

- Song 20 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“God Recommends His Own Love to Us”:** (10 min.)
 Ro 5:8, 12—Jehovah loved us “while we were yet sinners” (w11 6/15 12 ¶15)
 Ro 5:13, 14—Sin and death ruled as king (w11 6/15 12 ¶16)
 Ro 5:18, 21—Jehovah sent his Son so that we can receive life (w11 6/15 13 ¶9-10)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Ro 6:3-5—What is meant by baptism “into Christ Jesus” and baptism “into his death”? (w08 6/15 29 ¶7)

Ro 6:7—Why will resurrected ones not be judged on the basis of the sins they committed before they died? (w14 6/1 11 ¶1)

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) Ro 4:1-15 (10)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call Video:** (4 min.) Play and discuss the video.
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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 107
- **Local Needs:** (15 min.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *gy* chap. 54
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 97 and Prayer


ROMANS 4-6 | “God Recommends His Own Love to Us”

5:8, 18, 21

Jehovah’s gift of the ransom addresses issues of universal importance, such as the vindication of his name and sovereignty. But the ransom also enables us to have a righteous standing before Jehovah now and offers the prospect of a happy future for all obedient mankind.

How can we show our gratitude for the gift of the ransom?

- **Dedication and baptism** show that we have faith in the ransom and that we want to belong to Jehovah
- **Preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom** shows that we imitate Jehovah’s far-reaching love for people.—Mt 22:39; Joh 3:16

 **In what other ways can I show my gratitude to Jehovah for the gift of the ransom?**



20 *You Gave Your Precious Son* (1 John 4:9)

1. Jehovah, dear Father,
 There seemed no hope for us.
The ransom has given
 Hope to ev'ryone!
We give our lives to you,
 Our best in all we do.
And we'll tell others too,
 That your will might be done.

(CHORUS)

*You gave your precious Son,
And now we sing as one,
A song we'll sing forever,
for giving us your precious Son.*

2. Your kindness, your mercy,
 They draw us close to you.
Your great name, your friendship,
 These we've come to love.
But something more than this
 Is your most precious gift.
He died that we might live.
 You sent him from above.

(Chorus)

(ENDING)

Jehovah, dear Father, we pray in gratitude.
 We offer our thanks for giving us your precious Son.

Romans 4-6

4 That being so, what will we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For instance, if Abraham was declared righteous as a result of works, he would have reason to boast, but not with God. ³ For what does the scripture say? “Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the man who works, his pay is not counted as an undeserved kindness but as something owed to him. ⁵ On the other hand, to the man who does not work but puts faith in the One who declares the ungodly one righteous, his faith is counted as righteousness. ⁶ Just as David also speaks of the happiness of the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Happy are those whose lawless deeds have been pardoned and whose sins have been covered; ⁸ happy is the man whose sin Jehovah will by no means take into account.”

⁹ Does this happiness, then, only come to circumcised people or also to uncircumcised people? For we say: “Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness.” ¹⁰ Under what circumstances, then, was it counted as righteousness? When he was circumcised or uncircumcised? He was not yet circumcised but was uncircumcised. ¹¹ And he received a sign—namely, circumcision—as a seal of the righteousness by the faith he had while in his uncircumcised state, so that he might be the father of all those having faith while uncircumcised, in order for righteousness to be counted to them; ¹² and so that he might be a father to circumcised offspring, not only to those who adhere to circumcision but also to those who walk orderly in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had while in the uncircumcised state.

¹³ For it was not through law that Abraham or his offspring had the promise that he should be heir of a world, but it was through righteousness by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who adhere to law are heirs, faith becomes useless and the promise has been abolished. ¹⁵ In reality the Law produces wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there any transgression.

¹⁶ That is why it is through faith, so that it might be according to undeserved kindness, in order for the promise to be sure to all his offspring, not only to those who adhere to the Law but also to those who adhere to the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. ¹⁷ (This is just as it is written: “I have appointed you a father of many nations.”) This was in the sight of God, in whom he had faith, who makes the dead alive and calls the things that are not as though they are. ¹⁸ Although beyond hope, yet based on hope, he had faith that he would become the father of many nations according to what had been said: “So your offspring will be.” ¹⁹ And although he did not grow weak in faith, he considered his own body, now as good as dead (since he was about 100 years old), as well as the deadness of the womb of Sarah. ²⁰ But because of the promise of God, he did not waver in a lack of faith; but he became powerful by his faith, giving God glory ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to do. ²² Therefore, “it was counted to him as righteousness.”

²³ However, the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake only, ²⁴ but also for our sake, to whom it will be counted, because we believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord up from the dead. ²⁵ He was handed over for the sake of our trespasses and was raised up for the sake of declaring us righteous.

5 Therefore, now that we have been declared righteous as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord

Jesus Christ, ² through whom we also have obtained access by faith into this undeserved kindness in which we now stand; and let us rejoice, based on hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but let us rejoice while in tribulations, since we know that tribulation produces endurance; ⁴ endurance, in turn, an approved condition; the approved condition, in turn, hope, ⁵ and the hope does not lead to disappointment; because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy spirit, which was given to us.

⁶ For, indeed, while we were still weak, Christ died for ungodly men at the appointed time. ⁷ For hardly would anyone die for a righteous man; though perhaps for a good man someone may dare to die. ⁸ But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Much more, then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we became reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more we will be saved by his life, now that we have become reconciled.

¹¹ Not only that, but we are also rejoicing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

¹² That is why, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned—. ¹³ For sin was in the world before the Law, but sin is not charged against anyone when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death ruled as king from Adam down to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the same way that Adam transgressed, who bears a resemblance to the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by one man's trespass many died, how much more did the undeserved

kindness of God and his free gift by the undeserved kindness of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to many! ¹⁶ Also, it is not the same with the free gift as with the way things worked through the one man who sinned. For the judgment after one trespass was condemnation, but the gift after many trespasses was a declaration of righteousness. ¹⁷ For if by the trespass of the one man death ruled as king through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of the undeserved kindness and of the free gift of righteousness rule as kings in life through the one person, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ So, then, as through one trespass the result to men of all sorts was condemnation, so too through one act of justification the result to men of all sorts is their being declared righteous for life. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one person many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the Law came on the scene so that trespassing might increase. But where sin abounded, undeserved kindness abounded still more. ²¹ To what end? So that just as sin ruled as king with death, so also undeserved kindness might rule as king through righteousness leading to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 What are we to say then? Should we continue in sin so that undeserved kindness may increase? ² Certainly not! Seeing that we died with reference to sin, how can we keep living any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ So we were buried with him through our baptism into his death, in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in a newness of life. ⁵ If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united with him

in the likeness of his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old personality was nailed to the stake along with him in order for our sinful body to be made powerless, so that we should no longer go on being slaves to sin. ⁷ For the one who has died has been acquitted from his sin.

⁸ Moreover, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that Christ, now that he has been raised up from the dead, dies no more; death is no longer master over him. ¹⁰ For the death that he died, he died with reference to sin once for all time, but the life that he lives, he lives with reference to God. ¹¹ Likewise you, consider yourselves to be dead with reference to sin but living with reference to God by Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore, do not let sin continue to rule as king in your mortal bodies so that you should obey their desires. ¹³ Neither go on presenting your bodies to sin as weapons of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, also your bodies to God as weapons of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin must not be master over you, seeing that you are not under law but under undeserved kindness.

¹⁵ What follows? Are we to commit a sin because we are not under law but under undeserved kindness? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks to God that although you were once the slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over. ¹⁸ Yes, since you were set free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh; for just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness leading to lawlessness, so

now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free as to righteousness.

²¹ What, then, was the fruit that you used to produce at that time? Things of which you are now ashamed. For the end of those things is death. ²² However, now that you were set free from sin and became slaves to God, you are producing your fruit in the way of holiness, and the end is everlasting life.

²³ For the wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.

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 **In what other ways can I show my gratitude to Jehovah for the gift of the ransom?**



February 11-17 | Romans 4-6

- Song 20 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 minutes or less)

Treasures From God's Word

- **“God Recommends His Own Love to Us”**: (10 minutes)

“God Recommends His Own Love to Us”

Romans 5:8, 18, 21

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In what other ways can I show my gratitude to Jehovah for the gift of the ransom?

Romans 5:8, 12—Jehovah loved us “while we were yet sinners”

Romans 5:8: But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:12: That is why, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned—.

w11 6/15 12 paragraph 5

Paul outlined the matter, starting with this point: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) We are in a position to understand this because God had a record made of how human life began. Jehovah created two humans, Adam and Eve. The Creator is perfect, and so were those first humans, our ancestors. God gave them but one limiting directive and informed them that disobeying that law would bring a death sentence. (Genesis 2:17) However, they chose to act ruinously, violating God’s reasonable directive, thus rejecting him as Lawgiver and Sovereign.—Deuteronomy 32:4, 5.

Romans 5:13, 14—Sin and death ruled as king

Romans 5:13, 14: For sin was in the world before the Law, but sin is not charged against anyone when there is no law. Nevertheless, death ruled as king from Adam down to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the same way that Adam transgressed, who bears a resemblance to the one who was to come.

w11 6/15 12 paragraph 6

It was only after Adam had become a sinner that he fathered children, passing on sin and its effects to all of them. Of course, they had not violated the divine law as Adam had, so they were not charged with the same sin; nor had any law code yet been given. (Genesis 2:17) Still, Adam’s descendants inherited sin. Thus, sin

and death ruled down to the time when God gave the Israelites a law code, which clearly showed that they were sinners. (Read Romans 5:13, 14.) The effect of inherited sin might be illustrated with certain inherited diseases or defects, such as Mediterranean anemia or hemophilia. You may have read that Alexis, son of Russian Czar Nicholas II and Alexandra, inherited the bleeding disorder hemophilia. Granted, even in such a family, some children do not suffer from those diseases, but they still may be carriers. Not so with sin. The defect of sin from Adam was inevitable. All are subject to it. It is always fatal. And it is passed on to all children. Could that predicament ever be overcome?

Romans 5:18, 21—Jehovah sent his Son so that we can receive life

Romans 5:18: So, then, as through one trespass the result to men of all sorts was condemnation, so too through one act of justification the result to men of all sorts is their being declared righteous for life.

Romans 5:21: To what end? So that just as sin ruled as king with death, so also undeserved kindness might rule as king through righteousness leading to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

w11 6/15 13 paragraphs 9-10

9 What is the sense of the Greek words underlying the expressions “declaration of righteousness” and “declaring of them righteous”? One Bible translator wrote of the concept: “It is a legal metaphor that makes a quasi-legal point. It speaks of a change in a person’s status in relation to God, not of an inner change in the person . . . The metaphor pictures God as the judge who has reached a decision in favor of the accused, who had been brought before

God's court, so to speak, on a charge of unrighteousness. But God acquits the accused."

10 On what basis could the righteous "Judge of all the earth" acquit an unrighteous person? (Genesis 18:25) Laying the groundwork, God lovingly sent his only-begotten Son to earth. Jesus did his Father's will perfectly, despite temptations, extreme ridicule, and abuse. He kept his integrity even to the extent of dying on a torture stake. (Hebrews 2:10) In sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus offered a ransom that might release, or redeem, Adam's offspring from sin and death.—Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:6-8.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Romans 6:3-5—What is meant by baptism "into Christ Jesus" and baptism "into his death"?

Romans 6:3-5: Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? So we were buried with him through our baptism into his death, in order that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in a newness of life. If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.

w08 6/15 29 paragraph 7

When Jehovah anoints followers of Christ with the holy spirit, they are united with Jesus and become members of the congregation that is the body of Christ, he being the Head. (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 27; Colossians 1:18) This is their baptism into Christ Jesus. Anointed Christians are also "baptized into [Christ's] death" in that

they live a life of sacrifice and renounce any hope of everlasting life on earth. Their death, therefore, is a sacrificial one, as was Jesus' death, though their death does not have ransoming value. This baptism into Christ's death is completed when they die and are resurrected to life in heaven.

Romans 6:7—Why will resurrected ones not be judged on the basis of the sins they committed before they died?

Romans 6:7: For the one who has died has been acquitted from his sin.

w14 6/1 11 paragraph 1

When the unrighteous are resurrected, will they be judged on the basis of their past actions? No. Romans 6:7 states: "The one who has died has been acquitted from his sin." The unrighteous will have paid for their sins by dying. Thus, they will be judged on the basis of what they do after their resurrection, not what they did in ignorance before they died. How will they benefit?

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Initial Call

Question: Is the Bible still relevant today?

Scripture: 2Ti. 3:16

Link: Is the Bible compatible with science?

Brandi (Publisher 1): My name's Brandi, and this is Julie. Today we're asking people what they think about this question: is the Bible still relevant today? What's your opinion?

Householder: Mmm. I am not sure it is.

Brandi (Publisher 1): Well, you're not alone. Many people just believe it's too old to be of any real use today. But it's interesting to note what the Bible claims. Have you ever read this passage before? It says: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, so that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

Brandi (Publisher 1): So, according to this verse, all scripture comes from where?

Householder: It says it's inspired of God.

Brandi (Publisher 1): That's right. Now if this claim is true, if it's really from a God who created everything, how would the Bible compare with scientific discoveries? Would it be compatible, or incompatible?

Householder: Well, I guess it would be compatible.

Brandi (Publisher 1): I agree. So perhaps the next time we're here we can discuss that question: is the Bible.

Householder: Well, OK, if you can find me at home.

Brandi (Publisher 1): OK. By the way, as I mentioned, my name is Brandi. May I ask yours?

Householder: My name's Anne.



Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK


Sample Conversations

●○○
INITIAL CALL →

Question: Is the Bible still relevant today?

Scripture: 2Ti 3:16

Link: Is the Bible compatible with science?




○○○
FIRST RETURN VISIT →

Question: Is the Bible compatible with science?

Scripture: Job 26:7

Link: Is the Bible's advice practical?




○○●
SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: Is the Bible's advice practical?

Scripture: Pr 14:30

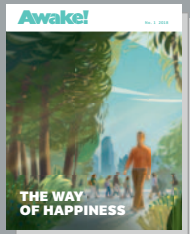
Link: Has the Bible accurately foretold the future?



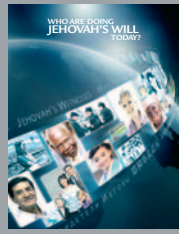
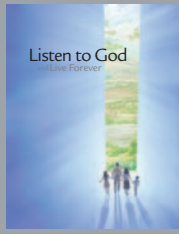


Teaching Toolbox

MAGAZINES



BROCHURES



BOOKS



TRACTS



VIDEOS



CONTACT CARDS



107 *The Divine Pattern of Love*

(1 John 4:19)

1. The pattern of love, we learn from Jehovah
Shows the way, guides our way.
In all he has done, his dealings have shown us
How to display his loving way.
He gave us his Son, his dearest possession
To cover our sin, forgiving transgression.
What proof of his love—its greatest expression!
His way is love, Yes, God’s way is love.

2. When we walk his way, our love for each other
Will be true, warm and true,
Will move us to care for all of our brothers,
Old ones and new, not just a few.
True love for our God and love for our brother,
We can’t have the one and not have the other.
The faults of our friends, we readily cover,
Proving our love, Our brotherly love.

3. The pattern of love, the bond that unites us
Lets us be family.
Our Father above now warmly invites us:
“Come taste and see real unity.”
Come share in the love and joy that define us;
God’s spirit and Word, he gives to refine us.
Our brothers and friends are here to remind us,
God’s way is love. Jehovah is love.

(See also Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:7.)

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How can we show our gratitude for the gift of the ransom?

- **Dedication and baptism** show that we have faith in the ransom and that we want to belong to Jehovah
- **Preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom** shows that we imitate Jehovah’s far-reaching love for people.—Mt 22:39; Joh 3:16

 **In what other ways can I show my gratitude to Jehovah for the gift of the ransom?**



54

JESUS —“THE BREAD OF LIFE”

JOHN 6:25-48

- JESUS IS “THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN”

Over on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus miraculously fed thousands and then escaped when they wanted to make him king. That night he walked on the stormy sea and rescued Peter, who also walked on water but began to sink when his faith wavered. Jesus also calmed the wind, perhaps saving his disciples from shipwreck.

Now Jesus is back on the western side of the sea, in the area of Capernaum. Those he miraculously fed find him and inquire: “When did you get here?” Rebuking them, Jesus says that they are looking for him in the hope of being fed again. He urges them to “work, not for the food that perishes, but for the food that remains for everlasting life.” So they ask: “What must we do to carry out the works of God?” —John 6:25-28.



They may be thinking of works set out in the Law, but Jesus points to the work of highest value: “This is the work of God, that you exercise faith in the one whom he sent.” The people, however, do not exercise such faith in Jesus, despite all that he has done. They demand that he perform a sign so that they may believe in him. “What work are you doing?” they ask. “Our forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”—John 6:29-31; Psalm 78:24.

Regarding their request for a sign, Jesus directs the people to the real Source of miraculous provisions: “I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Not grasping his point, they plead: “Lord, always give us this bread.” (John 6:32-34) What “bread,” though, does Jesus mean?

He explains: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will not get hungry at all, and whoever exercises faith in me will never get thirsty at all. But as I said to you, you have even seen me and yet do

not believe. . . . I have come down from heaven to do, not my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose none out of all those whom he has given me, but that I should resurrect them on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who recognizes the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life.”—John 6:35-40.

This causes quite a stir, and the Jews begin murmuring about him. How can he claim that he is “the bread that came down from heaven”? (John 6:41) To them, he is just a son of human parents from the Galilean city of Nazareth. The people ask: “Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?”—John 6:42.

“Stop murmuring among yourselves,” Jesus responds. “No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him, and I will resurrect him on the last day. It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by Jehovah.’ Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned comes to me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except the one who is

from God; this one has seen the Father. Most truly I say to you, whoever believes has everlasting life.” —John 6:43-47; Isaiah 54:13.

When earlier he spoke with Nicodemus, Jesus mentioned everlasting life and linked that with faith in the Son of man, stating: “Everyone exercising faith in [God’s only-begotten Son] might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:15, 16) But now he is speaking to a much larger audience, telling them that he has a role in their gaining everlasting life, which neither the manna nor the bread commonly available in Galilee can provide. So how can everlasting life be gained? Jesus repeats his words: “I am the bread of life.”—John 6:48.

This discussion regarding the bread from heaven continues, reaching a climax while Jesus teaches in a synagogue in Capernaum.

- ◇ Considering recent events, why is the request for Jesus to produce a sign inappropriate?
- ◇ How do the Jews react to Jesus’ saying that he is the true “bread from heaven”?
- ◇ Why is the bread that Jesus speaks of superior to manna or literal bread?

97 *Life Depends on God's Word*

(Matthew 4:4)

1. Life depends on Jehovah's Word,
All the things he has said.
We must live not on bread alone;
Live by his Word instead.
Even now we have peace and joy,
Future blessings assured.

(CHORUS)

*Man must live not on bread alone;
Life depends on God's Word.
There we find what we daily need;
Life depends on God's Word.*

2. True accounts in God's written Word
Tell about those of old.
Men and women who walked in faith—
They were loyal and bold.
We're encouraged each time we read
All they did and endured.

(Chorus)

3. Day by day as we read God's Word,
He gives comfort and hope.
When the trials of life arise,
He gives wisdom to cope.
May we treasure within our heart
All we've read and we've heard.

(Chorus)

DECEMBER 2018

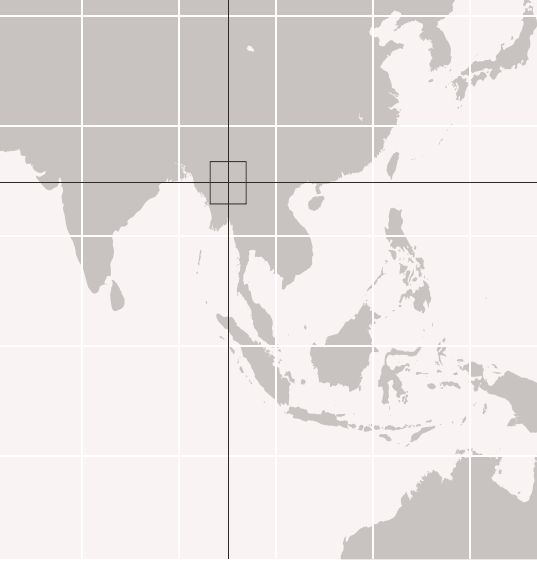
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
FEBRUARY 4–MARCH 3, 2019

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

MYANMAR

Two sisters find many with whom they can share the good news at a market in Taunggyi

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Honor “What God Has Yoked Together”

This article will present what the Bible says about honorable marriage. How can we show that we honor marriage? And how can we uphold what the Bible says about divorce and separation?

131 “What God Has Yoked Together”

(Matthew 19:5, 6)

1. With dignity and joy,
A threefold cord is bound.
With God and men to witness,
These sacred vows resound.

(CHORUS 1)

*He vowed before Jehovah
To love her from the heart.
“What God has yoked together,
Let no man put apart.”*

2. They both have searched God’s Word
To learn to do his will,
And now they seek his blessing,
Their promise to fulfill.

(CHORUS 2)

*She vowed before Jehovah
To love him from the heart.
“What God has yoked together,
Let no man put apart.”*



SONGS:
131, 132

**HOW WOULD YOU
ANSWER?**

Jehovah and Jesus
share what view
about marriage?

What is the only
Scriptural basis for
divorce, but why
might some decide
not to divorce?

One who
is considering
separation should
weigh what advice?

Honor “What God Has Yoked Together”

*“What God has yoked together,
let no man put apart.”—MARK 10:9.*

DO YOU enjoy honoring Jeho-
vah? Certainly you do! He mer-
its your honor and promises to
honor you in return. (1 Sam. 2:
30; Prov. 3:9; Rev. 4:11) He also
wants you to show honor on a hu-
man level, such as to government
officials. (Rom. 12:10; 13:7) But

1, 2. Hebrews 13:4 should move us to do
what?

there is a personal area in which you especially need to show honor. That is in marriage.

² The apostle Paul wrote: “Let marriage be honorable among all, and let the marriage bed be without defilement.” (Heb. 13:4) Paul was not making a mere casual observation. Rather, that text was directing, yes urging, Christians personally to esteem marriage, to view it as precious. Is that your view of marriage in general and particularly of your own marriage if you have a mate?

³ In honoring marriage, you are in the best of company. Jesus honored marriage. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce, he referred to what God had said regarding the first marriage: “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother, and the two will be one flesh.” Jesus added: “What God has yoked together, let no man put apart.” —Read Mark 10:2-12; Gen. 2:24.

⁴ Jesus thus agreed that marriage is of divine origin and stressed its permanence. God did not tell Adam and Eve that marriage could be ended by divorce. The standard set in that Edenic marriage was

3. What important advice about marriage did Jesus give? (See opening picture.)

4. Jehovah set what standard for marriages?

monogamy, “the two” being joined together in a lasting union.

TEMPORARY CHANGES FOR MARRIAGE

⁵ You know, however, that Adam’s sin brought changes. One was death, which would affect marriage. We can see that from what the apostle Paul wrote when explaining that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. He revealed that death ends a marriage and that the surviving mate can thereafter remarry.—Rom. 7:1-3.

⁶ The Law that God gave to the nation of Israel provided details about marriage. It allowed for polygamy, a practice that existed even before God gave Israel the Law. However, polygamy was regulated, prohibiting abuses. For example, if an Israelite married a slave and later took a second wife, he could not diminish his first wife’s food, clothing, and marital due. God required that he protect and care for her. (Ex. 21:9, 10) We are not under the Law, but we can still see from it Jehovah’s interest in marriage. Does that not help you to esteem marriage?

5. What effect does death have on the marriage union?

6. How did the Mosaic Law reflect God’s view of marriage?

⁷ What of divorce under the Law? God maintained his high regard for marriage; yet, as a concession he did allow divorce. (Read Deuteronomy 24:1.) An Israelite man could divorce his wife if “he found something indecent about her.” The Law did not describe what was meant by “indecent.” It must have been something shameful or serious, not some petty offense. (Deut. 23:14) Sadly, by Jesus’ day many Jews divorced “on every sort of grounds.” (Matt. 19:3) We would surely not want to adopt their attitude.

⁸ The prophet Malachi revealed God’s view of divorce. That was at a time when it was common for a man treacherously to divorce ‘the wife of his youth,’ maybe to marry a younger, pagan woman. Regarding God’s view, Malachi wrote: “I hate divorce.” (Mal. 2:14-16) That was in line with what God’s Word says about the first marriage: “[A man] will stick to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24) Jesus upheld his Father’s view of marriage, saying: “What God has yoked together, let no man put apart.”—Matt. 19:6.

7, 8. (a) According to Deuteronomy 24:1, the Law contained what provision for divorce? (b) What is Jehovah’s view of divorce?

ONLY ONE BASIS FOR DIVORCE

⁹ Someone might ask, ‘Is there ever a basis for a Christian to divorce and remarry?’ Well, Jesus stated his view on divorce: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if ever a woman after divorcing her husband marries another, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10: 11, 12; Luke 16:18) Clearly, Jesus thus honored marriage and wanted others to do so. A man divorcing his faithful wife (or a woman, her faithful husband) on some pretext and marrying another was committing adultery. This is true because merely divorcing one’s mate does not end the marriage. In God’s eyes, the two would still be “one flesh.” Moreover, Jesus said that a man’s divorcing his innocent wife would make her subject to adultery. How so? Back then, a divorced woman might feel compelled to remarry in order to gain financial support. Such a remarriage would amount to adultery.

¹⁰ Jesus did state the grounds on which a marriage can be ended: “I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the grounds of **sexual immorality** [Greek, *por·nei’a*], and marries another commits

9. How are Jesus’ words at Mark 10:11, 12 to be understood?

10. On what grounds can a Christian divorce and be free to remarry?

adultery.” (Matt. 19:9) He had made the same point in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:31, 32) On both occasions, Jesus spoke of “sexual immorality.” That expression covers a range of sexual sins outside of marriage: adultery, prostitution, sex relations between unmarried individuals, homosexuality, and bestiality. If, for example, a married man engages in sexual immorality, his wife can decide whether to divorce him or not. If she divorces him, that would end the marriage in God’s eyes.

¹¹ Significantly, Jesus did not say that a mate’s immorality (*por·nei’a*) *must* absolutely lead to divorce. For example, a wife might choose to maintain the marriage despite her husband’s having been immoral. She might still love him; she might be willing to forgive him and work with him to improve their marriage. Realistically, if she got a divorce but did not remarry, she would face challenges. What of her material and sexual needs? What about loneliness? Are there children to consider? Would a divorce make it harder to raise them in the truth? (1 Cor. 7: 14) Clearly, the divorced innocent one would face serious issues.

11. Why might a Christian decide not to get a divorce even though having Scriptural grounds to do so?

God's Response to Israel's Adultery

Both Israel and Judah became unfaithful to Jehovah. They made alliances with pagan nations and practiced false religion. God condemned them for “committing adultery with stones and with trees.” (Jer. 2:13, 20; 3:1-3, 9; compare Ezekiel 16:28; James 4:4.) When they would not change and continued like “a wife who commits prostitution,” God made a choice. He said: “When I saw that, I sent unfaithful Israel away with a full certificate of divorce because of her adultery.”—Jer. 3:6-8.

¹² The prophet Hosea's experience is enlightening. God told Hosea to take a wife (Gomer), who would become “a woman of prostitution and [would have] children of prostitution.” Gomer “conceived and bore [Hosea] a son.” (Hos. 1:2, 3) Later, she had a daughter and a son, both likely the results of her adultery. Despite Gomer's repeated adultery, Hosea stayed married to her. Finally, she left Hosea and became a slave. Still, he bought her back. (Hos. 3:1, 2) Jehovah was using Hosea to illustrate how He re-

12, 13. (a) What developed in Hosea's marriage? (b) Why did Hosea take Gomer back, and what can we learn from that as to marriage now?

The Only Scriptural Grounds

On two occasions, Jesus indicated that the only grounds for a divorce that would free an innocent mate to remarry is *por-nei'a*. What does that Greek term mean? *Por-nei'a* applies to illicit sexual relations outside Scriptural marriage. It includes adultery, prostitution, and sex relations between unmarried individuals as well as oral and anal sex and the sexual manipulation of the genitals of an individual to whom one is not married.—See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2006, “Questions From Readers.”

peatedly forgave Israel’s adulterous course. What might we learn from this?

¹³ If a Christian’s mate committed immorality, the innocent Christian would face a decision. Jesus said that the innocent one would have a basis for getting a divorce and then be free to remarry. On the other hand, the innocent mate could extend forgiveness. That would not be wrong. Hosea took back Gomer. Once Gomer was back with Hosea, she was not to have relations with any other man. Hosea did “not have relations” with Gomer for a while. (Hos. 3:3, ftn.) In time, though, Hosea must have resumed marital relations with her, thereby reflecting God’s

willingness to accept his people back and resume his dealings with them. (Hos. 1:11; 3:3-5) What bearing does that have on a marriage today? If an innocent mate decided to maintain the marriage, resuming marital relations would show forgiveness. (1 Cor. 7:3, 5) That course would cancel what had been grounds for divorce. Thereafter as a couple, they should work to reflect God's view of marriage.

HONOR EVEN IN A TROUBLED MARRIAGE

¹⁴ All Christians should strive to show regard for marriage, even as Jesus and Jehovah do. However, some may fail to do so, for humans are imperfect. (Rom. 7:18-23) Thus, it should not shock us that some Christians in the first century had troubled marriages. Paul wrote that “a wife should not separate from her husband”; yet, in some cases that did occur.—Read 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11.

¹⁵ Paul did not explain what led to such a separation. The problem was not, for example, that the husband had been immoral, giving the wife a basis for divorce and remarriage. Paul wrote that a wife who

14. According to 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, what may happen in a marriage?

15, 16. (a) Even if a marriage has problems, what is the goal, and why? (b) How does this apply if a mate is not a believer?



What can be done to save even a troubled marriage?
(See paragraph 15)

was separated from her husband should “remain unmarried or else be reconciled with her husband.” So the two were still united in God’s eyes. Paul advised that whatever the underlying problems, if sexual immorality is not involved, the goal should be reconciliation. The two could seek Bible-based help from congregation elders. While the elders avoid taking sides, they could offer Scriptural advice.

¹⁶ There would likely be more complications if just one mate was a believer seeking to live by God’s

standards. In the event of problems, is separation a justifiable solution? As noted, the Scriptures say that sexual immorality is a possible basis for divorce, but they do not outline various grounds for separation. Paul wrote: “If a woman has an unbelieving husband and he is agreeable to staying with her, let her not leave her husband.” (1 Cor. 7:12, 13) That applies in our day too.

¹⁷ Admittedly, there have been instances where an “unbelieving husband” seems to prove that he is not “agreeable to staying with her.” He might be extremely physically abusive, even to the point that she feels that her health or life is in danger. He might refuse to support her and the family or severely endanger her spirituality. In such cases, some Christians have personally decided that, despite what he might say, the mate is not “agreeable to staying” together and that a separation is necessary. But other Christians in comparably difficult situations have not; they have endured and tried to work at improving matters. Why?

¹⁸ In such a separation, the two are still marriage mates. If they lived apart, each one would face challenges, as mentioned earlier. The apostle Paul gave another reason for staying united. He wrote: “The

17, 18. Why have some Christians stayed in a troubled marriage?

unbelieving husband is sanctified in relation to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in relation to the brother; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” (1 Cor. 7:14) Many loyal Christians have remained with an unbelieving mate under very trying circumstances. They can testify that doing so was worthwhile in a special sense when their mate became a true worshipper.—Read 1 Corinthians 7:16; 1 Pet. 3:1, 2.

¹⁹ Jesus provided comments about divorce, and the apostle Paul offered inspired advice about separation. Both wanted God’s servants to honor marriage. Worldwide today, the Christian congregation abounds with successful marriages. You can likely find many happy couples in your local congregation. They are made up of loyal brothers who love their wife and devoted wives who prove to be loving mates, all showing that marriage can be honorable. We can rejoice that millions are living proof of the truthfulness of God’s words: “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and he will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.”—Eph. 5: 31, 33.

19. Why do successful marriages abound in the Christian congregation?

1. This is at last bone of my bone,
Flesh of my flesh; now I'm not alone.
God has provided a partner,
Someone to call my own.

Now we are one; now there can be
Blessings to share for you and for me.
As man and woman together,
We are a family.

Ev'ry day we'll serve our God above.
As he shows the way,
Unfailing love we'll display.

As we have vowed, so may it be.
Seasons of joy, may we come to see.
Oh, may we honor Jehovah,
And may you always be my love.

