

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

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Paul’s ‘Thorn in the Flesh’”:** (10 min.)
 2Co 12:7—Paul dealt with a nagging problem that was like an irritating thorn (w08 6/15 3-4)
 2Co 12:8, 9—Jehovah chose not to grant Paul’s supplications to remove the thorn (w06 12/15 24 ¶17-18)
 2Co 12:10—Paul was able to fulfill his assignment by relying on God’s holy spirit (w18.01 9 ¶8-9)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 2Co 12:2-4—To what do “the third heaven” and “paradise” likely refer? (w18.12 8 ¶10-12)

 2Co 13:12—What evidently was “a holy kiss”? (it-2 177)

 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) 2Co 11:1-15 (5)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **First Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 38
- **“You Can Succeed Despite Your ‘Thorn in the Flesh!’”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video *“The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened”* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Inform the audience that literature for the blind or visually impaired is available in 47 languages in braille as well as other formats. Publishers should speak with the literature servant to request such literature. Encourage all to be attentive to the needs of any in the congregation or territory who are visually impaired.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 67
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 78 and Prayer

2 CORINTHIANS 11-13 | Paul’s “Thorn in the Flesh”

12:7-10 

In the Bible, thorns are often used in a figurative sense. They may describe people who are troublesome and cause injury or things that pose problems. (Nu 33:55; Pr 22:5; Eze 28:24) When Paul wrote about his “thorn in the flesh,” he may have been referring to false apostles and others who challenged his apostleship and work. How do the scriptures below indicate another possibility for Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”?

- Ac 23:1-5
- Ga 4:14, 15
- Ga 6:11

What is your “thorn in the flesh”?

How can you rely on Jehovah to help you endure?



3

Our Strength, Our Hope, Our Confidence

(Proverbs 14:26)

1. O Jehovah, you have given us
a hope that we hold dear.
It's a hope we find so thrilling
we want the world to hear.
But at times this life's anxieties
are the cause of fears within,
And the hope that burned so brightly
has suddenly grown dim.

(CHORUS)

*You're our strength, you're our hope,
you're our confidence.*

Whatever we lack, you supply.

*When we preach, when we teach,
we have confidence*

because it's on you we rely.

2. So Jehovah, please instill in us
a heart that won't forget,
For you've always been our comfort
when troubled times we've met.
And these thoughts that lift and strengthen us
can revive that dying flame,
For they fill our hearts with courage
to speak about your name.

(Chorus)

1 Corinthians 11-13

11 I wish you would put up with me in a little unreasonableness. But, in fact, you are putting up with me! ² For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I personally promised you in marriage to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to the Christ. ³ But I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ. ⁴ For as it is, if someone comes and preaches a Jesus other than the one we preached, or you receive a spirit other than what you received, or good news other than what you accepted, you easily put up with him. ⁵ For I consider that I have not proved inferior to your superfine apostles in a single thing. ⁶ But even if I am unskilled in speech, I certainly am not in knowledge; indeed we made it clear to you in every way and in everything.

⁷ Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I gladly declared the good news of God to you without cost? ⁸ Other congregations I deprived by accepting provisions in order to minister to you. ⁹ Yet, when I was present with you and I fell into need, I did not become a burden on anyone, for the brothers who came from Mac-e-do'ni-a abundantly supplied my needs. Yes, in every way I kept myself from becoming a burden to you and will continue to do so. ¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, I will not stop this boasting in the regions of A-cha'ia. ¹¹ For what reason? Because I do not love you? God knows I do.

¹² But what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to eliminate the pretext of those who are wanting a basis for being found equal to us in the things about which they boast. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself keeps disguising himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is therefore nothing extraordinary if

his ministers also keep disguising themselves as ministers of righteousness. But their end will be according to their works.

¹⁶ I say again: Let no one think I am unreasonable. But even if you do, then accept me as an unreasonable person, so that I too may boast a little. ¹⁷ What I now say is, not as following the Lord's example, but as an unreasonable person would, with boastful self-confidence. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I too will boast. ¹⁹ Since you are so "reasonable," you gladly put up with the unreasonable ones. ²⁰ In fact, you put up with whoever enslaves you, whoever devours your possessions, whoever grabs what you have, whoever exalts himself over you, and whoever strikes you in the face.

²¹ I say this to our dishonor, since it may seem that we have acted in weakness.

But if others act boldly—I am talking unreasonably—I too act boldly. ²² Are they Hebrews? I am one also. Are they Israelites? I am one also. Are they Abraham's offspring? I am also. ²³ Are they ministers of Christ? I reply like a madman, I am more outstandingly one: I have done more work, been imprisoned more often, suffered countless beatings, and experienced many near-deaths. ²⁴ Five times I received 40 strokes less one from the Jews, ²⁵ three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I experienced shipwreck, a night and a day I have spent in the open sea; ²⁶ in journeys often, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my own people, in dangers from the nations, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers among false brothers, ²⁷ in labor and toil, in sleepless nights often, in hunger and thirst, frequently without food, in cold and lacking clothing.

²⁸ Besides those things of an external kind, there is what rushes in on me from day to day: the anxiety for all the congregations.

²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I am not incensed?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the One who is to be praised forever, knows I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under A-re'tas the king was guarding the city of the Dam-a-scenes' to seize me, ³³ but I was lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall, and I escaped his hands.

12 I have to boast. It is not beneficial, but I will move on to supernatural visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I know a man in union with Christ who, 14 years ago—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—was caught away to the third heaven. ³ Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know; God knows— ⁴ who was caught away into paradise and heard words that cannot be spoken and that are not lawful for a man to say. ⁵ I will boast about such a man, but I will not boast about myself except of my weaknesses. ⁶ For even if I want to boast, I will not be unreasonable, for I would say the truth. But I refrain from doing so, in order that no one should give me more credit than what he sees in me or hears from me, ⁷ just because of receiving such extraordinary revelations.

To keep me from becoming overly exalted, I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep slapping me, so that I might not be overly exalted. ⁸ Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it would depart from me. ⁹ But he said to me: “My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you, for my power is being made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly, then, I will boast about my weaknesses, in order that the power of the Christ may remain over me like a tent. ¹⁰ So I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in times of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful.

¹¹ I have become unreasonable. You compelled me to, for I ought to have been recommended by you. For I did not prove to be inferior to your superfine apostles in a single thing, even if I am nothing. ¹² Indeed, the signs of an apostle were produced among you with great endurance, and by signs and wonders and powerful works. ¹³ For how were you less favored than the rest of the congregations, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Kindly forgive me for this wrong.

¹⁴ Look! This is the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not become a burden. For I am seeking, not your possessions, but you; for the children are not expected to save up for their parents, but the parents for their children. ¹⁵ For my part, I will most gladly spend and be completely spent for you. If I love you so much more, am I to be loved the less? ¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, you say I was “crafty” and I caught you “by trickery.” ¹⁷ I did not take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you, did I? ¹⁸ I urged Titus and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you at all, did he? We walked in the same spirit, did we not? In the same footsteps, did we not?

¹⁹ Have you been thinking all along that we have been making our defense to you? It is before God that we are speaking in union with Christ. But, beloved ones, all that we do is to build you up. ²⁰ For I am afraid that somehow when I arrive, I may not find you as I wish and I may not be as you wish, but instead, there may be strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, dissension, backbiting, whispering, being puffed up with pride, and disorder. ²¹ Perhaps when I come again, my God might humiliate me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who previously sinned but have not repented of their uncleanness and sexual immorality and brazen conduct that they have practiced.

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. “On the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter must be established.”

² Although I am absent now, it is as if I were present for the second time, and I give my warning in advance to those who sinned previously and to all the rest, that if ever I come again I will not spare them, ³ since you are seeking proof that Christ, who is not weak toward you but strong among you, is really speaking through me. ⁴ For, indeed, he was executed on the stake because of weakness, but he is alive because of God’s power. True, we also are weak with him, but we will live together with him because of God’s power toward you.

⁵ Keep testing whether you are in the faith; keep proving what you yourselves are. Or do you not recognize that Jesus Christ is in union with you? Unless you are disapproved. ⁶ I truly hope you will recognize that we are not disapproved.

⁷ Now we pray to God that you may do nothing wrong, not that we may appear approved, but that you may do what is fine, even if we may appear disapproved. ⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We certainly rejoice whenever we are weak but you are powerful. And this is what we are praying for, your being readjusted. ¹⁰ That is why I write these things while absent, so that when I am present, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord gave me, to build up and not to tear down.

¹¹ Finally, brothers, continue to rejoice, to be readjusted, to be comforted, to think in agreement, to live peaceably; and the God of love and of peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All the holy ones send you their greetings.

¹⁴ The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the sharing in the holy spirit be with all of you.

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2Co 12:7—Paul dealt with a nagging problem that was like an irritating thorn (w08 6/15 3-4)
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- **“You Can Succeed Despite Your ‘Thorn in the Flesh!’”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video *“The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened”* (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Inform the audience that literature for the blind or visually impaired is available in 47 languages in braille as well as other formats. Publishers should speak with the literature servant to request such literature. Encourage all to be attentive to the needs of any in the congregation or territory who are visually impaired.
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2 CORINTHIANS 11-13 | Paul’s “Thorn in the Flesh”

12:7-10 ✍

In the Bible, thorns are often used in a figurative sense. They may describe people who are troublesome and cause injury or things that pose problems. (Nu 33:55; Pr 22:5; Eze 28:24) When Paul wrote about his “thorn in the flesh,” he may have been referring to false apostles and others who challenged his apostleship and work. How do the scriptures below indicate another possibility for Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”?

- Ac 23:1-5 **Paul was too nearsighted to see that Ananias was wearing the apparel of High Priest.**
- Ga 4:14, 15 **Since Paul was nearly blind they wished they could give him their good eyes.**
- Ga 6:11 **Paul was so nearsighted he had to write with large letters to be able to see what he was writing.**

What is your “thorn in the flesh”?

How can you rely on Jehovah to help you endure?



May 20-26 / 2 Corinthians 11-13

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

Treasures From God's Word

- **"Paul's 'Thorn in the Flesh'":** (10 minutes)

Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh"

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

In the Bible, thorns are often used in a figurative sense. They may describe people who are troublesome and cause injury or things that pose problems. (Numbers 33:55; Proverbs 22:5; Ezekiel 28:24) When Paul wrote about his "thorn in the flesh," he may have been referring to false apostles and others who challenged his apostleship and work. How do the scriptures below indicate another possibility for Paul's "thorn in the flesh"?

- **Acts 23:1-5**

Acts 23:1-5: Looking intently at the Sanhedrin, Paul said: "Men, brothers, I have behaved before God with a perfectly clear conscience down to this day." At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him: "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. Do you sit to judge me according to the Law and at the same time violate the Law by commanding me to be struck?" Those standing by said: "Are you insulting the high priest of God?" And Paul said: "Brothers, I did not know he was high priest. For it is written, 'You

must not speak injuriously of a ruler of your people.'"

- **Galatians 4:14, 15**

Galatians 4:14, 15: And though my physical condition was a trial for you, you did not treat me with contempt or disgust; but you received me like an angel of God, like Christ Jesus. Where is that happiness you had? For I bear you witness that, if it had been possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

- **Galatians 6:11**

Galatians 6:11: See with what large letters I have written you with my own hand.

What is your "thorn in the flesh"?

How can you rely on Jehovah to help you endure?

2 Corinthians 12:7—Paul dealt with a nagging problem that was like an irritating thorn

2 Corinthians 12:7: just because of receiving such extraordinary revelations. To keep me from becoming overly exalted, I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep slapping me, so that I might not be overly exalted.

w08 6/15 3-4

Another faithful servant asked Jehovah to remove "a thorn in the flesh," a nagging problem. The apostle Paul entreated God three

times to be set free from this trial. Whatever it was, like an irritating thorn, it could have robbed Paul of his joy in Jehovah's service. Paul likened it to being constantly slapped. Jehovah's answer was: "My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for my power is being made perfect in weakness." Jehovah did not take away that thorn in the flesh. Paul had to contend with it, but he added: "When I am weak, then I am powerful." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) What did he mean?

2 Corinthians 12:8, 9—Jehovah chose not to grant Paul's supplications to remove the thorn

2 Corinthians 12:8, 9: Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it would depart from me. But he said to me: "My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you, for my power is being made perfect in weakness." Most gladly, then, I will boast about my weaknesses, in order that the power of the Christ may remain over me like a tent.

w06 12/15 24 paragraphs 17-18

17 In response to Paul's prayers, God told him: "My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for my power is being made perfect in weakness." Paul said: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather boast as respects my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may like a tent remain over me." (2 Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 147:5) Hence, Paul experienced that through Christ, God's powerful protection was spread over him like a tent. Today, Jehovah answers our prayers in a similar manner. He spreads his protection like a shelter over his servants.

18 Of course, a tent does not stop the rains from falling or the winds from blowing, but it does provide some protection from those elements. Likewise, the shelter provided by “the power of the Christ” does not stop trials from befalling us or hardships from being brought against us. Yet, it does give spiritual protection against the harmful elements of this world and the attacks of its ruler, Satan. (Revelation 7:9, 15, 16) Therefore, even if you are dealing with a trial that does not ‘depart from you,’ you can be certain that Jehovah is aware of your struggle and that he has responded to “the sound of your outcry.” (Isaiah 30:19; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Paul wrote: “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it.”—1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:6, 7.

2 Corinthians 12:10—Paul was able to fulfill his assignment by relying on God’s holy spirit

2 Corinthians 12:10: So I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in times of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful.

w18.01 9 paragraphs 8-9

8 Read Isaiah 40:30. No matter how qualified we may be, we are limited in what we can accomplish in our own strength. That is a lesson we all must learn. Although he was a capable man, the apostle Paul had limitations that prevented him from doing everything he wanted to do. When he expressed his concerns to

God, he was told: "My power is being made perfect in weakness." Paul got the point. He concluded: "When I am weak, then I am powerful." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) What did he mean by that?

9 Paul realized that there was only so much he could do without help from a higher source. God's holy spirit could supply the power that Paul lacked. Not only that, but God's spirit could empower Paul to perform tasks that he would never have been able to complete in his own power. The same is true of us. If the strength we have comes from Jehovah, we will be strong indeed!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

2 Corinthians 12:2-4—To what do "the third heaven" and "paradise" likely refer?

2 Corinthians 12:2-4: I know a man in union with Christ who, 14 years ago—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—was caught away to the third heaven. Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know; God knows—who was caught away into paradise and heard words that cannot be spoken and that are not lawful for a man to say.

w18.12 8 paragraphs 10-12

"The third heaven" mentioned at 2 Corinthians 12:2 is likely the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ and the 144,000, the "new heavens."—2 Peter 3:13.

It is "the third heaven" because the Kingdom is a superlative, an elevated, form of rulership.

The “paradise” into which Paul was “caught away” in vision likely refers to (1) the physical Paradise to come on earth, (2) the spiritual paradise that will exist then, which will be more extensive than the spiritual paradise that exists now, and (3) “the paradise of God” in heaven that will coexist in the new world.

2 Corinthians 13:12—What evidently was “a holy kiss”?

2 Corinthians 13:12: Greet one another with a holy kiss.

it-2 177

The “Holy Kiss.” Among early Christians there was the “holy kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26) or “kiss of love” (1 Peter 5:14), possibly bestowed on individuals of the same sex. This early Christian form of greeting may correspond to the ancient Hebrew practice of greeting one with a kiss. Though the Scriptures provide no details, the “holy kiss” or “kiss of love” evidently reflected the wholesome love and unity prevailing in the Christian congregation.—John 13:34, 35.

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Bible Reading: (4 minutes or less) 2 Corinthians 11:1-15 (*th study 5*)

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Sample Conversations – May 2019

First Return Visit

Question: Is death the end of it all?

Scripture: Job 14:14, 15

Link: What will life be like when God resurrects our dead loved ones?

Lisa (Publisher 1): It's great to see you again. I brought my husband, Ron.

Householder: Nice to meet you.

Ron (Publisher 3): You too.

Lisa (Publisher 1): When I was here yesterday, we left off with the question: Is death the end of it all? Have you had a chance to give that any thought?

Householder: I've been thinking about it all day. I really hope the answer is no.

Ron (Publisher 3): You're right, the answer is no. The Bible clearly teaches that there is hope for those who've died. For example, consider what the faithful man Job said to God. Lisa would you like to read Job 14:14 & 15 for us?

Lisa (Publisher 1): Sure. It says: "If a man dies, can he live again? I will wait all the days of my compulsory service until my relief comes. You will call, and I will answer you. You will long for the work of your hands".

Ron (Publisher 3): Thank you. Did you notice the confidence that Job had? What did he believe would happen after he died?

Householder: Hmm. He would live again?

Ron (Publisher 3): Yes. He said that God would call him from the grave and he, job, would answer.

[Ron Soliloquises: When preparing for this return visit Lisa and I discussed how we might emphasize the latter part of verse 15, to show that Jehovah yearns to resurrect those who have died. This seems like a good opportunity to further the conversation in that direction.]

Ron (Publisher 3): There's also something interesting in verse 15. It says that God will "long" or "yearn" for the work of his hands. So how do you think God feels about resurrecting his servant Job?

Householder: It seems like he really wants to do it.

Sample Conversations – May 2019

Lisa (Publisher1): Isn't that a comforting thought

Householder: Definitely.

Ron (Publisher 3): Of course, you may wonder: What will life be like when God does this? Let's discuss the Bible's answer on our next visit.



Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations



INITIAL CALL

Question: What happens when we die?

Scripture: Ec 9:5a

Link: Is death the end of it all?



FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: Is death the end of it all?

Scripture: Job 14:14, 15

Link: What will life be like when God resurrects our dead loved ones?



SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: What will life be like when God resurrects our dead loved ones?

Scripture: Isa 32:18

Link: How will God bring peace to the earth?



What Can the Bible Teach Us?



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He Will Make You Strong

(1 Peter 5:10)

1. There was a reason why God brought the truth to you
And called you from the darkness to the light.
Within your heart, he saw the longing that you had
To search for him and practice what is right.
You promised him in prayer to do his will;
He helped you then, and he will help you still.

(CHORUS)

*With Jesus' blood He bought you,
to God you now belong.*

*So he will make you firm,
and he will make you strong.*

*He'll guide you and protect you,
as he has all along.*

*Yes, he will make you firm,
and he will make you strong.*

2. God gave his own beloved Son in your behalf;
On this account, He wants you to succeed.
If He did not withhold the gift of His dear Son,
Then never doubt He'll give the strength you need.
He won't forget the faith and love you've shown;
He will not fail to care for all His own.

(Chorus)

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

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Paul’s ‘Thorn in the Flesh’”:** (10 min.)
 2Co 12:7—Paul dealt with a nagging problem that was like an irritating thorn (w08 6/15 3-4)
 2Co 12:8, 9—Jehovah chose not to grant Paul’s supplications to remove the thorn (w06 12/15 24 ¶17-18)
 2Co 12:10—Paul was able to fulfill his assignment by relying on God’s holy spirit (w18.01 9 ¶8-9)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 2Co 12:2-4—To what do “the third heaven” and “paradise” likely refer? (w18.12 8 ¶10-12)

 2Co 13:12—What evidently was “a holy kiss”? (it-2 177)

 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) 2Co 11:1-15 (5)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **First Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation. (2)
- **First Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Begin with the sample conversation, and introduce the *Teach Us* book. (4)

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 38
- **“You Can Succeed Despite Your ‘Thorn in the Flesh!’”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video “*The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened*” (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Inform the audience that literature for the blind or visually impaired is available in 47 languages in braille as well as other formats. Publishers should speak with the literature servant to request such literature. Encourage all to be attentive to the needs of any in the congregation or territory who are visually impaired.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 67
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 78 and Prayer

2 CORINTHIANS 11-13 | Paul’s “Thorn in the Flesh”

12:7-10 ✍

In the Bible, thorns are often used in a figurative sense. They may describe people who are troublesome and cause injury or things that pose problems. (Nu 33:55; Pr 22:5; Eze 28:24) When Paul wrote about his “thorn in the flesh,” he may have been referring to false apostles and others who challenged his apostleship and work. How do the scriptures below indicate another possibility for Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”?

- Ac 23:1-5
- Ga 4:14, 15
- Ga 6:11

What is your “thorn in the flesh”?

How can you rely on Jehovah to help you endure?



Talita Alnashi: “The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened”

Bro. Geoffrey Jackson (Governing Body): Let’s begin by visiting a family in Stockholm, Sweden.

The parents, Usama and Kristina, have two daughters, Talita and Isabella.

When Talita was born, the doctor found cataracts in both of her eyes.

A cataract is a clouding of the eye’s natural lens.

So the doctor had to operate so that Talita wouldn’t lose her sight completely—a terrifying situation for any parent.

Today, Talita is seven years old and almost blind in one eye but completely blind in the other.

Teaching a child about Jehovah in this system of things is already a challenge even without physical ailments involved.

But let’s find out how Talita’s parents rose to the challenge, making sure that she received a proper spiritual education despite her poor vision.

Talita Alnashi: I look forward to not having poor sight anymore and that I can play with a bear and a lion and to sit on the back of a tiger.

Usama Alnashi: Jehovah gives us a fantastic promise at Isaiah 35:5: “The eyes of the blind will be opened.”

Kristina Alnashi: It’s been a challenge to get to where we are today. We thank Jehovah for all the help he has given us.

Usama Alnashi: As soon as Talita was able to leave the house after the operation, we made sure to go to the meetings.

Kristina Alnashi: It helped us a lot to be able to throw our burden on Jehovah. We prayed together; we cried a lot together because it was so hard.

E&OE

Talita Alnashi: “The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened”

Usama Alnashi: One of the challenges is that we have to give Talita audio description constantly. We have to tell her who is coming in and what is happening.

Kristina Alnashi: We get so many amazing materials on jw.org and also through the congregation. She really loves to read Learn from the Great Teacher. It has questions which make her a part of the story.

Usama Alnashi: She has a very good memory, and therefore she remembers a lot of what she reads. So when we are with friends, she often quizzes them.

[At a family gathering with brothers and sisters]

Talita: OK, what are the names of Jesus' apostles?

Brother: There are so many.

Talita: But Joseph's brothers, they are more difficult!

[Laughing]

Brother: Exactly. This is nothing....Judas Iscariot...the other one.

Talita: Judas Thaddeus.

Brother: Judas Thaddeus.

[Family singing together]

Talita: I really like to sing the songs in my songbook.

Kristina Alnashi: Talita's spiritual goal is to learn more of our Kingdom songs. We get so much help from the beautiful music on the website and also from the Caleb and Sophia videos.

Talita Alnashi: “The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened”

Usama Alnashi: She knows many of the stories from My Book of Bible Stories, so she can answer in her own words. We will ask a question like, Do you know this about David? And if she knows the answer, then we encourage her to answer at the meeting.

Talita (answering at a meeting): “And your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.”

Talita: When I give an answer at the meetings, Jehovah becomes happy because he loves children.

Kristina Alnashi: She often asks the friends, “Do you love Jehovah?” So she feels very united with them.

Kristina Alnashi: One of the best moments where we saw that Talita’s spirituality had grown was when she came home from a sleepover at her grandparents’ house. My parents are not Jehovah’s Witnesses, and her grandmother had said that God doesn’t exist. So when Talita came home, she said, “And then when I was going to sleep, I prayed to Jehovah, ““Would you please help Grandmother to realize that you do exist —that you are real?””

Usama Alnashi: We try to keep our wonderful hope alive, so we often talk about what we will do in Paradise. We really look forward to when Talita will be able to see again and live in a paradise with all our friends. It’s going to be wonderful!

Talita: I think that Jehovah looks forward to looking at me when I play with a tiger.

You Can Succeed Despite Your “Thorn in the Flesh”!

During these critical last days, thorny problems afflict all of God’s servants. (2Ti 3:1) How can we rely on Jehovah and successfully cope with these problems? Watch the video “*The Eyes of the Blind Will Be Opened*” to find out what Talita Alnashi and her parents have done, and then answer the following questions:



- What is Talita’s “thorn in the flesh”?

- What Bible promises have helped Talita and her parents maintain a positive attitude?



- How did Talita’s parents demonstrate their reliance on Jehovah soon after her operation?



- How have Talita’s parents made good use of theocratic resources to instill love for God in Talita’s heart?

- How has Talita shown that she is growing spiritually despite her “thorn in the flesh”?



- How has Talita’s example encouraged you?

“NEVER HAS ANY MAN SPOKEN LIKE THIS”

JOHN 7:32-52

- OFFICERS SENT TO ARREST JESUS
 - NICODEMUS SPEAKS IN JESUS' BEHALF
-

Jesus is still in Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles (or, Booths). He is pleased that “many of the crowd put faith in him.” That does not please the religious leaders, however. They send officers, who function as religious police, to arrest him. (John 7: 31, 32) Yet, Jesus does not try to hide.

Rather, Jesus keeps on teaching publicly in Jerusalem, saying: “I will be with you a little while longer before I go to the One who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me, and where I am you cannot come.” (John 7:33, 34) The Jews do not understand, so they say among themselves: “Where does this man intend to go, so that we will not find him? He does not intend to go to the Jews dispersed among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does he? What does he mean when he says, ‘You



will look for me, but you will not find me, and where I am you cannot come’?” (John 7:35, 36) Jesus, however, is speaking of his death and resurrection to heaven, and his enemies cannot follow him there.

The seventh day of the festival arrives. Each morning of the festival, a priest has poured out water taken from the Pool of Siloam, so that it flowed to the base of the temple’s altar. Likely reminding the people of this practice, Jesus cries out: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever puts faith in me, just as the scripture has said: ‘From deep within him streams of living water will flow.’”—John 7:37, 38.

Jesus is referring to what will happen when his disciples are anointed with holy spirit and called to be in line for heavenly life. This anointing occurs after Jesus’ death. Beginning on the day of Pentecost the following year, streams of life-giving water begin to flow as spirit-anointed disciples share the truth with people.

In response to Jesus’ teaching, some say: “This really is the Prophet,” evidently referring to the



foretold prophet greater than Moses. Others say: “This is the Christ.” But some argue: “The Christ is not coming out of Galilee, is he? Does the scripture not say that the Christ is coming from the offspring of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”—John 7:40-42.

So the crowd is divided. Though some want Jesus arrested, no one lays a hand on him. When the officers return to the religious leaders without Jesus, the chief priests and Pharisees ask: “Why did you not bring him in?” The officers reply: “Never has any man spoken like this.” The religious leaders angrily resort to ridicule and name-calling: “You have not been misled also, have you? Not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him, has he? But this crowd who do not know the Law are accursed people.”—John 7:45-49.

At this, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, dares to speak in Jesus’ behalf. Some two and a half years earlier, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and expressed faith in him. Now Nicodemus says: “Our Law does not judge a man

unless it first hears from him and learns what he is doing, does it?” What is their defensive reply? “You are not also out of Galilee, are you? Search and see that no prophet is to be raised up out of Galilee.” —John 7:51, 52.

The Scriptures do not directly say that a prophet would come out of Galilee. Yet God’s Word did point to the Christ as coming from there; it prophesied that “a great light” would be seen in “Galilee of the nations.” (Isaiah 9:1, 2; Matthew 4:13-17) Furthermore, as foretold, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and he is an offspring of David. Although the Pharisees may be aware of this, they are likely responsible for spreading many of the misconceptions that people have about Jesus.

- ◇ How may Jesus be calling attention to something that occurs each morning during the festival?
- ◇ Why do the officers not arrest Jesus, and how do the religious leaders react?
- ◇ What indicates that the Christ would come out of Galilee?

78 *“Teaching the Word of God”*

(Acts 18:11)

1. For those who teach the Word of God,
 There is a joyful share.
 The benefits that we receive
 Are far beyond compare.
 We imitate the Son of God
 And how he taught with love.
 And as we teach, the ones we’re helping
 Draw close to God above.
2. As teachers of Jehovah’s Word,
 We strive to do what’s right,
 So all may see sincerity
 As we reflect God’s light.
 With diligence we search God’s Word,
 For it has news to tell.
 So we can share our heart’s good treasure
 And teach ourselves as well.
3. Jehovah gives us all we need
 To teach his precious Word.
 So if we pray to ask for help,
 We know that we’ll be heard.
 We love what’s in the Word of God;
 What’s more, we know it’s true.
 And as we love the ones we’re teaching,
 They’ll soon be teachers too!

MARCH 2019

THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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COVER PICTURE:

Away from the crowd, Jesus compassionately heals a deaf man
(See study article 12, paragraph 11)

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Encourage One Another

(Hebrews 10:24, 25)

1. As we encourage one another
 To serve Jehovah faithfully,
We find the bonds of love are strengthened;
 Fine works bring peace and unity.
The love we find among God's people
 Gives each the courage to endure.
Our congregation is a refuge,
 A place where we can feel secure.

2. A word when spoken at the right time
 Is, oh, how comforting to hear!
We hear these words of consolation
 From friends so faithful and so dear.
How good it is to work together
 With those whose hopes and goals we share!
We seek to strengthen one another
 And help each one his burden bear.

3. As we with eyes of faith are seeing
 The nearness of Jehovah's day,
We need our gathering together
 To keep us walking in the way.
United with Jehovah's people,
 We hope to serve eternally.
So we encourage one another
 To hold to our integrity.

Show Concern for the Feelings of Others

“All of you have . . . fellow feeling.”—1 PET. 3:8.

SONG 90

Encourage One Another

PREVIEW

Jehovah and Jesus are concerned about the feelings of others. This article will consider what we can learn from their examples. We will also discuss why we need to show fellow feeling and how we can do so.

WE ENJOY being around people who care about our feelings and welfare. They try to put themselves in our place, to discern what we are thinking and feeling. They anticipate our needs and offer help—sometimes even before we ask for it. We appreciate people who show that they have “fellow feeling”* for us.—**Read 1 Peter 3:8.**

² As Christians, we all want to show empathy, or fellow feeling. Realistically, though, we may need to work at it. Why? For one thing, we are imperfect. (Rom. 3:23) So we must fight the in-born tendency to think mainly of ourselves. Also, some of us may struggle to show empathy because of our upbringing or past circumstances. Finally, we could be influenced by the attitude of people around us. In these last days, many do not consider the feelings of others. Rather, they are “lovers of themselves.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 2) What can help us

* **EXPRESSIONS EXPLAINED:** To show “fellow feeling” means to try to understand what others are feeling and to feel the same way ourselves. (Rom. 12:15) In this article, “fellow feeling” and “concern” mean the same thing.

-
1. In line with 1 Peter 3:8, why do we enjoy being around people who care about our feelings and welfare?
 2. Why may we need to work at showing empathy?

overcome these challenges to our showing concern for the feelings of others?

³ We can improve in showing fellow feeling by imitating Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Jehovah is a God of love, and he sets the best example in showing concern for others. (1 John 4:8) Jesus perfectly imitated his Father's personality. (John 14:9) While on earth, he demonstrated how a human can show compassion. In this article, we will first consider how Jehovah and Jesus have shown concern for the feelings of others. Then we will consider how we can imitate their examples.

JEHOVAH'S EXAMPLE OF CONCERN FOR OTHERS

⁴ The Bible teaches that Jehovah cares about the feelings of his servants. For example, consider how Jehovah felt when the ancient Israelites went through trials. "During all their distress it was distressing to him," says God's Word. (Read Isaiah 63:7-9.) Later, through the prophet Zechariah, Jehovah declared that when his people are

3. (a) How can we improve in showing fellow feeling? (b) What will we consider in this article?

4. How does Isaiah 63:7-9 show that Jehovah cares about the feelings of his servants?

mistreated, he takes it personally. Jehovah told his servants: “Whoever touches you touches the pupil of my eye.” (Zech. 2:8) What a powerful image of the concern Jehovah has for his people!

⁵ Jehovah does more than just *feel compassion* for his servants who suffer. He *takes action* to help them. For example, when the Israelites were suffering as slaves in Egypt, Jehovah understood their pain and felt moved to relieve it. Jehovah said to Moses: “I have certainly seen the affliction of my people . . . , and I have heard their outcry . . . I well know the pains they suffer. I will go down to rescue them out of the hand of the Egyptians.” (Ex. 3:7, 8) Because Jehovah felt compassion for his people, he freed them from slavery. Centuries later, in the Promised Land, the Israelites faced enemy attacks. How did Jehovah respond? He “was moved to pity over their groaning caused by those who oppressed them and those who were treating them abusively.” Again, empathy moved Jehovah to help his people. He sent judges to save the Israelites from their enemies.—Judg. 2: 16, 18.

5. Give an example of how Jehovah has taken action to help his servants who suffer.

⁶ Jehovah shows consideration for the feelings of his people—even when their thinking is not always sound. Consider the case of Jonah. God sent this prophet to proclaim a message of judgment against the Ninevites. When they repented, God chose to spare them. However, Jonah was not happy about this outcome. He “became hot with anger” because his prophecy of doom did not

6. Give an example of how Jehovah showed regard for the feelings of someone whose thinking was not sound.

Jehovah compassionately freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt
(See paragraph 5)



come true. But Jehovah was patient with Jonah and helped him to adjust his thinking. (Jonah 3:10–4:11) In time, Jonah got the point, and he was even used by Jehovah to record this account for our benefit.—Rom. 15:4.*

⁷ Jehovah’s dealings with his people assure us that he has empathy for his servants. He is aware of the pain and suffering of each one of us. Jehovah “truly know[s] the human heart.” (2 Chron. 6:30) He understands our intimate thoughts, our deepest emotions, and our limitations. And “he will not let [us] be tempted beyond what [we] can bear.” (1 Cor. 10:13) How comforting that assurance is!

JESUS’ EXAMPLE OF CONCERN FOR OTHERS

⁸ As a human on earth, Jesus had deep concern for others. At least three factors must have contributed to his concern. First, as noted earli-

* Jehovah also responded with compassion to other faithful individuals’ strong emotions. Think of the accounts about Hannah (1 Sam. 1:10-20), Elijah (1 Ki. 19:1-18), and Ebed-melech (Jer. 38:7-13; 39:15-18).

7. Jehovah’s dealings with his servants assure us of what?

8-10. What factors must have contributed to Jesus’ concern for others?

er, *Jesus perfectly reflected his heavenly Father's personality.* Like his Father, Jesus loved people. Although he rejoiced over everything he had helped Jehovah make, Jesus “was especially fond of the sons of men.” (Prov. 8:31) Love moved Jesus to care about the feelings of others.

⁹ Second, like Jehovah, *Jesus could read hearts.* He could know people's motives and feelings. (Matt. 9:4; John 13:10, 11) So when Jesus discerned that people were brokenhearted, concern moved him to provide comfort.—Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:17-21.

¹⁰ Third, *Jesus himself experienced some of the challenges people faced.* For example, Jesus apparently grew up in a poor family. From working with his adoptive father, Joseph, Jesus learned how to do hard physical work. (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) It seems that Joseph died sometime before the end of Jesus' ministry. So Jesus likely felt the pain of losing a loved one in death. And Jesus knew what it was like to be in a family with differing religious views. (John 7:5) Those circumstances and others would have helped Jesus to understand the challenges and feelings of ordinary people.

¹¹ Jesus' concern was especially evident when he performed miracles. Jesus did not perform miracles out of a mere sense of duty. He was "moved with pity" for those who were suffering. (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 1:40-42) For example, imagine Jesus' feelings as he took a man away from the crowd and healed his deafness or as he resurrected the only son of a widow. (Mark 7:32-35; Luke 7:12-15) Jesus sympathized with those people and wanted to help them.

¹² Jesus showed fellow feeling for Martha and Mary. When he saw their grief over the death of their brother, Lazarus, "Jesus gave way to tears." (Read John 11:32-35.) He did not weep just because he had lost the company of a close friend. After all, he knew that he was going to resurrect Lazarus. Rather, Jesus wept because he understood and was touched by the heartache of his dear friends.

¹³ We benefit greatly from learning about Jesus'

11. When was Jesus' concern especially evident? Explain. (See cover picture.)

12. How does John 11:32-35 show Jesus' fellow feeling for Martha and Mary?

13. How are we encouraged by knowing about Jesus' fellow feeling?

fellow feeling. Of course, we are not perfect as he was. Yet, we love him for the way he treated others. (1 Pet. 1:8) We are encouraged to know that he is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. He will soon eliminate all suffering. He is in the best position to help humanity recover from the wounds inflicted by Satan's rulership, for Jesus too was once human. Indeed, we are blessed to have a Ruler who can "sympathize with our weaknesses." —Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16.

IMITATE THE EXAMPLE SET BY JEHOVAH AND JESUS

¹⁴ When we consider the example set by Jehovah and Jesus, we ourselves feel moved to try to show greater fellow feeling. (Read Ephesians 5:1, 2.) We cannot read hearts as they do. Even so, we can try to understand the emotions and needs of others. (2 Cor. 11:29) Unlike the selfish world around us, we strive to "look out not only for [our] own interests, but also for the interests of others." —Phil. 2:4.

¹⁵ Congregation elders in particular need to

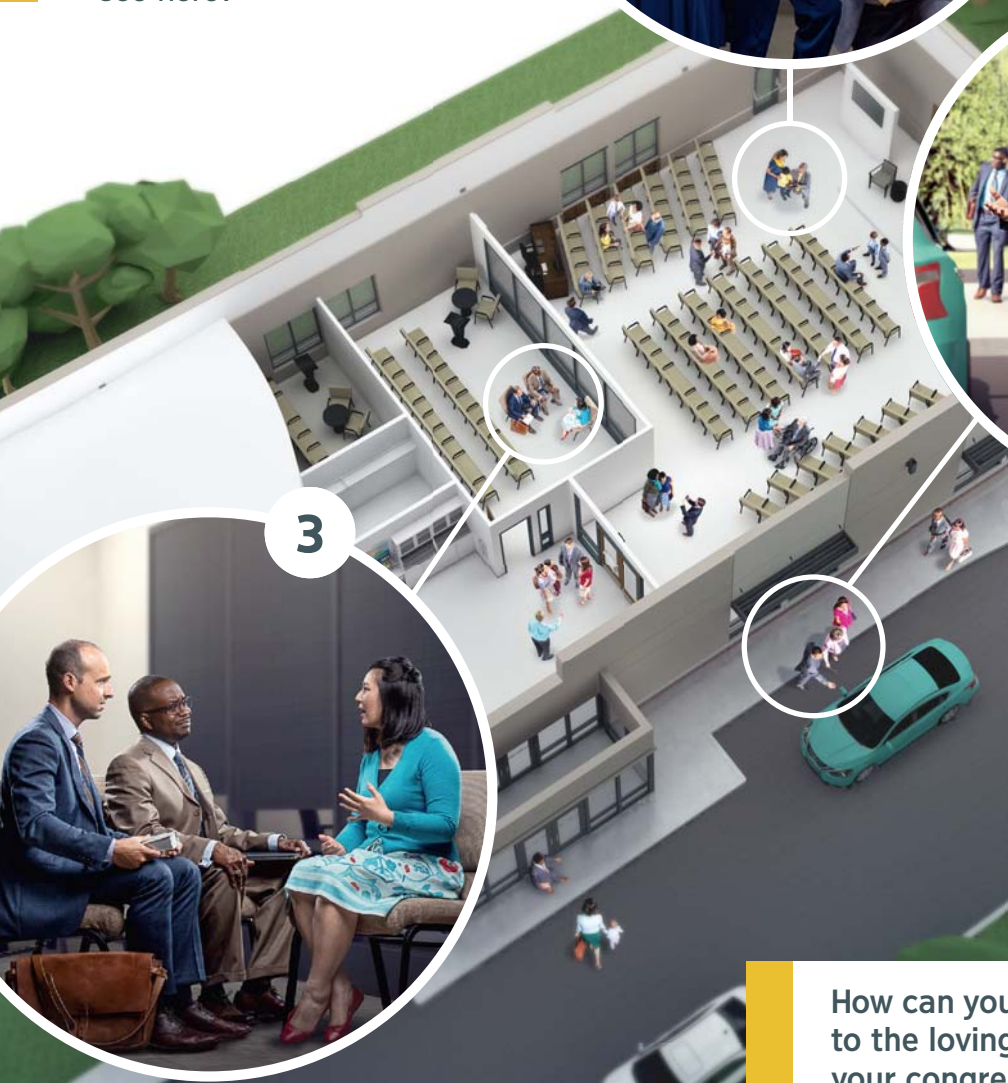
14. In view of Ephesians 5:1, 2, what do we feel moved to do?

15. Who in particular need to show fellow feeling?

Our congregations thrive when we show fellow feeling

(See paragraphs 15-19)

In congregations around the world, you will find examples of Jehovah's people caring for one another. What examples of fellow feeling can you see here?



How can you add to the loving spirit in your congregation?

show fellow feeling. They know that they are accountable for the sheep entrusted to their care. (Heb. 13:17) To help their fellow believers, elders need to be understanding. How can elders demonstrate fellow feeling?

¹⁶ A sympathetic elder spends time with his Christian brothers and sisters. He asks questions and then listens attentively and patiently. That is especially important if one of these dear sheep wants to pour out his heart but struggles to find the right words. (Prov. 20:5) By willingly giving of his time, an elder forms strong bonds of trust, friendship, and love with his brothers. —Acts 20:37.

¹⁷ Many brothers and sisters say that the quality they most value in congregation elders is their concern for the feelings of others. Why? “It is easier to talk to them because you know that they will understand you,” says Adelaide. She adds: “You can discern that they have fellow feeling for you by the way they respond when you talk with them.” A brother recalls appreciatively: “I saw

16. What does a sympathetic elder do, and why is this important?

17. What do many brothers and sisters say that they most value in elders? Give an example.

tears well up in the eyes of one elder as he contemplated my situation. That image will always remain in my mind.”—Rom. 12:15.

¹⁸ Of course, elders are not the only ones who need to show fellow feeling. All of us can develop this quality. How? Try to understand what family members and fellow believers are going through. Take an interest in the teenagers in the congregation as well as in the sick, the elderly, and those who have lost loved ones in death. Ask how they are doing. Really listen as they express themselves. Help them sense that you truly understand what they are dealing with. Offer to help in whatever way you can. When we do this, we show genuine love in action.—1 John 3:18.

¹⁹ We need to be flexible when trying to help others. Why? Because people react to hardship in different ways. Some are eager to talk, while others are more reserved. So we want to offer help, but we should avoid asking questions that are too personal. (1 Thess. 4:11) Even when others do open up, we may find that we do not always share their point of view. Yet, we need to recognize that

18. How can we develop fellow feeling for others?

19. Why do we need to be flexible when trying to help others?

this is how *they* feel. We want to be quick to listen and slow to speak.—Matt. 7:1; Jas. 1:19.

²⁰ Besides showing fellow feeling in the congregation, we want to show this beautiful quality in our ministry. How can we display fellow feeling when making disciples? We will consider that in the following article.

20. What will we consider in the following article?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 38: Meetings at the Kingdom Hall offer many opportunities for warm fellowship. We see (1) an elder kindly talking to a young publisher and his mother, (2) a father and his daughter helping an older sister to the car, and (3) two elders listening attentively to a sister seeking guidance.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- How has Jehovah shown concern for the feelings of others?
- How did Jesus show concern for the feelings of others?
- How can we show fellow feeling?

1. Lovingly Jehovah

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

If we truly are repentant,

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

2. We receive such mercy

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

Putting up with one another,

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

3. Mercy is a virtue

That we all should cultivate.

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

When we imitate Jehovah,

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



10,000 Galaxies