

- Song 67 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“The Revealing of the Lawless One”:** (10 min.) [Play the video *Introduction to 2 Thessalonians.*] 2Th 2:6-8—“The lawless one,” already at work, would be revealed (*it-1* 972-973) 2Th 2:9-12—Those who are misled by “the lawless one” would be judged (*it-2* 245 ¶7)
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- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) 2Th 1:1-12 (10)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS


- Song 61
- **Is Your Ministry in a Rut?:** (15 min.) Play the video *Incorporate Your Ministry—How?* (video category FROM OUR STUDIO).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jj* chap. 75
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2 THESSALONIANS 1-3 | The Revealing of the Lawless One

2:6-12

What was Paul referring to in these verses?

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 How do these verses encourage you to preach with zeal and a sense of urgency?



“Preach the Word”

(2 Timothy 4:2)

1. God has commanded us this day;
He has given us a charge to obey.
At all times, be ready to impart
The reason for the hope within your heart.

(CHORUS)

*So preach the word
So that ev'ryone can hear!
Preach the word,
For we know the end is near.
Preach the word,
Help the meek to understand.
Preach the word
Throughout the land!*

2. Seasons of trouble we will face;
Opposition may bring shame and disgrace.
Though preaching may out of season seem,
Our trust is in our God, who is supreme.

(Chorus)

3. Seasons of favor we will see,
And the need for us to teach, there will be.
The way to salvation we proclaim
And help to sanctify Jehovah's name.

(Chorus)

2nd Thessalonians 1-3

1 Paul, Sil-va'nus, and Timothy, to the congregation of the Thes-sa-lo'ni-ans in union with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 May you have undeserved kindness and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are obligated always to give thanks to God for you, brothers. This is fitting, because your faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and every one of you is increasing toward one another. **4** As a result we ourselves take pride in you among the congregations of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the hardships that you are suffering. **5** This is a proof of the righteous judgment of God, leading to your being counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering.

6 This takes into account that it is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you. **7** But you who suffer tribulation will be given relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels **8** in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. **9** These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength, **10** at the time when he comes to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in that day with wonder among all those who exercised faith, because the witness we gave met with faith among you.

11 To that very end we always pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling and with his power perform completely all the good that he pleases and every work of faith.

¹² This is so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in union with him, according to the undeserved kindness of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 However, brothers, concerning the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you ² not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be alarmed either by an inspired statement or by a spoken message or by a letter appearing to be from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.

³ Let no one lead you astray in any way, because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction. ⁴ He stands in opposition and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits down in the temple of God, publicly showing himself to be a god. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I used to tell you these things?

⁶ And now you know what is acting as a restraint, so that he will be revealed in his own due time. ⁷ True, the mystery of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who is right now acting as a restraint is out of the way. ⁸ Then, indeed, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence. ⁹ But the lawless one's presence is by the operation of Satan with every powerful work and lying signs and wonders ¹⁰ and every unrighteous deception for those who are perishing, as a retribution because they did not accept the love of the truth in order that they might be saved. ¹¹ That is why God lets a deluding influence mislead them so that they may come to believe the lie, ¹² in order that they all may be judged because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness.

¹³ However, we are obligated always to thank God for you, brothers loved by Jehovah, because from the beginning God

selected you for salvation by sanctifying you with his spirit and by your faith in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through the good news we declare, so that you may acquire the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So, then, brothers, stand firm and maintain your hold on the traditions that you were taught, whether it was by a spoken message or by a letter from us. ¹⁶ Moreover, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave everlasting comfort and good hope by means of undeserved kindness, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and make you firm in every good deed and word.

3 Finally, brothers, carry on prayer for us, that the word of Jehovah may keep spreading rapidly and being glorified, just as it is with you, ² and that we may be rescued from harmful and wicked men, for faith is not a possession of all people. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the wicked one. ⁴ Moreover, we have confidence in the Lord regarding you, that you are carrying out and will go on carrying out our instructions. ⁵ May the Lord continue to guide your hearts successfully to the love of God and to the endurance for the Christ.

⁶ Now we are giving you instructions, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother who is walking disorderly and not according to the tradition that you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you should imitate us, because we did not behave in a disorderly way among you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food free. On the contrary, by labor and toil we were working night and day so as not to impose an expensive burden on any one of you. ⁹ Not that we do not have authority, but we wanted to offer ourselves as an example for you to imitate. ¹⁰ In fact, when we were with you, we used to give you this order: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat." ¹¹ For we hear that some are walking disorderly among you, not working at all, but meddling with what does not concern them. ¹² To such people we give the order

and exhortation in the Lord Jesus Christ that they should work quietly and eat food they themselves earn.

¹³ For your part, brothers, do not give up in doing good. ¹⁴ But if anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, keep this one marked and stop associating with him, so that he may become ashamed. ¹⁵ And yet do not consider him an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother.

¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace constantly in every way. May the Lord be with all of you.

¹⁷ Here is my greeting, Paul's, in my own hand, which is a sign in every letter; this is the way I write.

¹⁸ The undeserved kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

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- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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 How do these verses encourage you to preach with zeal and a sense of urgency?



July 15-21 / 2 Thessalonians 1-3

- Song 67 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 minutes or less)

Treasures From God's Word

- **"The Revealing of the Lawless One":** (10 minutes)

[Play the video *Introduction to 2 Thessalonians*.]

The Revealing of the Lawless One

2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

What was Paul referring to in these verses?

- "A restraint" (vs.6)—Likely the apostles
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2 Thessalonians 2:6-8—“The lawless one,” already at work, would be revealed

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8: And now you know what is acting as a restraint, so that he will be revealed in his own due time. True, the mystery of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who is right now acting as a restraint is out of the way. Then, indeed, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence.

it-1 972-973

Herein lies another mystery, diametrically opposed to Jehovah’s “sacred secret.” It is “the mystery of this lawlessness.” This was a mystery to true Christians because in the apostle Paul’s day the identity of “the man of lawlessness” had not taken form in a definitely established and clearly identifiable class. Even after that “man” would take form, his identity would continue to be mysterious to most persons because his wickedness would be practiced under the guise and in the name of godly devotion. It would, in fact, be an apostasy from true godly devotion. Paul said that “the mystery of this lawlessness” was already at work in his day, because there was a lawless influence in the Christian congregation that would eventually result in producing this apostate class. Finally,

this one would be done away with by Jesus Christ at the manifestation of his presence. This apostate, Satan-operated “man” would lift himself up “over everyone who is called ‘god’ or an object of reverence” (Greek, *se'basma*). Thus this great opposer of God as a Satanic instrument would be extremely deceptive and would bring destruction to those following its practices. The effectiveness of “the man of lawlessness” would lie in the fact that his wickedness would be cloaked in a hypocritical godly devotion.—2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; compare Matthew 7:15, 21-23.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12—Those who are misled by “the lawless one” would be judged

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12: But the lawless one’s presence is by the operation of Satan with every powerful work and lying signs and wonders and every unrighteous deception for those who are perishing, as a retribution because they did not accept the love of the truth in order that they might be saved. That is why God lets a deluding influence mislead them so that they may come to believe the lie, in order that they all may be judged because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness.

***it-2* 245 paragraph 7**

Jehovah God allows “an operation of error” to go to persons who prefer falsehood “that they may get to believing the lie” rather than the good news about Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) This principle is illustrated by what happened centuries earlier in the

case of Israelite King Ahab. Lying prophets assured Ahab of success in war against Ramoth-gilead, while Jehovah's prophet Micaiah foretold disaster. As revealed in vision to Micaiah, Jehovah allowed a spirit creature to become "a deceptive spirit" in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. That is to say, this spirit creature exercised his power upon them so that they spoke, not truth, but what they themselves wanted to say and what Ahab wanted to hear from them. Though forewarned, Ahab preferred to be fooled by their lies and paid for it with his life.—1 Kings 22:1-38; 2 Chronicles 18.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8—In what sense will the revelation of Jesus and the angels be "in a flaming fire"?

2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8: But you who suffer tribulation will be given relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.

***it-1* 834 paragraph 5**

Peter wrote that "the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire." From the context and in the light of other scriptures, it is evident that this is not a literal fire but signifies everlasting destruction. As the Flood of Noah's day did not destroy the literal heavens and earth, but only the ungodly persons, so also the

revelation of Jesus Christ with his powerful angels in a flaming fire will result in permanent destruction only for the ungodly and the wicked system of things of which they are a part.—2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; compare Isaiah 66:15, 16, 22, 24.

2 Thessalonians 2:2—What did Paul mean by “an inspired statement”?

2 Thessalonians 2:2: not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be alarmed either by an inspired statement or by a spoken message or by a letter appearing to be from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.

***it-1* 1206 paragraph 4**

“Inspired Expressions”—True and False. The Greek word *pneu'ma* (spirit) is used in a special manner in some apostolic writings. At 2 Thessalonians 2:2, for example, the apostle Paul urges his Thessalonian brothers not to get excited or shaken from their reason “either through an inspired expression [literally, “spirit”] or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.” It is clear that Paul uses the word *pneu'ma* (spirit) in connection with means of communication, such as the “verbal message” or “letter.” For this reason Lange’s *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (page 126) says on this text: “By this the Apostle intends a spiritual suggestion, pretended prediction, utterance of a prophet.” (Translated and edited by P. Schaff, 1976) Vincent’s *Word Studies in the New*

Testament states: "By spirit. By prophetic utterances of individuals in Christian assemblies, claiming the authority of divine revelations." (1957, Volume IV, page 63) Thus, while some translations simply render *pneu'ma* in this and similar cases as "spirit," other translations read "message of the Spirit" (*AT*), "prediction" (*JB*), "inspiration" (D'Ostervald; *Segond* [French]), "inspired expression" (*NW*).

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Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK


Sample Conversations

●○○
INITIAL CALL →

Question: Is God to blame for our suffering?

Scripture: Job 34:10

Link: What is the root cause of our suffering?




○○●
FIRST RETURN VISIT →

Question: What is the root cause of our suffering?

Scripture: 1Jo 5:19

Link: How will God undo the damage caused by the Devil?




○○●
SECOND RETURN VISIT

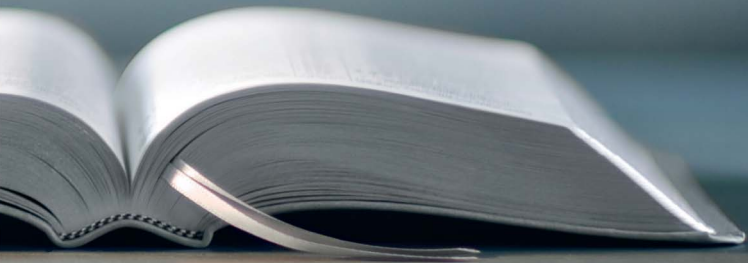
Question: How will God undo the damage caused by the Devil?

Scripture: Mt 6:9, 10

Link: What is the Kingdom of God?



What Does the Bible Really Teach?



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Is This What God Purposed?	3
1. What Is the Truth About God?	8
2. The Bible—A Book From God	18
3. What Is God’s Purpose for the Earth?	27
4. Who Is Jesus Christ?	37
5. The Ransom—God’s Greatest Gift	47
6. Where Are the Dead?	57
7. Real Hope for Your Loved Ones Who Have Died	66
8. What Is God’s Kingdom?	76
9. Are We Living in “the Last Days”?	86
10. Spirit Creatures—How They Affect Us	96
11. Why Does God Allow Suffering?	106
12. Living in a Way That Pleases God	115
13. A Godly View of Life	125
14. How to Make Your Family Life Happy	134
15. Worship That God Approves	144
16. Take Your Stand for True Worship	154
17. Draw Close to God in Prayer	164
18. Baptism and Your Relationship With God	174
19. Remain in God’s Love	184
Appendix	194

61 *Forward, You Witnesses!*

(Luke 16:16)

1. Firm and determined in this time of the end,
Prepared are God's servants the good news to defend.
The Devil has fought and opposed them.
With Jehovah, they take their stand against him.

(CHORUS)

*Then forward, you Witnesses, ever strong of heart!
Rejoice that in God's work, you too may have a part!
Go tell far and wide that the Paradise is near
And that soon all its blessings will be here.*

2. Servants of Jah do not seek a life of ease;
The world and its rulers we do not try to please.
Unspotted at all times remaining,
Our integrity we will keep maintaining.

(Chorus)

3. God and his Kingdom are mocked and pushed aside;
His great name is slandered, its holiness denied.
Let's share in its sanctification,
And declare it to ev'ry tribe and nation.

(Chorus)

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Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

To set the stage for the experiences in our program, I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes on the theme "Invigorate Your Ministry—How?" You dear brothers and sisters are having a regular share in the preaching work, and just think of the results.

Each year, about two billion hours are spent in the ministry.

Millions of Bible studies are conducted, and those being baptized number into the hundreds of thousands.

If you are a Kingdom publisher, you have had a share in those thrilling statistics.

But there's a potential danger.

With so much to do in our life —not just in the ministry but also with secular work, family responsibilities, for some, even health issues— we can get into a rut.

It's not always easy to detect at first, because in this age of technology we always feel busy.

But what consumes our day? Watch this one-minute video, and try to detect what's going on in the life of one brother.

His life is in a rut.

Try to figure out why.

Would you say that this brother's life is in a rut? Oh, he's active all day —he always has something to do.

But it's as if his mind has been kidnapped by his devices.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

Have you ever had the experience of reading an e-mail while someone is trying to tell you something? It can be embarrassing when you realize that they've asked you a question, and they're waiting for an answer, but you have no idea what they asked.

It's embarrassing, right? But what if the person who is trying to speak to you is Jehovah? Even though we aren't doing anything wrong, our daily routine can occupy our attention so much that we are not able to hear the refreshing words of Jehovah.

That can happen to any one of us.

Even our spiritual activity can get into a rut.

One Christian sister described it this way: "I would go out in service, go to meetings, study, pray—but I did it all on automatic control, never feeling anything."

Have you ever felt that way? Do you see all the happy servants of Jehovah whose experiences appear on JW Broadcasting, and you say to yourself: 'Why can't I find that joy? Why is my ministry in a rut?' Perhaps you feel like a remote-control train that goes around and around on a track, working the same territory, with the same partner, saying the same thing at each door.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with being in a good routine.

But being in a rut can sap our energy and take the joy out of our service.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

We could even come to view our ministry as boring.

Of course, we feel invigorated when we get good results: We meet an interested person when going from door to door—we're invigorated! An inactive person approaches the cart and wants to get in touch with the local congregation—we're even more invigorated! We start a Bible study—we're on top of the world! I'm sure you'll agree, all those outcomes are good reasons for joy.

The problem is that we're not always in control of getting those outcomes.

In real life, we may spend an entire morning in the door-to-door work without meeting an interested person.

We may spend months making return visits without starting a study.

And once again, our ministry can get into a rut.

Now, don't misunderstand.

It's not that we're doing anything wrong, but we're not getting the full joy out of doing what's right.

Of course, Satan would love it if our service to Jehovah were to fall into a rut.

He would love it if we lost our joy.

If we lose our joy, we lose hope, we lose strength, and we might even begin to feel like giving up.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

The point is this, brothers and sisters: If you feel that your ministry has fallen into a rut, don't be discouraged and don't give up.

There are ways that we can invigorate our ministry and serve Jehovah with renewed joy.

To illustrate that: Maybe you've had the frustrating experience of locking yourself out of your house or apartment.

Of course, with a key, opening the door is simple.

A locked door might seem like an obstacle, but it isn't if you have the key.

And the same is true with invigorating our ministry.

If we've fallen into a rut and if we've lost that feeling of joy in our service, there are a number of keys that can help us unlock the door.

Let's look at one.

Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9. Now, in these verses, the apostle Paul was presented with a key of opportunity, and he used it to open a door.

First Corinthians 16:8, 9 says: "But I am remaining in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost, because a large door that leads to activity has been opened to me."

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

Here, the apostle Paul found a key, and it didn't require moving to another location.

In this case, the key was to stay where he was and to take full advantage of an opportunity right before him.

Sometimes, the key to getting out of a rut in our ministry is to take advantage of opportunities we have right where we are.

For example, have you considered auxiliary pioneering or regular pioneering? What about learning a foreign language with the goal of helping a nearby group or congregation? Opening one door often leads to other doors of opportunity.

For example, a brother named Jacob wrote this: "When I was seven, many of my classmates were Vietnamese. I wanted to tell them about Jehovah, so after a while I made plans to learn their language. For the most part, I learned by comparing the English and Vietnamese editions "of The Watchtower. I also made friends in a nearby Vietnamese-language congregation. When I was 18, I started pioneering. Later, I attended the Bible School for Single Brothers. This helped me with my present pioneer assignment, where I am the only elder in a Vietnamese-language group. Many Vietnamese people are amazed that I have learned their language. They invite me in, and often I can study the Bible with them. Some have progressed to baptism."

The point is, our ministry is what we make it.

If we allow ourselves to remain in a rut, it will be boring.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

If we use our keys and if we take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, we will invigorate our ministry and give it new meaning.

This doesn't always involve putting in more time in the ministry.

It could mean that we simply 'make the best use of our time' as Ephesians 5:16 says.

In fact, there's a saying: "Don't work harder; work smarter." The key to working smarter could be as simple as switching things up a bit.

For example: Could we work with different publishers instead of the same one all the time? Could we try a different approach to our presentation, perhaps making better use of the Bible or our videos? Could we engage in other aspects of the ministry, such as cart witnessing or phone witnessing? Could we use our time more effectively to reach people when they're most likely to be home? Here's something else we could do to unlock a door and invigorate our ministry.

Open your Bible to Acts 16:9, 10. Now, here the apostle Paul found a unique way to unlock a door to greater joy.

Acts 16:9, 10 says: "And during the night a vision appeared to Paul—a Macedonian man was standing there urging him and saying: "Step over into Macedonia and help us." As soon as he had seen the vision, we tried to go into Macedonia, drawing the conclusion that God had summoned us to declare the good news to them."

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

Notice, Paul didn't think of all the reasons he couldn't step into Macedonia.

No, he took action as soon as he was presented with the opportunity.

Paul unlocked the door to invigorate his ministry.

Sometimes we think that only those who are young can reach out to pioneer or to serve where the need is greater.

But that's not always the case.

You parents may be able to unlock a door of opportunity for yourselves, and think of the example you set for your children when you do so.

That's what a mother named Tara discovered: "I started pioneering when my youngest daughter was in elementary school," she says. "It was important to me that my children see me serving Jehovah to the best of my ability as I encouraged them to reach out."

Tara's husband, Anthony, saw the effect that his wife's pioneering had and, in time, he too joined the ranks. This is what he said: "When Tara became a pioneer, it made an immediate impact on daughters number one and number two, and they became pioneers. When I became a pioneer, daughters number three and number four followed. I wish I had pursued full-time service sooner, as it made a huge impact on the spirituality of the family."

I can relate to this experience because of the good example of my parents.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?

My mother was baptized in Canada in 1940 when she was 16. Jehovah's Witnesses had just been banned in Canada.

Her father had already died, and her mother was opposed at that time.

The brothers had very little money, but they encouraged my mother to pursue spiritual goals.

With that encouragement, she started pioneering in 1942 while the ban was still on in Canada.

In 1947, she was invited to become a special pioneer in the province of Quebec.

At that time, special pioneers were required to spend 200 hours each month in the ministry.

With basically no money and no family support, she accepted that assignment.

This picture was taken when she and her pioneer partner were boarding the train to Quebec.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?



Whenever I see this picture, it reminds me of the intrepid spirit that my mother had —not being afraid to take on a challenging assignment, but putting complete trust in Jehovah.

That spirit encourages me even to this day.

My father has that same spirit.

In the summer of 1976, when I was 11 years old, a new arrangement was announced at our district convention — auxiliary pioneering.

You could be an auxiliary pioneer if you could devote 60 hours in one month to the ministry.

The month of October 1976 had five weekends.

My father encouraged our whole congregation to try auxiliary pioneering that month.

Mark Sanderson: Invigorate Your Ministry—How?



So many brothers and sisters, including me, decided to get a taste of pioneering.

It was a wonderful experience that I will never forget.

Parents, your good example will help your children to have a living ministry of their own that they will love.

Brothers and sisters, if you find yourself in a rut, there is no reason to stay there.

We've discussed several ways to reinvigorate our ministry, and with Jehovah's help we will be successful.

JESUS REVEALS THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

LUKE 11:14-36

- EXPELLING DEMONS BY “GOD’S FINGER”
 - SOURCE OF TRUE HAPPINESS
-

Jesus has just repeated his instructions about prayer, but that is not the only subject that comes up more than once during his ministry. When he was performing miracles in Galilee, Jesus faced the false charge that he did so by means of power from the ruler of the demons. Now in Judea this charge arises again.

When Jesus casts out of a man a demon that prevents him from speaking, the crowds are amazed. Not his critics, though. They bring up the same false accusation: “He expels the demons by means of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” (Luke 11: 15) Others, seeking more evidence as to Jesus’ identity, ask him for a sign from heaven.

Realizing that they are trying to test him, Jesus answers them as he did similar critics encountered



in Galilee. He says that every kingdom divided against itself will fall, reasoning: “If Satan is also divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?” Then Jesus tells them directly: “If it is by means of God’s finger that I expel the demons, the Kingdom of God has really overtaken you.”—Luke 11:18-20.

Jesus’ mention of “God’s finger” should call to his listeners’ minds what happened earlier in Israel’s history. Those in Pharaoh’s court who saw Moses perform a miracle exclaimed: “It is the finger of God!” It was also “God’s finger” that wrote the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets. (Exodus 8:19; 31:18) Similarly, “God’s finger”—his holy spirit, or active force—is what is now enabling Jesus to expel demons and cure sick people. Hence, the Kingdom of God has indeed overtaken these opposers, because the designated King of the Kingdom, Jesus, is right there performing these works.

Jesus’ ability to expel demons is evidence of his power over Satan, just as when a stronger man approaches and overpowers a well-armed man guard-

ing a palace. Jesus also repeats his illustration about an unclean spirit that leaves a man. If the man does not fill the void with good things, that spirit will return with seven others, making the man's final condition worse than at the first. (Matthew 12:22, 25-29, 43-45) So it is proving to be with the nation of Israel.

A woman listening to Jesus is moved to exclaim: "Happy is the womb that carried you and the breasts that nursed you!" Jewish women hoped to be the mother of a prophet, particularly of the Messiah. So this woman might think that Mary can be especially happy as the mother of such a teacher. Yet Jesus corrects the woman as to the true source of happiness: "No, rather, happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!" (Luke 11:27, 28) Jesus has never suggested that Mary should be given special honor. Rather, true happiness for any man or woman is found in being a faithful servant of God, not in any physical ties or accomplishments.

As Jesus did in Galilee, he rebukes the people for demanding a sign from heaven. He says that no sign

will be given them except “the sign of Jonah.” Jonah served as a sign both by his three days in the fish and by his bold preaching, which moved the Ninevites to repent. Jesus says: “But look! something more than Jonah is here.” (Luke 11:29-32) Jesus also is more than Solomon, whose wisdom the queen of Sheba came to hear.

“After lighting a lamp,” Jesus adds, “a person puts it, not in a hidden place nor under a basket, but on the lampstand.” (Luke 11:33) He may mean that teaching and performing miracles before these people is like hiding the light of a lamp. Because their eyes are not focused, they miss the purpose of his works.

Jesus has just expelled a demon and has caused a man who was speechless to speak. That should motivate people to glorify God and tell others what Jehovah is accomplishing. So Jesus has words of warning for his critics: “Be alert, therefore, that the light that is in you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is bright with no part of it dark, it will all be as bright as when a lamp gives you light by its rays.”—Luke 11:35, 36.

- ◇ How do some in Judea respond to Jesus' healing a man?
- ◇ What is "God's finger," and how has God's Kingdom overtaken Jesus' listeners?
- ◇ How can people find true happiness?

Our Reasons for Joy

(Matthew 5:12)

1. Our reasons for joy are abundant,
Like riches increasing in worth.
Those precious to God from all nations
Are joining us in all the earth.
The joy in our heart is well-founded,
With roots reaching deep in God's Word.
We daily partake of its teachings;
Faith follows the things we have heard.
Our causes for joy are deep-seated,
Like embers that burn in our hearts.
Though troubles and trials beset us,
Endurance Jehovah imparts.

(CHORUS)

*Jehovah our God is our joy,
The work of his hands our delight.
How deep are his thoughts, how great are his works,
Abounding in goodness and might!*

2. We gladly behold his productions,
The heavens, the sea, and the land.
We gaze at the book of creation,
Applauding the work of his hands.
Triumphantly we now bear witness,
Proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
The news of its birth and its blessings,
We joyously spread all abroad.
Eternal rejoicing approaches,
Like daylight that follows the night.
The promised new earth and new heavens
Will bring everlasting delight.

(Chorus)

MAY 2019

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JULY 1–AUGUST 4, 2019

Study Article 18: July 1-7	2
Love and Justice in the Christian Congregation	

Study Article 19: July 8-14	14
Love and Justice in the Face of Wickedness	

Study Article 20: July 15-21	27
Providing Comfort for Victims of Abuse	

Study Article 21: July 22-28	41
Do Not Be Fooled by “the Wisdom of This World”	

Study Article 22: July 29–August 4	51
Improve Your Study Habits!	

COVER PICTURE:

Parents protect their children from sexual abuse by sharing with them appropriate information about sex. To do so, parents use the information that God’s organization has provided. (See study article 19, paragraphs 19-22)

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134 *Children Are a Trust From God*

(Psalm 127:3-5)

1. When a man becomes a father

And a woman has a child of her own,
They share a trust, they must remember,
That is not theirs, not theirs alone.
The gift they share is from Jehovah;
Of life and love he is the one true Source.
To parents he gives sure direction
That they may follow the wisest course.

(CHORUS)

*A sacred trust you have been given;
A precious life is in your hands.
You can bestow the greatest favor;
Instruct your child in God's commands.*

2. All the words God has commanded—

They must always prove to be on your heart.
These words you'll speak to sons and daughters;
This is your trust, this is your part.
To them you'll speak along your roadway,
When you rise up and when you are at rest.
In years to come, may they remember,
May they be faithful, may they be blessed.

(Chorus)

PART 4 OF 4

Providing Comfort for Victims of Abuse

“The God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our trials.”

—2 COR. 1:3, 4.

SONG 134

Children Are a Trust From God

PREVIEW

Those who have endured sexual abuse in childhood may face challenges even years later. This article will help us to understand why. We will also consider who may be able to comfort such ones. Finally, we will discuss some effective ways in which we can provide comfort.

HUMANS have a natural need for comfort and a remarkable ability to provide it. For instance, when a little child falls and skins his knee while playing, he may run to Mommy or Daddy, crying. The parents cannot heal the wound, but they can comfort the child. They may ask what happened, wipe away his tears, offer soothing words and affection, and perhaps apply some medicine or a bandage. Before long, the child stops crying and may even resume playing. In time, the wound will heal.

² Sometimes, though, children are hurt in far worse ways. Some are sexually abused. The abuse can be inflicted on a single occasion, or it may go on for years. In either case, the abuse can leave deep emotional scars. In some cases, the offender is caught and punished. In others, the abuser may seem to escape justice. But even if justice is swift, the harmful effects of the abuse may last well into adulthood.

³ If a Christian who was abused as a child still struggles with emotional pain as an adult, what help is available? (Read **2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.**) Clearly, it is Jehovah's will that his sheep receive the love and com-

1-2. (a) What example shows that humans have a natural need for comfort and an ability to provide it? (b) How are some children hurt?

3. As mentioned at 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4, what is Jehovah's will, and what questions will we address?

fort they need. So let us address three questions: (1) Why may those who have endured child abuse need comfort? (2) Who can provide the comfort needed? (3) How can we offer comfort effectively?

WHY IS COMFORT NEEDED?

⁴ For some adults who suffered childhood abuse, comfort may still be needed even though many years have passed. Why? In order to understand, we must first realize that children are very different from adults. A child is often affected in ways that are quite different from the ways that an adult might be affected by mistreatment. Consider some examples.

⁵ *Children need to form close, trusting bonds with those who raise them and care for them.* Such bonds make children feel secure and teach them to trust others who love them. (Ps. 22:9) Sadly, abuse most often occurs in the home, and close family members and family friends are common perpetrators. Breaking a child's trust in this way can make it hard for that child to trust others, even years later.

⁶ *Children are vulnerable, and sexual abuse is cruel and harmful.* Subjecting children to sexual acts many years before they are physically, emotionally, or

4-5. (a) Why is it important to realize that children differ from adults? (b) How may abuse affect a child's ability to trust others?
6. Why is sexual abuse cruel and harmful?

mentally ready for sex within marriage can do great harm. Abuse can badly distort their view of sex, of themselves, or of anyone who seeks to be close to them.

⁷ Children are not fully developed in their ability to think, to reason, or to recognize and avoid danger. (1 Cor. 13:11) So it is all too easy for devious abusers to deceive children. Abusers teach children dangerous lies, such as the idea that the child is to blame, that the abuse must be kept secret, that no one will listen or care if the child reports the abuse, or that sexual acts between an adult and a child are actually normal expressions of sincere love. Such lies can distort a child's thinking ability and perception of truth for many years. Such a child may grow up thinking of herself or himself as damaged, defiled, and unworthy of love or comfort.

⁸ It is not surprising, then, that sexual abuse can cause lasting harm. How evil this crime is! Such widespread abuse is clear evidence that we are living in the last days, a time when many have “no natural affection” and when “wicked men and impostors will ad-

7. (a) Why may a devious abuser find it easy to fool a child, and how might the abuser do so? (b) What may be the results of such lies?

8. Why can we be sure that Jehovah can provide comfort to those who have been hurt?

vance from bad to worse.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13) Satan’s designs are truly evil, and it is sad when humans act in a way that pleases the Devil. However, Jehovah is far stronger than Satan or his servants. He is never blind to Satan’s tactics. We can be sure that Jehovah is fully aware of the pain we experience, and he can provide the comfort we need. We are blessed to serve “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in *all* our trials so that we may be able to comfort others in *any* sort of trial with the comfort that we receive from God.” (2 Cor. 1: 3, 4) Whom, though, does Jehovah use to offer comfort?

WHO CAN PROVIDE COMFORT?

⁹ Those who have been abandoned by parents or victimized by people close to them may especially need comfort. The psalmist David knew that Jehovah is the most reliable provider of comfort. (Read Psalm 27: 10.) David had faith that Jehovah takes in those who have been rejected by their loved ones. How does Jehovah do so? He uses his faithful human servants. Our fellow worshippers of Jehovah are our spiritual family. For instance, Jesus spoke of those who joined him in worshipping Jehovah as his brothers, sisters, and mother.—Matt. 12:48-50.

9. According to King David’s words found at Psalm 27:10, what will Jehovah do for those who are abandoned by their own family?

¹⁰ Consider an example of such familylike relationships in the Christian congregation. The apostle Paul was a hardworking, faithful elder. He set a fine example, and he was even inspired to tell others to imitate him as he imitated Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1) Note how Paul once described his work as an elder: “We became gentle in your midst, as when a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.” (1 Thess. 2:7) Loyal elders today can likewise use tender, gentle words as they offer Scriptural comfort to those in need.

¹¹ Are elders the only ones who can give comfort to victims of abuse? No. All of us have a responsibility to

10. How did the apostle Paul describe his work as an elder?

11. What shows that elders are not the only ones who can give comfort?



Mature Christian sisters are often very effective at giving comfort

(See paragraph 11)

“keep comforting one another.” (1 Thess. 4:18) Mature Christian sisters can be especially encouraging to sisters in need of comfort. Fittingly, Jehovah God likened himself to a mother who comforts her son. (Isa. 66:13) The Bible includes examples of women who provided comfort to those in distress. (Job 42:11) How delighted Jehovah is to see Christian women today offering comfort to fellow sisters who struggle with emotional pain! In some cases, an elder or two may discreetly ask a mature sister if she is in a position to help a suffering sister in that way.*

HOW CAN WE OFFER COMFORT?

¹² Of course, we are careful not to pry into matters that a fellow Christian prefers to keep private. (1 Thess. 4:11) What, though, can we do for those who need and want help and comfort? Let us consider five Scriptural ways in which we may offer comfort.

¹³ *Offer practical help.* When the prophet Elijah was on the run for his life, he was so discouraged that he wished for death. Jehovah sent a mighty angel to visit that discouraged man. The angel provided

* Whether an individual who has suffered abuse should seek qualified professional help is a personal decision.

12. What are we careful not to do?

13. As related at 1 Kings 19:5-8, what did Jehovah’s angel do for Elijah, and how might we imitate the angel?

very practical help. He gave Elijah a hot meal and encouraged him to eat. (Read 1 Kings 19:5-8.) That account illustrates a useful truth: Sometimes a simple act of practical kindness can do a great deal of good. Perhaps a meal, a modest gift, or a thoughtful card would assure a downhearted brother or sister of our love and concern. If we feel uncomfortable discussing very personal or painful subjects, perhaps we can still give such practical help.

¹⁴ *Make distressed ones feel safe and comfortable.* We may learn another lesson from the account about Elijah. Jehovah miraculously gave the prophet the help he needed to go all the way to Mount Horeb. Perhaps at that remote spot, where Jehovah had made his covenant with his people centuries earlier, Elijah felt safe. He may have felt that he was, at last, far out of the reach of those who sought to do him harm. What lesson may we draw? If we want to offer comfort to victims of abuse, we may need first to help them feel safe. For instance, elders should keep in mind that a distressed sister may feel safer and more comfortable having a cup of tea in a relaxed setting at home than she would in a Kingdom Hall conference room. Another might feel the opposite.

¹⁵ *Be a good listener.* The Bible offers this clear

14. What lesson can we learn from the account about Elijah?

15-16. What is involved in being a good listener?

advice: “Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak.” (Jas. 1:19) Are we good listeners? We might tend to think of listening as a passive act—as if it means nothing more than staying still, looking at the person, and saying nothing. But good listening involves more than that. For example, Elijah finally poured out his anguished feelings to Jehovah, and Jehovah truly listened. Jehovah perceived that Elijah was scared, felt alone, and thought that all his work had been for nothing. Jehovah lovingly addressed each concern. He showed that he had truly listened to Elijah.—1 Ki. 19:9-11, 15-18.

¹⁶ How can we show sympathy and tender compassion—which are expressions of love—while listening? At times, a few tactful, warm words may show how we feel. You might say: “I am so sorry that happened to you! No child should be treated that way!” Perhaps you could ask a question or two to make sure you understand what the anguished friend is saying. You might ask, “Can you please help me understand what you mean?” or “When you said that, I concluded . . . Did I get it right?” Such loving expressions may assure the person that you are truly listening, trying to make sure that you understand.—1 Cor. 13:4, 7.

¹⁷ Be careful, though, to remain “slow to speak.” Do not interrupt to give advice or to correct the person’s

17. Why should we be patient and “slow to speak”?



We can provide healing by listening patiently, praying earnestly, and choosing comforting words
(See paragraphs 15-20)

thinking. And be patient! When Elijah finally poured out his heart to Jehovah, he spoke in strong terms, expressing anguish. Later, after Jehovah strengthened Elijah's faith, the man poured out his feelings again, using the very same words. (1 Ki. 19:9, 10, 13, 14) The lesson? Sometimes distressed ones need to pour out their heart more than once. Like Jehovah, we want to listen patiently. Rather than trying to provide solutions, we offer sympathy and tender compassion. —1 Pet. 3:8.

¹⁸ *Pray earnestly with the one in pain.* Those who are

18. How can our prayers prove to be comforting to those who are in pain?

very low in spirits may feel unable to pray. A person may feel unworthy to approach Jehovah. If we want to comfort such a person, we may offer a prayer with that one, using his or her name. We may express to Jehovah how dear the downhearted one is to us and to the congregation. We may ask Jehovah to soothe and comfort that precious sheep of his. Prayers of that kind can be profoundly comforting.—Jas. 5:16.

19 *Choose words that heal and console.* Think before you speak. Thoughtless words can hurt. Kind words can heal. (Prov. 12:18) So pray to Jehovah for help to find kind, comforting, soothing words. Keep in mind that no words are more powerful than Jehovah’s own expressions contained in the Bible.—Heb. 4:12.

20 Past abuse may have convinced some that they are dirty, worthless, or unloved—even unlovable. What a terrible lie! So use the Scriptures to remind them of their true value in Jehovah’s eyes. (See the box “Comfort From the Scriptures.”) Remember how an angel kindly strengthened the prophet Daniel when he was feeling weak and low. Jehovah wanted that dear man to know that he was precious. (Dan. 10:2, 11, 19) Likewise, our anguished brothers and sisters are precious to Jehovah!

19. What might help us to prepare to comfort someone?

20. Of what may bad experiences have convinced some, and of what do we want to remind them?

Comfort From the Scriptures



What scriptures have been especially comforting to survivors of sexual abuse? A great many could be listed, but these are just a few that offer comfort. Below each Scripture citation is either a comment or a quotation showing how the verses may be applied in a helpful way.

JOB 34:22-28 In some cases, abusers may seem to get away with their wicked deeds. But they cannot hide from Jehovah, who hears the cries of their victims. Trusting in Jehovah’s justice can help us find peace.

PSALM 62:8 “As that verse encourages, I poured out my heart before Jehovah, and I begged him for comfort and for a sound heart and mind. Through constant prayer to Jehovah, I gradually found real comfort and peace of mind.”—An elder who was sexually abused when he was about nine.—See also Psalm 56:8-13.

ISAIAH 41:10, 13 These verses paint a comforting picture of Jehovah as a loving, protective Father who helps his servants during hard times. God’s people around the world have experienced the truthfulness of those words, including in the wake of abuse.

ISAIAH 32:1, 2 “I turned to the elders for help. They sat down with me on several occasions and took their time talking to me. They showed personal interest and listened carefully. They prayed with me and for me.”—A Christian sister who was molested at about age six.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4, 7 Keep those verses in mind when listening to someone disclose past abuse. Avoid expressions of disbelief or skepticism. Many abusers tell children that if they report the abuse, no one will believe them. Some children grow up thinking that. So focus instead on the very real pain of your fellow Christian, and offer what comfort you can.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4, 5 Sexual abuse can teach young ones to believe lies, but God’s inspired Word can overturn even the most entrenched of satanic lies.

1 JOHN 3:19, 20 When our heart condemns us unfairly, we must remember that Jehovah “is greater than our hearts and knows all things.” His Word can reassure us of this truth: We are precious in God’s eyes.

See chapter 24 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*.

²¹ When we comfort others, we remind them of Jehovah’s love. And we must never forget that Jehovah is also a God of justice. No wicked act of abuse is really hidden. Jehovah sees all, and he will not let unrepentant wrongdoers go unpunished. (Num. 14:18) Meanwhile, let us do all we can to show love to those who have experienced abuse. Moreover, how comforting it is to know that Jehovah will permanently heal all those who have been abused by Satan and his world! Soon, these painful things will never again come up into the mind or heart.—Isa. 65:17.

21. What future awaits all unrepentant wrongdoers, but what should we all be resolved to do in the meanwhile?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 32: A mature sister comforts a sister who is in emotional pain. Page 36: Two elders visit the sister who is in distress. She has invited the mature sister to be present.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why may those who endured child abuse need comfort even years later?
- Who may provide comfort to those in need?
- What are effective ways to offer comfort?

109 *Love Intensely From the Heart*

(1 Peter 1:22)

1. When our love is pure and intense,
 We make Jehovah's heart rejoice.
Love is his greatest quality,
 Something that we hold dear.
Warm affection glows in our hearts,
 Making a loyal friendship grow.
Love always acts unselfishly,
 Proving our love sincere.

When we see a friend in need,
 We'll be there to lend a helping hand.
Truly we can be a friend,
 Someone who can understand.

Jesus showed what love really means,
 Helping us see Jehovah's love,
Touching our hearts and moving us.
 Tender feelings are a start.
Love intensely from the heart.

