' day adhered to human tradition when they ceremonially cleansed themselves. Of the four Gospel accounts, only Mark's account mentions that the ceremonial washing of hands reached **up to the elbow**.

7:4

wash themselves: Many ancient manuscripts use the Greek word *ba·pti'zo* (to dip; to immerse) here, a term that most often describes Christian baptism, but at Lu 11:38, it is used to describe a broad range of repeated ritual washings rooted in Jewish tradition. Other ancient manuscripts here use the Greek term *rhan·ti'zo*, meaning "to sprinkle; to cleanse by sprinkling." (Heb 9:13, 19, 21, 22) Regardless of which manuscript reading is preferred, the general meaning remains the same; devout Jews did not eat unless they in some way cleansed themselves ceremonially. In Jerusalem, there is archaeological evidence that the Jews used ritual baths at this time, which in this context could give support for rendering the verb *ba·pti'zo*, "immerse themselves."

baptisms: Or "immersions into water." The Greek word *ba·pti-smos'* is here used regarding cleansing rituals practiced by some religious Jews in

Jesus' time. They baptized, or immersed into water, the cups, pitchers, and copper vessels used at meals.

7:11

corban: The Greek word *kor-ban'* is a loanword from the Hebrew *qor-ban'*, meaning "an offering." This Hebrew word is often used in Leviticus and Numbers and applies both to offerings containing blood and to those that are bloodless. (Le 1:2, 3; 2:1; Nu 5:15; 6:14, 21) A related word, *kor-ba-nas'*, appears at Mt 27:6, where it is rendered "sacred treasury."—See study note on Mt 27:6.

a gift dedicated to God: The scribes and Pharisees taught that money, property, or anything that a person dedicated as a gift to God belonged to the temple. According to this tradition, a son could keep the dedicated gift and use it for his own interests, claiming that it was reserved for the temple. Some evidently evaded the responsibility of caring for their parents by dedicating their assets in this way.—Mr 7:12.

7:16

Some manuscripts here include the words "If anyone has ears to listen, let him listen," but they do not appear in important early manuscripts. Therefore, these words are evidently not part of the original text of Mark. Similar words, though, can be found at Mr 4:9, 23 as part of the inspired Scriptures. Some scholars are of the opinion that a copyist introduced these words here as a natural comment following verse 14 by drawing from the wording at Mr 4:9, 23.—See App. A3.

7:19

Thus he declared all foods clean: The Greek text allows for these words to be a continuation of what Jesus said, but they are generally understood to be Mark's observation on the implications of what Jesus had just explained. It does not mean that Jesus was declaring that Jews could now eat certain foods that had been considered unclean according to the Mosaic Law. That Law remained in force until Jesus' death. Mark's comment must be understood in accord with this historical context. (Le, chap. 11; Ac 10:9-16; Col 2:13, 14) The tradition-bound religious leaders felt that even "clean" foods would make a person unclean unless he first

followed elaborate cleansing rituals not required by the Law. Therefore, the meaning of Mark's comment is evidently that Jesus declared that foods counted as "clean" according to the Mosaic Law would not defile the eater just because he had not ritualistically washed his hands according to man-made traditions. Furthermore, some have understood that Mark was also commenting on the future implications Jesus' words would have for Christians. By the time Mark wrote his Gospel, Peter had seen the vision in which he was told, in language similar to this passage in Mark, that "God has cleansed" foods that were once considered defiled according to the Mosaic Law. (Ac 10:13-15) In either case, the words appear to be Mark's inspired summary of the implications of Jesus' words, not the words of Jesus himself.

7:21

sexual immorality: The plural form of the Greek word *por·nei'a* is used here and could be rendered "acts (cases) of sexual immorality."—See study note on Mt 5:32 and Glossary.

7:22

acts of adultery: The plural form of the Greek word for "adultery" (*moi·khei'a*) is used here.—See Glossary, "Adultery."

brazen conduct: Or "shameless conduct." The Greek word *a·sel'gei·a* denotes conduct that is a serious violation of God's laws and that reflects a brazen or boldly contemptuous attitude.—See Glossary.

an envious eye: The Greek word here rendered "envious" literally means "bad; wicked." The term "eye" is here used figuratively of a person's intent, disposition, or emotions. The expression "an envious eye" could also be rendered "envy."—See study notes on Mt 6:23; 20:15.

7:26

a Greek: This non-Israelite woman was likely of Greek descent.

Syrophoenician: This expression, a combination of "Syrian" and "Phoenician," probably originated because Phoenicia was part of the Roman province of Syria.—See study note on Mt 15:22, where the woman is called "Phoenician," or "Canaanite."

7:27

children . . . little dogs: Since dogs were unclean according to the Mosaic Law, the Scriptures often use the term in a derogatory sense. (Le 11:27; Mt 7:6; Php 3:2; Re 22:15) However, in both Matthew's account (15:26) and Mark's account of Jesus' conversation, the diminutive form of the term meaning "little dog" or "house dog" is used, softening the comparison. Perhaps this indicates that Jesus used an affectionate term for household pets in non-Jewish homes. By likening Israelites to "children" and non-Jews to "little dogs," Jesus evidently wanted to indicate an order of priority. In a household that had both children and dogs, the children would be fed first.

7:31

Decapolis: A group of Greek cities, originally made up of ten cities (from Greek *de'ka*, meaning "ten," and *po'lis*, "city"). It was also the name for the region east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, where most of these cities were located. They were centers of Hellenistic culture and trade. Jesus passed through this region, but there is no record of his having visited any of the cities. (Mt 4:25; Mr 5:20)—See App. A7 and B10.

7:32

a deaf man with a speech impediment: Only Mark mentions Jesus' healing of the deaf man who had a speech impediment.—Mr 7:31-37.

7:33

took him aside privately: This was not something Jesus usually did when healing the sick. He may have desired to avoid embarrassing the man. Jesus wanted to help him in the kindest way possible.

spitting: Some among both Jews and Gentiles considered spitting a means or sign of healing. So Jesus may have spit simply to convey to the man that he was about to be healed. Whatever the case, Jesus was not using his saliva as a natural healing agent.

7:34

sighed deeply: Mark often records Jesus' feelings, perhaps as related to Mark by Peter, a man of deep emotion. (See "Introduction to Mark.") This verb may describe a prayerful sigh or groan, reflecting Jesus' sympathy for the man or even Jesus' pain over the suffering of all humans. A related verb at Ro 8:22 describes the "groaning" of all creation.

Ephphatha: A Greek transliteration thought by some to derive from a Hebrew root word that is rendered "be unstopped" at Isa 35:5. Jesus' use of this expression must have made an indelible impression on an eyewitness, possibly Peter, who may have related it verbatim to Mark. Like the expression "*Talitha cumi*" (Mr 5:41), it is one of the few times that Jesus is quoted verbatim.

MARK Study Notes—Chapter 8

8:8

large baskets: Or "provision baskets." The Greek word *sphy·ris'* used here seems to denote a type of basket that is larger than the ones used on an earlier occasion when Jesus fed about 5,000 men. (See study note on Mr 6:43.) The same Greek word is used for the "basket" in which Paul was lowered to the ground through an opening in the wall of Damascus.—Ac 9:25.

8:9

about 4,000 men: Only Matthew's parallel account (Mt 15:38) mentions the women and the young children when reporting this miracle. It is possible that the total number of those miraculously fed was over 12,000.

8:10

Dalmanutha: This name is not mentioned in other Biblical or non-Biblical sources, but it was preserved in Mark's Gospel. Though the exact location is uncertain, it seems to have been near the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, since the area is called Magadan in Matthew's parallel account. (See study note on Mt 15:39.) Dalmanutha may have been another name for Magadan.

8:12

sighed deeply: Mark, who frequently records how Jesus felt and reacted (Mr 3:5; 7:34; 9:36; 10:13-16, 21), uses a verb found only here in the Christian Greek Scriptures. This intensive form of a related verb, used at Mr 7:34 (see study note), expresses a strong emotional reaction. This deep sigh may have reflected his exasperation over the Pharisees' demand for a sign while they stubbornly ignored the evident demonstrations of power that they had already seen.

8:15

leaven: Or “yeast.” Often used figuratively in the Bible to denote corruption and sin, “leaven” here refers to corrupt teaching and influence. (Mt 16:6, 11, 12; 1Co 5:6-8) The repetition of the word in this verse suggests that “the leaven” of the Pharisees was different from that of Herod and his party followers, the Herodians. This latter group was more political than religious. An example of their nationalistic “leaven” was the question about the paying of taxes that the two groups used in an attempt to trap Jesus.—Mr 12:13-15.

Herod: Some ancient manuscripts read “Herodians.”—See Glossary, “Herod, party followers of.”

8:19

baskets: Reporting on the two occasions when Jesus miraculously fed the crowds (see study notes on Mr 6:43; 8:8, 20 and parallel accounts at Mt 14:20; 15:37; 16:9, 10), the accounts consistently distinguish between the types of baskets used for collecting leftovers. When he fed the 5,000 men, the Greek term *ko'phi-nos* (“basket”) is used; when he fed the 4,000 men, the Greek word *sphy-ris'* (“large basket”) is used. This indicates that the writers were present or had received the facts from reliable eyewitnesses.

8:20

large baskets: Or “provision baskets.” The Greek word *sphy-ris'* used here seems to denote a type of basket that is larger than the ones used on an earlier occasion when Jesus fed about 5,000 men. (See study note on Mr 6:43.) The same Greek word is used for the “basket” in which Paul

was lowered to the ground through an opening in the wall of Damascus.—Ac 9:25.

8:22

a blind man: Mark is the only Gospel writer to record Jesus' healing of this blind man.—Mr 8:22-26.

8:27

Caesarea Philippi: A town situated at the headwaters of the Jordan River at an elevation of 350 m (1,150 ft) above sea level. The town is some 40 km (25 mi) N of the Sea of Galilee and near the SW foot of Mount Hermon. It was named Caesarea by Philip the tetrarch, son of Herod the Great, in honor of the Roman emperor. In order to distinguish it from the seaport city of the same name, it was called Caesarea Philippi, which means "Caesarea of Philip."—See App. B10.

8:28

John the Baptist: John: The English equivalent of the Hebrew name Jehohanan or Johanan, meaning "Jehovah Has Shown Favor; Jehovah Has Been Gracious." **the Baptizer:** Or "the Immerser; the Dipper." The Greek participle rendered "Baptizer" here and at Mr 6:14, 24 could also be rendered "one who baptizes." The form is slightly different from the Greek noun *Ba·pti·stes'*, which is rendered "Baptist" at Mr 6:25; 8:28 and in Matthew and Luke. The two designations, "Baptizer" and "Baptist," are used interchangeably at Mr 6:24, 25.

8:29

the Christ: Peter identifies Jesus as "the Christ" (Greek, *ho Khri·stos'*), a title equivalent to "the Messiah" (from Hebrew *Ma·shi'ach*), both meaning "Anointed One." Here "Christ" is preceded by the definite article in Greek, evidently as a way of emphasizing Jesus' office as the Messiah.—See study notes on Mt 1:1; 2:4.

8:31

Son of man: Or "Son of a human." This expression occurs about 80 times in the Gospels. Jesus used it to refer to himself, evidently emphasizing that he was truly human, born from a woman, and that he

was a fitting human counterpart to Adam, having the power to redeem humankind from sin and death. (Ro 5:12, 14-15) The same expression also identified Jesus as the Messiah, or the Christ.—Da 7:13, 14; see Glossary.

elders: Lit., “older men.” In the Bible, the Greek term *pre-sby'te-ros* refers primarily to those who hold a position of authority and responsibility in a community or a nation. Although the term sometimes refers to physical age (as at Lu 15:25; Ac 2:17), it is not limited to those who are elderly. Here it refers to the leaders of the Jewish nation, who are often mentioned together with chief priests and scribes. The Sanhedrin was made up of men from these three groups.—Mr 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; see study note on Mt 16:21 and Glossary, “Elder; Older man.”

chief priests: The Greek term is rendered “high priest” when it is singular and refers to the chief representative of the people before God. Here the plural refers to principal men of the priesthood, including former high priests and, possibly, the heads of the 24 priestly divisions. See Glossary, “Chief priest.— An alternate term for “high priest” in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the expression “chief priests” evidently denoted the principal men of the priesthood, possibly including any deposed high priests and the heads of the 24 priestly divisions.—2Ch 26:20; Ezr 7:5; Mt 2:4; Mr 8:31.

8:33

Get behind me: According to the parallel account at Mt 16:23, Jesus adds: “You are a stumbling block to me.” (See study note on Mt 18:7.) Jesus thus strongly **rebuked** Peter. Jesus refused to allow anything to hinder him from fulfilling his Father’s will. His words may also have reminded Peter of his proper place as a supportive follower of his Master.

Satan: Jesus was not identifying Peter with Satan the Devil but was referring to him as a resister, or opposer, which is the meaning of the Hebrew expression *sa-tan'*. Jesus may have implied that Peter, by his action on this occasion, had allowed himself to be influenced by Satan.

8:34

come after me: Or, according to some ancient manuscripts, “follow after me.”

let him disown himself: Or “let him give up all right to himself.” This indicates a person’s willingness to deny himself utterly or to relinquish ownership of himself to God. The Greek phrase can be rendered “he must say no to himself,” which is fitting because it may involve saying no to personal desires, ambitions, or convenience. (2Co 5:14, 15) The same Greek verb is used by Mark when describing Peter’s denial of Jesus.—Mr 14:30, 31, 72.

torture stake: Or “execution stake.” In classical Greek, the word *stau·ros* primarily referred to an upright stake or pole. Used figuratively, this term sometimes stands for the suffering, shame, torture, and even death that a person experienced because of being a follower of Jesus.—See Glossary.

8:35

life: Or “soul.”—See Glossary, “Soul.”— The traditional rendering of the Hebrew word *ne’phesh* and the Greek word *psy·khe*. In examining the way these terms are used in the Bible, it becomes evident that they basically refer to (1) people, (2) animals, or (3) the life that a person or an animal has. (Ge 1:20; 2:7; Nu 31:28; 1Pe 3:20; also ftns.) In contrast to the way that the term “soul” is used in many religious contexts, the Bible shows that both *ne’phesh* and *psy·khe*, in connection with earthly creatures, refer to that which is material, tangible, visible, and mortal. In this translation, these original-language words have most often been rendered according to their meaning in each context, using such terms as “life,” “creature,” “person,” “one’s whole being,” or simply as a personal pronoun (for example, “I” for “my soul”). In most cases, footnotes give the alternative rendering “soul.” When the term “soul” is used, either in the main text or in footnotes, it should be understood in line with the above explanation. When referring to doing something with one’s whole soul, it means to do it with one’s whole being, wholeheartedly, or with one’s whole life. (De 6:5; Mt 22:37) In some contexts, these original-language words can be used to refer to the desire or appetite of a living creature.

They can also refer to a dead person or a dead body.—Nu 6:6; Pr 23:2; Isa 56:11; Hag 2:13.

8:36

life: Or “soul.”—See Glossary, “Soul.”

8:37

life: Or “soul.”—See Glossary, “Soul.”

8:38

adulterous: Or “unfaithful.” In a spiritual sense, adultery denotes unfaithfulness to God on the part of those who are joined to him in a covenant. The false religious practices of natural Israel were a violation of the Law covenant, making the Israelites guilty of spiritual adultery. (Jer 3:8, 9; 5:7, 8; 9:2; 13:27; 23:10; Ho 7:4) For similar reasons, Jesus denounced as adulterous the generation of Jews in his day. (Mt 12:39; 16:4) If Christians who are in the new covenant defile themselves with the present system of things, they commit spiritual adultery. In principle, this would be true of all those who are dedicated to Jehovah.—Jas 4:4.

- Song 13 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Pick Up Your Torture Stake and Keep Following Me”:** (10 min.)
 Mr 8:34—In order to follow Christ, we must disown ourselves (*nwtsty* study note; *w92* 8/1 17 ¶14)
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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) Mr 7:1-15

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call Video:** (4 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bhs* 165-166 ¶6-7

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

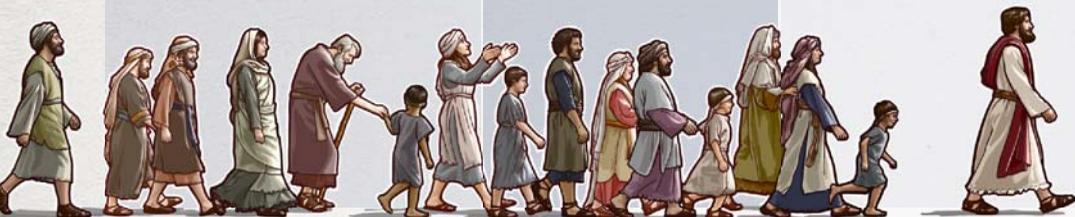
- Song 51
- **Local Needs:** (5 min.)
- **“Prepare Your Children to Follow Christ”:** (10 min.) Discussion.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jy* chap. 19 ¶10-16, box on p. 50
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 60 and Prayer

MARK 7-8 | Pick Up Your Torture Stake and Keep Following Me

8:34 

Jesus said: “Keep following me.” Therefore, we must endure. How can you strive to do that when it comes to . . .

prayer?	
study?	
the ministry?	
meeting attendance?	
commenting at meetings?	





Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

●○○ INITIAL CALL

Question: How can we know what the future holds?

Scripture: Isa 46:10

Link: What future does God promise for humans and the earth?



●●○ FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: What future does God promise for humans and the earth?

Scripture: Ps 37:29

Link: How can we make the hope offered in the Bible our own?



○○● SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: How can we make the hope offered in the Bible our own?

Scripture: Ps 37:34

Link: What way of life does God invite us to follow?

worship.—**Read Exodus 20:4, 5; Psalm 115:4-8; Isaiah 42:8; 1 John 5:21.**

⁴ Some people may spend a lot of time and energy trying to please their dead ancestors. They may even worship them. But we have learned that those who have died cannot help us or hurt us. They are not living somewhere else. Actually, it is dangerous to try to communicate with them because any message that appears to come from a dead relative would in fact be from the demons. That is why Jehovah commanded the Israelites not to try to talk with the dead or get involved in any other sort of demonism.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12; see Endnotes 26 and 31.

⁵ What can help you to stop using images to worship God or to stop worshipping your ancestors? You need to read the Bible and think carefully about how Jehovah views those things. He views them as “detestable,” or disgusting. (Deuteronomy 27:15) Pray to Jehovah every day for help to view things as he does and for help to worship him in the way that he wants. (Isaiah 55:9) You can be sure that Jehovah will give you the strength you need to remove from your life anything related to false worship.

SHOULD WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

⁶ Around the world, Christmas is one of the most popular holidays, and most people think that it is

4. (a) Why should we not worship our ancestors? (b) Why did Jehovah tell his people not to try to speak with the dead?

5. What can help you to stop using images to worship God and to stop worshipping your ancestors?

6. Why was December 25 chosen as the day to celebrate Jesus' birth?

a celebration of the birth of Jesus. But Christmas is actually connected with false worship. One encyclopedia explains that Roman pagans celebrated the birthday of the sun on December 25. Church leaders wanted more pagans to become Christians, so even though Jesus was not born on December 25, they decided to celebrate Jesus' birth on that date. (Luke 2:8-12) Jesus' disciples did not celebrate Christmas. One reference book explains that in the 200 years after Jesus' birth, "no one knew, and few people cared, exactly when he was born." (*Sacred Origins of Profound Things*) Christmas celebrations started several hundred years after Jesus lived on earth.

⁷ Many people know about the pagan origins of Christmas and its traditions, such as partying and gift-giving. For example, in England and parts of America, there was a time when celebrating Christmas was forbidden because of its pagan origins. Anyone who celebrated it was punished. But eventually people began to celebrate Christmas again. Why do true Christians not celebrate Christmas? Because they want to please God in everything they do.

SHOULD WE CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS?

⁸ Another popular celebration for many people is their birthday. Should Christians celebrate birthdays? The only birthday celebrations mentioned in the Bible were held by those who did not worship Jehovah. (Genesis 40:20; Mark 6:21) Birthday celebrations were used to honor false gods. That is why the early Chris-

7. Why do true Christians not celebrate Christmas?

8, 9. Why didn't early Christians celebrate birthdays?

51 *To God We Are Dedicated!*

(Matthew 16:24)

1. To Christ, by our God, Jehovah, we have been drawn
 To be his disciples from now on.
From Jehovah's lofty throne,
 How the light of truth has shone.
In our hearts, our faith has grown;
 Our lives we vow to disown.

(CHORUS)

*To God we are dedicated; This is our choice.
In him and in Jesus we now rejoice.*

2. In prayer we have come before Jehovah to say
 We'll serve him forever and obey.
It's a joy beyond compare,
 One that we are glad to share,
As Jehovah's name we bear,
 And Kingdom truth we declare.

(Chorus)

- Song 13 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

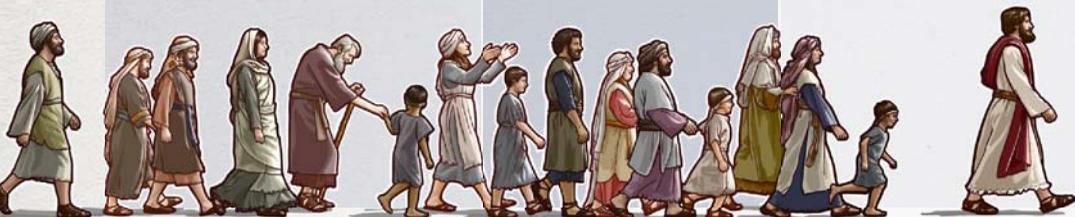
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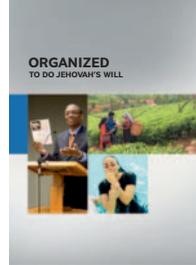
prayer?	
study?	
the ministry?	
meeting attendance?	
commenting at meetings?	



Prepare Your Children to Follow Christ

Nothing brings Christian parents more joy than seeing their child “disown himself and pick up his torture stake and keep following” Jesus. (Mr 8:34; 3Jo 4) What can parents do to prepare their children to follow Jesus, dedicate their life to Jehovah, and get baptized? What are some indications that children are ready for the important step of baptism?

Read “A Message to Christian Parents” on pages 165-166 of *Organized to Do Jehovah’s Will*, and then consider the following questions:



1. What is a disciple?

2. What should parents teach their children?

3. In keeping with their age, how should children apply the following scriptures in order to qualify for baptism?

- Col 3:20

- Lu 2:46

- Ps 122:1

- Mt 4:4

- Mt 6:33

- 1Co 15:33



A Message to Christian Parents:

As a parent, you desire to help your precious children come to love Jehovah and dedicate their life to him. What can you do to help prepare them for baptism? At what point will they be ready for this important step? Jesus instructed his followers: “Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them.” (Matt. 28:19) According to this, the primary requirement for baptism is to be a disciple—one who not only understands and believes Christ’s teachings but follows them closely. This is something that even the relatively young can do.

Set a good example for your children, and inculcate Jehovah’s teachings in them. (Deut. 6:6-9) This includes using the information in the books *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* and *“Keep Yourselves in God’s Love”* to teach them basic Bible truths and prepare them to reason on Bible principles. Help your children to be able to explain their beliefs in their own words. (1 Pet. 3:15) The knowledge and encouragement they receive from you and from personal study, congregation meetings, and good associates will help them progress to baptism and beyond. Keep spiritual goals before them.

Proverbs 20:11 says: “Even a child is known by his actions, whether his behavior is pure and right.” What are some actions that would indicate that a child, either a boy or a girl, has become a disciple of Jesus Christ and is ready to get baptized?

A child who is progressing toward baptism should obey his godly parents. (Col. 3:20) Regarding Jesus when he was 12 years old, the Bible says: “He continued subject to [his parents].” (Luke 2:51) Of course, you cannot expect your child to be perfect. But one who desires to get baptized will strive to follow Jesus’ example and be known for his subjection to his parents.

He will also demonstrate an interest in learning Bible truths. (Luke 2:46) Does your child want to attend meetings and participate? (Ps. 122:1) Does he have an appetite for regular Bible reading and personal study?—Matt. 4:4.

A child progressing toward baptism endeavors to put Kingdom interests first. (Matt. 6:33) He is mindful of his responsibility as an unbaptized publisher and demonstrates initiative to go in the field service and talk at the doors. He shares in various aspects of the ministry and is not ashamed to let his teachers and schoolmates know that he is one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He takes his assignments for the Life and Ministry Meeting seriously.

He will also strive to remain morally clean by avoiding bad associations. (Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33) This will be reflected in his preferences regarding music, movies, television programs, video games, and the use of the Internet.

Many have responded to the diligent efforts of their parents, made the truth their own, and qualified for baptism in their youth. May Jehovah bless you as you help your children reach this important milestone in their relationship with Jehovah.

when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” Then he tells her: “The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for indeed, the Father is looking for ones like these to worship him.”—John 4:21, 23, 24.

What the Father looks for in true worshippers is not where they worship but how they worship. The woman is impressed. “I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ,” she says. “Whenever that one comes, he will declare all things to us openly.”—John 4:25.

Then Jesus reveals an important truth: “I am he, the one speaking to you.” (John 4:26) Think of that! Here is a woman who comes at midday to draw water. Yet, Jesus favors her in a wonderful way. He tells her pointedly what he has apparently not yet confessed openly to others—that he is the Messiah.

MANY SAMARITANS BELIEVE

Jesus’ disciples return from Sychar with food. They find him at Jacob’s well where they left him, but now he is talking with a Samaritan woman. As

the disciples arrive, she leaves her water jar and heads for the city.

Once in Sychar, the woman recounts to the people the things that Jesus told her. With conviction, she tells them: “Come and see a man who told me everything I did.” Then, perhaps to arouse curiosity, she asks: “Could this not perhaps be the Christ?” (John 4:29) That is a question on a vital subject—one that has been of interest since Moses’ day. (Deuteronomy 18:18) It moves the people of the city to come out to see Jesus for themselves.

Meanwhile, the disciples urge Jesus to eat the food they have brought. But he replies: “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The disciples wonder at that, saying to one another: “No one brought him anything to eat, did he?” Jesus kindly explains with words that hold meaning for all of his followers: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”—John 4:32-34.

The work Jesus is talking about is not that of the grain harvest, which is some four months away. Rather, Jesus is referring to a spiritual harvest, as

WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS?

The region called Samaria lay between Judea to the south and Galilee to the north. After King Solomon's death, the ten northern tribes of Israel broke away from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

The people of those ten tribes turned to calf worship. So in 740 B.C.E., Jehovah allowed the Assyrians to overrun Samaria. The invaders carried off much of the population, replacing them with people from elsewhere in the Assyrian Empire. These worshippers of foreign gods intermarried with Israelites who remained in the land. Over time, people of this area developed a form of worship that incorporated some of the beliefs and practices set out in God's Law, such as circumcision. Still, their religious practices could not be called true worship.—2 Kings 17:9-33; Isaiah 9:9.

In Jesus' day, the Samaritans accepted the books of Moses but did not worship at the temple in Jerusalem. For years they had used a temple built on Mount Gerizim, not far from Sychar, and they continued worshipping on that mountain even after that temple was destroyed. The animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews was evident during Jesus' ministry.—John 8:48.

he goes on to show: “Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting. Already the reaper is receiving wages and gathering fruit for everlasting life, so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.”—John 4:35, 36.

Jesus may already realize the effect of his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Many from Sychar are putting faith in him on account of her testimony, for she is telling the people: “He told me all the things I did.” (John 4:39) Therefore, when they come from Sychar to the well, they ask Jesus to stay and talk to them some more. Jesus accepts the invitation and remains in Samaria for two days.

As the Samaritans listen to Jesus, many more believe in him. They tell the woman: “We no longer believe just because of what you said; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the savior of the world.” (John 4:42) Surely the Samaritan woman provides a fine example of how we can witness about Christ, arousing curiosity so that our listeners will welcome more information.

Recall that it is four months before the harvest—evidently the barley harvest, which in this region occurs in the spring. So it is now probably November or December. This means that following the Passover of 30 C.E., Jesus and his disciples have

spent eight months or so in Judea, teaching and baptizing. They now head north to their home territory of Galilee. What awaits them there?



- ◇ What conclusion about Jesus does the Samaritan woman reach, and what does she then do?
- ◇ What have Jesus and his disciples been doing following the Passover of 30 C.E.?

1. In this year of goodwill
by our God, all need to hear
That the day of his anger
will come, and it is near.

(CHORUS)

*It means their life, but not just theirs;
It means our own life as well.
It means their life if they obey,
So all the nations we must tell;
We must tell.*

2. There's a message to preach,
so we spread it all abroad.
We invite all to come and
be reconciled to God.

*(Chorus)**(BRIDGE)*

It's urgent, it's important,
That people listen, learn, and live.
We tell them, and we teach them;
Life-giving truth we freely give.

(Chorus)

MARCH 2018

THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 30–JUNE 3, 2018

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

CROATIA

Two brothers offer a tract to a painter on the bridge in front of Kaštilac, a fortress built in the 16th century, near the city of Split

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 WEEK OF APRIL 30–MAY 6

Baptism—A Requirement for Christians

16 WEEK OF MAY 7-13

Parents, Are You Helping Your Child Progress to Baptism?

What should be our goal when we conduct a Bible study? Why would it be a mistake to delay baptism? What has caused some Christian parents to encourage their children to postpone getting baptized? These questions and others will be addressed in these two articles.

51 *To God We Are Dedicated!*

(Matthew 16:24)

1. To Christ, by our God, Jehovah, we have been drawn
 To be his disciples from now on.
From Jehovah's lofty throne,
 How the light of truth has shone.
In our hearts, our faith has grown;
 Our lives we vow to disown.

(CHORUS)

*To God we are dedicated; This is our choice.
In him and in Jesus we now rejoice.*

2. In prayer we have come before Jehovah to say
 We'll serve him forever and obey.
It's a joy beyond compare,
 One that we are glad to share,
As Jehovah's name we bear,
 And Kingdom truth we declare.

(Chorus)



SONGS:
51, 135

**HOW CAN THESE
VERSES HELP
PARENTS ASSIST
THEIR CHILDREN
TO PROGRESS TO
BAPTISM?**

Colossians 1:9, 10

Ecclesiastes 12:1

James 4:17

Parents, Are You Helping Your Child Progress to Baptism?

“Why are you delaying? Rise, get baptized.”—ACTS 22:16.

“FOR months I kept telling Dad and Mom that I wanted to be baptized, and they often talked to me about it. They wanted to make sure I knew how serious my decision was. On December 31, 1934, the day came for this momentous

1. What do Christian parents want to be sure of before their children get baptized?

event in my life.” Blossom Brandt thus described events surrounding her decision to get baptized. Today, Christian parents have a similar interest in helping their children make wise decisions. Postponing baptism or delaying it needlessly could invite spiritual problems. (Jas. 4:17) Wisely, however, parents want to be sure that *before* their children get baptized, they are ready to shoulder the responsibility of Christian discipleship.

² Some circuit overseers have expressed concern because they meet young ones in their late teens and early 20’s who have grown up in Christian households but who have yet to get baptized. In most cases, these young ones attend congregation meetings and share in the ministry. They view themselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses. Yet, for some reason they hold back from dedicating their lives to Jehovah and getting baptized. What could be the reason for this? In some cases, parents have encouraged them to delay baptism. In this article, we will consider four concerns that have hindered some Christian parents from helping their children progress to baptism.

-
2. (a) Why have some circuit overseers expressed concern?
(b) What will we consider in this article?

IS MY CHILD OLD ENOUGH?

³ Blossom's parents, mentioned in the first paragraph, were understandably concerned whether their daughter was old enough to grasp the significance and seriousness of baptism. How can parents know if a child is in a position to make a valid dedication?

⁴ Read Matthew 28:19, 20. As discussed in the preceding article, the Bible does not specify an age at which a person should get baptized. However, parents can benefit from reflecting on what it means to make a disciple. The Greek word translated "make disciples" at Matthew 28:19 has the sense of teaching with the *intent* of making pupils, or disciples. A disciple is one who learns and understands Jesus' teachings and who is determined to observe them. Thus, the goal of all Christian parents should be to teach their children from infancy with the intention of helping them become baptized disciples of Christ. Granted, an infant would not qualify for baptism. However, the Bible shows that even relatively young children can grasp and appreciate Bible truths.

3. Blossom's parents had what concern?

4. How can Jesus' command found at Matthew 28:19, 20 help parents as they teach their children?

⁵ Timothy was a disciple who made the truth his own at a young age. The apostle Paul stated that Timothy had learned Scriptural truths from infancy. Even though Timothy grew up in a religiously divided household, his Jewish mother and grandmother cultivated in him an appreciation for the Scriptures, as the Jews understood them. As a result, his faith was unshakable. (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14, 15) By the time he was in his late teens or early 20's, Timothy was a Christian disciple who could be considered for special privileges in the congregation. —Acts 16:1-3.

⁶ Of course, each child is unique; not all children become mature at the same rate or at the same point in life. Some have a good measure of mental and emotional maturity at a young age and express a desire to get baptized. Others may not be ready for baptism until they are a bit older. Thus, discerning parents do not pressure their children to get baptized. Rather, they assist each child to make spiritual advancement in keeping with his or her own growth and progress. Parents can rejoice when a child takes to heart the thought behind

5, 6. (a) The Bible's description of Timothy leads us to what conclusion about his baptism? (b) How can discerning parents effectively assist their children?

Proverbs 27:11. (Read.) However, they should never lose sight of their goal—to have their children become Christian disciples. With that in mind, parents will want to consider the question, ‘Does my child have sufficient knowledge to make a dedication to God and get baptized?’

DOES MY CHILD HAVE ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE?

⁷ It is fitting that as teachers in the family, parents want their children to gain a solid foundation of knowledge on which a dedication may be based. Even so, an exhaustive knowledge is not required before a person can make a dedication to God and get baptized. After baptism, all disciples should keep on growing in accurate knowledge. (Read **Colossians 1:9, 10.**) So how much knowledge is initially required?

⁸ The experience of a family in the first century offers parents some insight. (Acts 16:25-33) While on his second missionary tour, about 50 C.E., Paul visited Philippi. While there, he and his companion

7. Does someone who wants to get baptized need to have an exhaustive knowledge of the Bible? Explain.

8, 9. What lessons can we learn from the account about Paul and the jailer?

Silas were arrested on false charges and thrown in jail. During the night, an earthquake shook the foundations of the jail and opened all the doors. The jailer, fearing that the prisoners had escaped, was on the verge of committing suicide when Paul called out to him. Paul and Silas were able to give a fine witness to the jailer and his family. Their appreciation for the truths they were learning about Jesus prompted them to take what step? They got baptized without delay. What can we learn from this account?

⁹ According to custom, the jailer may have been a retired army veteran. He was not familiar with the Scriptures. So to gain a solid foundation of Scriptural knowledge, he needed to learn basic Bible truths, understand what it means to be one of God's servants, and be determined to obey Jesus' teachings. In a relatively brief time, his knowledge of basic Scriptural truths and his appreciation of them prompted him to get baptized. No doubt he continued to add to his knowledge after his baptism. With this example in mind, what can you do when your child expresses a heartfelt appreciation for basic Scriptural teachings, including the meaning and significance of dedication and baptism? You Christian parents may conclude that he can contact the

congregation elders to see if he meets the qualifications to get baptized.* Like other baptized disciples, he will continue to increase in knowledge of Jehovah's purpose throughout his life, even for all eternity.—Rom. 11:33, 34.

IS MY CHILD BEING EDUCATED FOR SUCCESS?

¹⁰ Some parents have concluded that it would be best for their son or daughter to delay baptism in order first to obtain some advanced education and become secure in a career. Such reasoning may be well-intentioned, but will it help their child to achieve genuine success? More important, is it in harmony with the Scriptures? What course does Jehovah's Word encourage?—Read Ecclesiastes 12:1.

¹¹ It is important to remember that this world and all its components are opposed to Jehovah's interests and thinking. (Jas. 4:7, 8; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19) A close relationship with Jehovah is a child's best defense against Satan, his world, and its ungodly thinking. For a parent to place high priority on sec-

* Parents can review with their child the helpful information in *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2, pp. 304-310. See also the "Question Box" in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, April 2011, p. 2.

10, 11. (a) What have some parents concluded? (b) What should be a parent's first concern?

ular pursuits could confuse a child and jeopardize his best interests. Would loving Christian parents really want this world to shape their child's view of success? The fact is, we find true joy and success only when we give Jehovah first place in our lives. —Read Psalm 1:2, 3.

WHAT IF MY CHILD WERE TO SIN?

¹² In explaining her reasons for discouraging her daughter from getting baptized, one Christian mother stated, “I am ashamed to say that the major reason was the disfellowshipping arrangement.” Like that sister, some parents have reasoned that it is better for their child to postpone baptism until he has outgrown the childish tendency to behave foolishly. (Gen. 8:21; Prov. 22:15) They may conclude, ‘As long as my child is not baptized, he cannot be disfellowshipped.’ Why is this deceptive reasoning? —Jas. 1:22.

¹³ Understandably, Christian parents would not want their child to get baptized before being mature enough to make a valid dedication. However, it

12. Why have some parents wanted their child to postpone baptism?

13. Does delaying baptism make one less accountable to Jehovah? Explain.

would be a mistake to conclude that by not being baptized, a child is not accountable to Jehovah. Why is that? Accountability to Jehovah is not founded on the act of getting baptized. Rather, a child is accountable to God when the child knows what is right and what is wrong in Jehovah's eyes. (Read James 4:17.) Thus, rather than discourage a child from getting baptized, wise parents work hard to set the right example. They want to cultivate in their child from infancy a heartfelt appreciation for Jehovah's elevated moral standards. (Luke 6:40) Such appreciation is the best protection, for your child will be motivated to hold to Jehovah's righteous way.—Isa. 35:8.

OTHERS CAN HELP

¹⁴ As spiritual shepherds, congregation elders can reinforce parents' efforts by speaking positively about spiritual goals. One sister who served as a pioneer for more than 70 years recalled the impact of her conversation with Brother Charles T. Russell when she was only six years old. She related, "He took 15 minutes with me to discuss my spiritual goals." Yes, positive words and encouragement can

14. How can the elders reinforce the efforts of parents who are helping their children progress to baptism?

have a long-lasting effect. (Prov. 25:11) Elders can also include parents and their children in Kingdom Hall projects, giving tasks to youths in keeping with their age and abilities.

¹⁵ Members of the congregation can help by demonstrating appropriate personal interest in young ones. This would include being alert to indications of spiritual progress. Did a youth give a heartfelt, well-thought-out comment or share in a part on the midweek meeting program? Has a youth successfully faced a test of integrity or taken advantage of an opportunity to give a witness at school? Be quick to offer sincere commendation. What about making it a point—before or after a meeting—to talk with a young person, manifesting your genuine interest? In these ways and others, young ones can be made to realize that they are part of “the great congregation.”—Ps. 35:18.

HELP YOUR CHILD PROGRESS TO BAPTISM

¹⁶ Bringing up a child in “the discipline and admonition of Jehovah” is one of the greatest privileges

15. What are some ways that others in the congregation can encourage young ones?

16, 17. (a) How does baptism relate to one’s future life prospects? (b) What joy do all Christian parents strive for? (See opening picture.)



a Christian parent can have. (Eph. 6:4; Ps. 127:3) Unlike children in the ancient nation of Israel, the children of Christian parents are not born as part of a people dedicated to Jehovah. Moreover, love for God and for truth is not inherited. From the day of their child's birth, parents should have the intent to make a disciple, assisting their child to become a dedicated, baptized servant of Jehovah. What could be more important? After all, it is each individual's dedication, baptism, and faithful service to God that will bring him in line for being marked for salvation during the coming great tribulation.—Matt. 24:13.

¹⁷ When Blossom Brandt decided that she wanted



Parents should have the goal of helping their child become a disciple
(See paragraphs 16, 17)

to get baptized, her God-fearing parents wanted to be sure that she was ready to take the most important step of her life. Once they were certain that she was ready, they supported her decision. On the night before her baptism, her father did a beautiful thing. Blossom related: “He had all of us get on our knees, and he offered a prayer. He told Jehovah that he was so happy about his little girl’s decision to dedicate her life to Him.” More than 60 years later, Blossom stated: “You can be sure, in all the ages to come, I’ll never forget that night!” May you parents experience the joy and satisfaction that result from seeing your children become dedicated, baptized servants of Jehovah.

Jehovah's Warm Appeal:
"Be Wise, My Son"
(Proverbs 27:11)

1. Young man and young woman,
do give your heart to me.
My foe who now taunts me
will then be made to see.
Your youth and devotion
to me you freely give;
You show all the world
that for me you really live.

(CHORUS)

*Beloved son and precious daughter,
Be wise and make my heart rejoice,
That out of your own heart you serve me,
And offer praise by your own choice.*

2. Rejoice and take pleasure
in giving me your all,
And though you may stumble,
I'll raise you if you fall.
No matter who fails you
or proves to be untrue,
Take comfort in knowing
I'll always cherish you.

(Chorus)

