

- Song 50 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Display Godly Wisdom”:** (10 min.)
 Jas 3:17—Godly wisdom is pure and peaceable (cl 221-222 ¶9-10)
 Jas 3:17—Godly wisdom is reasonable, ready to obey, and full of mercy and good fruits (cl 223-224 ¶12; 224-225 ¶14-15)
 Jas 3:17—Godly wisdom is impartial and not hypocritical (cl 226-227 ¶18-19)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jas 4:5—What scripture is James quoting? (w08 11/15 20 ¶6)

Jas 4:11, 12—How does someone who “speaks against a brother” speak “against law”? (w97 11/15 20-21 ¶8)

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) Jas 3:1-18 (5)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Apply Yourself to Reading and Teaching:** (10 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Modulation*, and then discuss study 10 of the *Teaching* brochure.
- **Talk:** (5 min. or less) w10 9/1 23-24—Theme: Why should we confess our sins, and to whom? (14)

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS


- Song 53
- **Local Needs:** (15 min.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 86 ¶8-17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 125 and Prayer

JAMES 3-5 | Display Godly Wisdom



3:17

Jehovah’s wisdom is practical. For instance, it can help us to restore peace with fellow believers. If we have truly acquired godly wisdom, it will be evident in our conduct.

 **ASK YOURSELF:** “Which of these aspects of godly wisdom have I displayed recently? How might I improve in displaying some of them?”

- Pure
- Peaceable
- Reasonable
- Ready to obey
- Full of mercy and good fruits
- Impartial
- Not hypocritical

My Prayer of Dedication

(Matthew 22:37)

1. Take my heart and may it love
Truth and wisdom from above.
Take my voice and let it sing
Praises always to my King.
2. Take my feet and take my hands;
Let them serve your wise commands.
Take my silver and my gold.
Nothing, Lord, would I withhold.
3. Take my life and bring it, Lord,
With your will, in full accord.
Take myself, may all I do
Be well-pleasing, Jah, to you.

James 3-5

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive heavier judgment. ² For we all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body. ³ If we put bridles in the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide also their whole body. ⁴ Look also at ships: Although they are so big and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the man at the helm is inclined to go.

⁵ So, too, the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it makes great brags. See how small a fire it takes to set a great forest ablaze! ⁶ The tongue is also a fire. The tongue represents a world of unrighteousness among our body members, for it defiles all the body and sets the whole course of life on fire, and it is set on fire by Ge-hen'na. ⁷ For every kind of wild animal and bird and reptile and sea creature is to be tamed and has been tamed by humans. ⁸ But no human can tame the tongue. It is unruly and injurious, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we praise Jehovah, the Father, and yet with it we curse men who have come into existence "in the likeness of God." ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

My brothers, it is not right for things to happen this way. ¹¹ A spring does not cause the fresh water and the bitter water to bubble out of the same opening, does it? ¹² My brothers, a fig tree cannot produce olives, or a grapevine figs, can it? Neither can salt water produce fresh water.

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him by his fine conduct demonstrate works performed with a mildness that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and contentiousness in your hearts, do not be bragging and lying against the truth.

¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above; it is earthly,

animalistic, demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there are jealousy and contentiousness, there will also be disorder and every vile thing.

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical. ¹⁸ Moreover, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peaceful conditions for those who are making peace.

4 What is the source of the wars and fights among you? Do they not originate from your fleshly desires that carry on a conflict within you? ² You desire, and yet you do not have. You go on murdering and coveting, and yet you are not able to obtain. You go on fighting and waging war. You do not have because of your not asking.

³ When you do ask, you do not receive because you are asking for a wrong purpose, so that you may spend it on your fleshly desires.

⁴ Adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is making himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that for no reason the scripture says: "The spirit that has taken up residence within us keeps enviously longing"? ⁶ However, the undeserved kindness that He gives is greater. So it says: "God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones."

⁷ Therefore, subject yourselves to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you indecisive ones. ⁹ Give way to misery and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into despair.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the eyes of Jehovah, and he will exalt you.

¹¹ Stop speaking against one another, brothers. Whoever speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks against law and judges law. Now if you judge law, you are not a doer of law but a judge. ¹² There is only one who is Lawgiver and Judge, the one

who is able to save and to destroy. But you, who are you to be judging your neighbor?

¹³ Come, now, you who say: "Today or tomorrow we will travel to this city and will spend a year there, and we will do business and make some profit," ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. ¹⁵ Instead, you should say: "If Jehovah wills, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ But now you take pride in your arrogant boasting. All such boasting is wicked. ¹⁷ Therefore, if someone knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him.

5 Come, now, you rich men, weep and wail over the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted, and your clothing has become moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have rusted away, and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh. What you have stored up will be like a fire in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you have withheld from the workers who harvested your fields keep crying out, and the cries for help of the reapers have reached the ears of Jehovah of armies. ⁵ You have lived in luxury and for self-gratification on the earth. You have fattened your hearts on the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one. Is he not opposing you?

⁷ Be patient then, brothers, until the presence of the Lord. Look! The farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until the early rain and the late rain arrive. ⁸ You too exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close.

⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you do not get judged. Look! The Judge is standing before the doors. ¹⁰ Brothers, take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the

exercising of patience the prophets who spoke in the name of Jehovah. ¹¹ Look! We consider happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.

¹² Above all, my brothers, stop swearing, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your “Yes” mean yes and your “No,” no, so that you do not become liable to judgment.

¹³ Is there anyone suffering hardship among you? Let him carry on prayer. Is there anyone in good spirits? Let him sing psalms.

¹⁴ Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the elders of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, applying oil to him in the name of Jehovah. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will make the sick one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

¹⁶ Therefore, openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. A righteous man’s supplication has a powerful effect. ¹⁷ E-li’jah was a man with feelings like ours, and yet when he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the land produced fruit.

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you is led astray from the truth and another turns him back, ²⁰ know that whoever turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save him from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- Song 50 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

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- **Local Needs:** (15 min.)
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JAMES 3-5 | Display Godly Wisdom



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Jehovah’s wisdom is practical. For instance, it can help us to restore peace with fellow believers. If we have truly acquired godly wisdom, it will be evident in our conduct.

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- Pure
- Peaceable
- Reasonable
- Ready to obey
- Full of mercy and good fruits
- Impartial
- Not hypocritical

October 7-13 / James 3-5

- Song 50 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 minutes or less)

Treasures From God's Word

- **"Display Godly Wisdom":** (10 minutes)

Display Godly Wisdom

James 3:17

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James 3:17—Godly wisdom is pure and peaceable

James 3:17: But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical.

cl 221-222 paragraphs 9-10

9 “First of all chaste.” To be chaste means to be pure and undefiled not just outwardly but inwardly. The Bible associates wisdom with the heart, but heavenly wisdom cannot enter into a heart that is defiled by wicked thoughts, desires, and motives. (Proverbs 2:10; Matthew 15:19, 20) However, if our heart is chaste—that is, as far as is possible for imperfect humans—we will “turn away from what is bad and do what is good.” (Psalm 37:27; Proverbs 3:7) Is it not fitting that chasteness is the first quality of wisdom listed? After all, if we are not morally and spiritually clean, how can we truly reflect the other qualities of the wisdom from above?

10 “Then peaceable.” Heavenly wisdom moves us to pursue peace, which is a fruit of God’s spirit. (Galatians 5:22) We strive to avoid disrupting the “bond of peace” that unites Jehovah’s people.

(Ephesians 4:3) We also do our best to restore peace when it is disturbed. Why is this important? The Bible says: "Continue . . . to live peaceably; and the God of love and of peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13:11) So as long as we continue to live peaceably, the God of peace will be with us. The way we treat fellow worshipers has a direct bearing on our relationship with Jehovah. How can we prove ourselves to be peacemakers? Consider an example.

James 3:17—Godly wisdom is reasonable, ready to obey, and full of mercy and good fruits

James 3:17: But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical.

cl 223-224 paragraph 12

"Reasonable." What does it mean to be reasonable? According to scholars, the original Greek word rendered "reasonable" at James 3:17 is difficult to translate. Translators have used such words as "gentle," "forbearing," and "considerate." A footnote in the New World Translation indicates that the literal meaning is "yielding." How can we demonstrate that this aspect of the wisdom from above is at work in us?

cl 224-225 paragraphs 14-15

14 "Ready to obey." The Greek word rendered "ready to obey" is not found elsewhere in the Christian Greek Scriptures. According to one scholar, this word "is often used of military discipline." It conveys the idea of "easy to be persuaded" and "submissive." One who is governed by the wisdom from above readily submits to what the Scriptures say. He is not known as one who makes up his mind and then refuses to be influenced by any facts that contradict him. Rather, he is quick to change when he is presented with clear Scriptural evidence that he has taken a wrong stand or has drawn erroneous conclusions. Is that how you are known by others?

15 "Full of mercy and good fruits." Mercy is an important part of the wisdom from above, for such wisdom is said to be "full of mercy." Notice that "mercy" and "good fruits" are mentioned together. This is fitting, for in the Bible, mercy most often refers to an active concern for others, a compassion that produces a rich crop of kindly deeds. One reference work defines mercy as "a feeling of sorrow over someone's bad situation and trying to do something about it." Hence, godly wisdom is not dry, heartless, or merely intellectual. Instead, it is warm, heartfelt, and sensitive. How can we show that we are full of mercy?

James 3:17—Godly wisdom is impartial and not hypocritical

James 3:17: But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical.

cl 226-227 paragraphs 18-19

18 “Not making partial distinctions.” Godly wisdom rises above racial prejudice and national pride. If we are guided by such wisdom, we endeavor to root out of our hearts any tendency to show favoritism. (James 2:9) We do not give preferential treatment to others on the basis of their educational background, financial standing, or congregational responsibility; nor do we look down on any of our fellow worshipers, regardless of how lowly they may seem to be. If Jehovah has made such ones recipients of his love, we should certainly deem them worthy of our love.

19 “Not hypocritical.” The Greek word for “hypocrite” can refer to “an actor who played a role.” In ancient times, Greek and Roman actors wore large masks when performing. Hence, the Greek word for “hypocrite” came to apply to one putting on a pretense, or one playing false. This aspect of godly wisdom should influence not just how we treat fellow worshipers but also how we feel about them.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

James 4:5—What scripture is James quoting?

James 4:5: Or do you think that for no reason the scripture says: “The spirit that has taken up residence within us keeps enviously longing”?

w08 11/15 20 paragraph 6

James is not quoting any specific verse. However, these divinely inspired words are possibly based on the general thought behind such scriptures as Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Proverbs 21:10; and Galatians 5:17.

James 4:11, 12—How does someone who “speaks against a brother” speak “against law”?

James 4:11, 12: Stop speaking against one another, brothers. Whoever speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks against law and judges law. Now if you judge law, you are not a doer of law but a judge. There is only one who is Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and to destroy. But you, who are you to be judging your neighbor?

w97 11/15 20-21 paragraph 8

It is sinful to speak against a fellow believer. (James 4:11, 12) Yet some are critical of fellow Christians, perhaps as a result of their own self-righteous attitude or because they want to exalt themselves by downgrading others. (Psalm 50:20; Proverbs 3:29) The Greek term rendered 'speak against' denotes hostility and implies making an exaggerated or false accusation. This amounts to judging a brother adversely. How is this 'speaking against and judging God's law'? Well, the scribes and the Pharisees 'adroitly set aside God's commandment' and judged by their own standards. (Mark 7:1-13) Similarly, if we condemned a brother that Jehovah would not condemn, would we not be 'judging God's law' and sinfully imply that it is inadequate? And by unjustly criticizing our brother, we would not be fulfilling the law of love.—Romans 13:8-10.

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Apply Yourself to Reading and Teaching

Study 6 – Scripture Application Made Clear

Proverbs 8:4, 7

⁴ “To you, O people, I am calling; I raise my voice to everyone. ⁷ For my mouth softly utters truth, and my lips detest what is wicked.

SUMMARY: Convey ideas clearly and stir emotion by varying your volume, pitch, and pace.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Vary your volume, pitch, and pace in order to convey ideas and stir emotion.

INSTRUCTOR: The human voice is a marvelous instrument, capable of great variety. When we vary our volume, pitch and pace so as to convey ideas clearly and stir emotion, we're using modulation. Why is modulation important when speaking? For the same reason it's important when playing a musical instrument. How would music sound without modulation?

(Sound - a constant unchanging beat played in a single tone)

.....

It's not very appealing, is it? Now let's vary the volume.

(Sound - a constant unchanging beat played in a single tone but varying in volume)

.....oO.....

Let's also add changes in pace.

(Sound - a single tone played with varying volume and changes in the pace of the beat)

.. . . .oO

Finally, let's add variations in pitch.

(Music - a beat with varying volume, pace, and pitch)



When the musician varied the volume, pace and pitch, the result was something pleasurable to listen to. To illustrate the importance of doing this when we speak, let's listen, as the speaker presents fine information, but with little modulation.

SCENE 1:

SPEAKER (speaking in a very monotone and evenly paced voice): After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites are on the verge of a momentous change. They're about to take possession of the Promised Land. Tents will be replaced by houses. Manna will be replaced by meat and vegetables. At last, they will be able to worship Jehovah as a free and spiritually clean people. Still, challenges awaited them. What would Moses say shortly before his death? To encourage and prepare them. Let's find out by reading Deuteronomy 31:7-8.

INSTRUCTOR: We stopped the speaker before he read the scripture and finished making the point because he was difficult to listen to. Let's watch him try again. But this time he varies his volume, pitch and pace.

- Vary your volume
- Vary your pitch
- Vary your pace

SCENE 2:

SPEAKER: After **40 years** of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites are on the *verge* of a **momentous** change. They're about to take possession of *the Promised Land*. *Tents* will be replaced by *houses*. *Manna* will be replaced by *meat* and *vegetables*. **At last**, they'll be able to *worship* Jehovah as a *free* and *spiritually clean* people. Still, *challenges* awaited them. What would Moses say shortly before his death to *encourage* and *prepare* them? *Let's find out* by reading Deuteronomy 31:7-8:

⁷ Moses then called Joshua and said to him before the eyes of **all Israel**: “**Be courageous and strong**, for you are the one who will bring this people into the land that Jehovah **swore** to their forefathers to give to them, and you will give it to them as an inheritance. ⁸ **Jehovah** is the one *marching* before you, and he will **continue** with you. He will neither *desert you* nor *abandon you*. **Do not be afraid** or be terrified.”

INSTRUCTOR: It was much better, wasn't it? Did you notice how the speaker built anticipation for the scripture by lowering his volume as he asked, what would Moses say shortly before his death to encourage and prepare them? Then he increased his volume when reading Moses exhortation. If we strive to read and speak with modulation, will convey the ideas more clearly and stir the emotion of our listeners.

To Whom Should Sins Be Confessed?

God does not authorize men to forgive sins against him; only he can do so. The Bible tells us clearly: "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) However, to whom should such sins be confessed?

Since forgiveness can come only from God, confession must be made to him. That is what David did, as we have noted. On what basis, though, would forgiveness be granted? The Bible tells us: "Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the person of Jehovah." (Acts 3:19) Yes, forgiveness is contingent not only on one's recognizing and confessing the sin but also on one's being willing to desist from the wrong course. This additional step is often difficult. But there is help.

Recall the words of the disciple James that we referred to earlier: "Openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may get healed." To those words, James added: "A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force." (James 5:16) The 'righteous man' can be one of "the older men of the congregation," whom James mentioned in verse 14. In the Christian congregation, there are spiritually "older men," or elders, appointed to assist those who want to gain God's forgiveness. No, such "older men" cannot absolve anyone of sins, for no man is authorized to forgive a fellow human

for a wrong against God. However, they are spiritually qualified to reprove and readjust a person guilty of a serious sin, helping him to recognize the gravity of his sin and the need to repent.—Galatians 6:1.

Why Confess One's Sins?

Whether the sin is grievous or not, the person who committed it has damaged his relationship with his fellow man and with God. Consequently, he may feel troubled or ill at ease. This is the work of the faculty of conscience, with which our Creator has endowed us. (Romans 2:14, 15) What can be done?

Turning once again to the book of James, we find these encouraging words: “Is there anyone [spiritually] sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him.”—James 5:14, 15.

Here again, the older men, or elders, are called upon to respond to the needs of the flock. How? Not by merely hearing a confession. Rather, since spiritual sickness is involved, something needs to be done in order to “make the indisposed one well.” There are two things James mentioned that can be done.

First, there is the ‘greasing with oil.’ This refers to the healing power of God’s Word. The apostle Paul explained that “the word of God is alive and exerts power . . . and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart,”

reaching deep into one's mind and heart. (Hebrews 4:12) By skillful use of the Bible, the older men can help the spiritually sick one to see the cause of the problem and take appropriate steps to correct matters before God.

Then, there is "the prayer of faith." Although the prayers of the older men will not alter God's application of justice, these prayers do count with God, who is eager to pardon sin on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice. (1 John 2:2) God is ready to help any sinner who is genuinely repentant and who produces "works that befit repentance."—Acts 26:20.

The foremost reason to confess a sin—committed either against a fellow human or against God—is to gain an approved standing with God. Jesus Christ indicated that we must first resolve any difficulty with our fellow men and make peace with them before we can worship God with a good conscience. (Matthew 5:23, 24) Proverbs 28:13 says: "He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy." When we humble ourselves in the eyes of Jehovah God and ask for forgiveness, we will win his favor and be exalted in due course.—1 Peter 5:6.

Preparing to Preach (Jeremiah 1:17)

1. Morning comes.

Soon we will be

On our way to preach good news.

But it's dark outside,

And the rain starts to fall.

It would be easy to stay inside,
sleepy-eyed.

(CHORUS)

Positive thoughts and preparation,

Praying that we'll succeed;

This can provide the inspiration,

We'll surely need.

We're not alone; the angels guide us.

Jesus commands them all.

And with a loyal friend beside us,

We'll never fall.

2. Soon we'll see

Joy come our way

If these things we keep in mind.

And Jehovah sees

Ev'ry effort we make,

And he remembers the love we show;
this we know.

(Chorus)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 53
- **Local Needs:** (15 min.)



There has been a blatant disregard for cookie baking in this congregation. You sisters need to step up. And you brothers aren't off the hook either. They sell cookie dough at the store! It ain't that hard to butter a pan and set the timer. (Eze 3:1-3)

- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 86 ¶18-17
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 125 and Prayer

JAMES 3-5 | Display Godly Wisdom



3:17

Jehovah’s wisdom is practical. For instance, it can help us to restore peace with fellow believers. If we have truly acquired godly wisdom, it will be evident in our conduct.

ASK YOURSELF: “Which of these aspects of godly wisdom have I displayed recently? How might I improve in displaying some of them?”

- Pure
- Peaceable
- Reasonable
- Ready to obey
- Full of mercy and good fruits
- Impartial
- Not hypocritical

How will his father react? Will he turn on his son angrily and scold him about the folly of leaving home in the first place? Will the father display an indifferent, unwelcoming attitude? If it were you, how would you react? What if it were your son or daughter?

THE LOST SON IS FOUND

Jesus describes how the father feels and acts: “While [the son] was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and embraced him and tenderly kissed him.” (Luke 15:20) Even if the father has heard of his son’s debauched living, he welcomes his son back. Will the Jewish leaders, who claim to know and worship Jehovah, see from this how our heavenly Father feels toward repentant sinners? Will they also recognize that Jesus has been showing the same welcoming spirit?

- ◇ To whom does Jesus tell this illustration, and why?
- ◇ Who may be considered the principal character, and what happens to him?



The discerning father can likely conclude from his son's sad, downcast countenance that he is repentant. Still, the father's loving initiative to greet him makes it easier for his son to confess his sins. Jesus relates: "Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'"—Luke 15:21.

The father orders his slaves: "Quick! bring out a robe, the best one, and clothe him with it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Also bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead but has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." Then they start "to enjoy themselves."—Luke 15:22-24.

Meanwhile, the father's older son is in the field. Jesus says about him: "As he returned and got near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants to him and asked what was happening. He said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father slaughtered the fattened calf because he

got him back in good health.’ But he became angry and refused to go in. Then his father came out and began to plead with him. In reply he said to his father, ‘Look! These many years I have slaved for you and never once did I disobey your orders, and yet you never once gave me a young goat to enjoy with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours arrived who squandered your belongings with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’”—Luke 15:25-30.

Who, like the older son, have been critical of the mercy and attention that Jesus has accorded the common people and sinners? The scribes and the Pharisees. Their criticism of Jesus’ welcoming sinners has prompted this illustration. Of course, anyone critical of God’s showing mercy should take the lesson to heart.

Jesus concludes his illustration by relating the father’s appeal to his older son: “My son, you have always been with me, and all the things that are mine are yours. But we just had to celebrate and rejoice, for your brother was dead but has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”—Luke 15:31, 32.



Jesus does not reveal what the older son eventually does. However, after Jesus' death and resurrection, "a large crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7) That might have included some of the very ones who hear Jesus relate this powerful illustration about the son who was lost. Yes, it was possible even for them to come to their senses, repent, and return to God.

From that day forward, Jesus' disciples can and should take to heart key lessons that he set out in this fine illustration. An initial lesson is how truly wise it is to remain in the security of God's people, under the care of our Father who loves us and provides for us, instead of wandering off after tempting pleasures in "a distant country."

Another lesson is that if any of us should deviate from God's way, we must humbly return to our Father so as to enjoy his favor again.

Still another lesson can be seen by the contrast between the father's receptive, forgiving spirit and the older brother's resentful, unwelcoming attitude. Clearly, God's servants want to be forgiving and

welcoming if one who had strayed truly repents and returns to ‘the Father’s house.’ Let us rejoice that our brother who ‘was dead has come to life’ and that he who ‘was lost has been found.’

- ◇ When the younger son returns, how does his father respond?
- ◇ How does the compassionate father reflect the ways of Jehovah and Jesus?
- ◇ In what sense does the older son’s reaction mirror the way the scribes and the Pharisees behave?
- ◇ What lessons do you find in Jesus’ illustration?

125 *“Happy Are the Merciful!”*

(Matthew 5:7)

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

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COVER PICTURE:

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul writes his letter to the congregation in Philippi. During that time, Paul also makes good use of opportunities to preach to his guards and to visitors (See study article 32, paragraph 16)

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106 *Cultivating the Quality of Love*

(1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

1. We humbly bow to our God in prayer,
That all his qualities we may share.
But most important of all those things
Is love, which having his spirit brings.
We may be talented, wise, or bold,
But we are nothing if love grows cold.
We pray for love that is warm and true,
Revealed in all that we say and do.
2. Love looks for ways to give graciously
And thinks of others unselfishly.
Love never harbors a hateful thought,
Forgives our brothers, as Jesus taught.
Love helps us patiently suffer wrong,
Bears heavy loads when it's really strong.
Through ev'ry trial let love prevail;
It bears all things; it will never fail.

Let Your Love Abound

“This is what I continue praying, that your love may abound still more and more.”—PHIL. 1:9.

SONG 106

Cultivating the Quality of Love

PREVIEW

Now more than ever, we need to strengthen our love for our brothers. The letter to the Philippians helps us to see how we can abound in love, even when we face challenges.

WHEN the apostle Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy arrived in the Roman colony of Philippi, they found many people who were interested in the Kingdom message. These four zealous brothers helped form a congregation, and all the disciples began meeting together, likely at the home of a hospitable believer named Lydia.—Acts 16:40.

² The young congregation soon faced a challenge. Satan stirred up enemies of the truth who fiercely opposed the preaching activity of these loyal Christians. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten with rods, and imprisoned. After they were released from prison, they visited the new disciples and encouraged them. Then Paul, Silas, and Timothy left the city while Luke apparently remained there. How did the newly formed congregation fare? With the help of Jehovah’s spirit, the new believers forged ahead in Jehovah’s service. (Phil. 2:12) Paul had every reason to be proud of them!

³ Some ten years later, Paul wrote a letter to the congregation in Philippi. As you read that

-
1. Who helped form the congregation in Philippi?
 2. What challenge did that congregation soon face?
 3. As described at Philippians 1:9-11, what did Paul make a matter of prayer?

letter, you can easily discern the love Paul had for his brothers. “I am longing for all of you with such tender affection as Christ Jesus has,” he wrote. (Phil. 1:8) He wrote them that he prayed in their behalf. He asked Jehovah to help them to abound in love, to make sure of the more important things, to be flawless, to avoid stumbling others, and to continue bearing righteous fruit. No doubt you will agree that we can benefit from Paul’s heartfelt words today. So let us read what Paul wrote to the Philippians. **(Read Philippians 1:9-11.)** We will then consider the points he mentioned and discuss how we can apply each of them.

ABOUND IN LOVE

⁴ Jehovah expressed his great love for us by sending his Son to earth to die for our sins. **(Read 1 John 4:9, 10.)** God’s unselfish love moves us to love him. (Rom. 5:8) How much should we love God? Jesus answered that question when he told a Pharisee: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matt. 22:36, 37) We do not want our love for God to be half-hearted.

4. (a) According to 1 John 4:9, 10, how has Jehovah expressed his love for us? (b) How much should we love God?

Rather, we want our love for him to grow stronger each day. Paul told the Philippians that their love should “abound still more and more.” What can we do to strengthen our love for God?

⁵ We need to know God in order to love him. The Bible says: “Whoever does not love has not come to know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) The apostle Paul indicated that our love for God would grow stronger as we gain “accurate knowledge and full discernment” of Him. (Phil. 1:9) When we first studied the Bible, we developed love for God based on a limited knowledge of his wonderful qualities. Then the more we learned about Jehovah, the stronger our love for him became. No wonder we view regular Bible study and meditation on God’s Word as being among the most important things in our life!—Phil. 2:16.

⁶ God’s great love for us will move us to love our brothers. (Read 1 John 4:11, 20, 21.) We might think that love for our brothers and sisters will come naturally. After all, we worship Jehovah and strive to imitate his fine qualities. We follow the

5. How can our love grow stronger?

6. According to 1 John 4:11, 20, 21, in what way can we abound in love?

example of Jesus, whose love was so great that he gave his life in our behalf. Yet, we may at times find it difficult to obey the commandment to love one another. Consider an example in the Philippian congregation.

⁷ Euodia and Syntyche were zealous sisters who had served “side by side” with the apostle Paul. Yet, they had perhaps allowed personal differences to cause a rift between them. In his letter to the congregation where those sisters served, Paul specifically named Euodia and Syntyche and gave them pointed admonition “to be of the same mind.” (Phil. 4:2, 3) Paul felt compelled to instruct the entire congregation: “Keep doing all things free from murmuring and arguments.” (Phil. 2:14) No doubt Paul’s straightforward counsel helped not only these loyal sisters but also the entire congregation to strengthen their bond of love for one another.

⁸ Like Euodia and Syntyche, we may face a major obstacle to cultivating a close bond of love with others—the tendency to focus on imperfections.

7. What do we learn from Paul’s admonition to Euodia and Syntyche?

8. What is a major obstacle to loving our brothers, and how can we overcome it?

All of us make mistakes every day. If we stay focused on the imperfections of others, our love for them will cool. For example, if a brother forgets to help us clean the Kingdom Hall, we may become irritated. If we then begin to list all the other mistakes we know our brother has made, our irritation will grow and our love for him will diminish. If you find yourself in a similar situation, it would be good to reflect on this fact: Jehovah sees our imperfections as well as those of our brother. Yet, in spite of these imperfections, he still loves our

Why do we need to keep a positive view of our brothers?
(See paragraph 8)



brother and he still loves us. For that reason, we need to imitate Jehovah’s love and keep a positive view of our brothers. When we work hard to love our brothers, we strengthen our bond of unity with them.—Phil. 2:1, 2.

“THE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS”

⁹ Holy spirit inspired Paul to instruct those in Philippi—and all Christians—to “*make sure of the more important things.*” (Phil. 1:10) These important things include the sanctification of Jehovah’s name, the fulfillment of his purposes, and the peace and unity of the congregation. (Matt. 6:9, 10; John 13:35) When we build our life around these important things, we prove that we love Jehovah.

¹⁰ Paul also said that we must “*be flawless.*” This does not mean that we must be perfect. We cannot be flawless to the degree that Jehovah God is flawless. But Jehovah will view us as flawless if we do our very best to deepen our love and make sure of the more important things. One way in which we

9. What are among “the more important things” Paul mentions in his letter to the Philippians?

10. What must we do to be viewed as flawless?

show our love is by doing our utmost to avoid stumbling others.

¹¹ The instruction to *avoid stumbling others* is really a warning. How might we stumble someone? We could do so by our choice of entertainment, our choice of clothing, or even our choice of employment. What we do may not be wrong in itself. But if the choices we make offend someone else's conscience and he or she is stumbled, that matters. Jesus said that we would be better off having a heavy stone tied around our neck and being tossed into the sea than we would be if we stumbled one of his sheep!—Matt. 18:6.

¹² Note how one pioneer couple took Jesus' warning to heart. They served in a congregation along with a newly baptized couple who came from a very conservative background. This new couple believed that Christians should not go to the movies—even to see wholesome movies. They were shocked when they learned that the pioneer couple had seen a movie. After that, the pioneer couple refrained from going to the movies until the new disciples were able to train their own

11. Why must we avoid stumbling others?

12. What do we learn from the example set by one pioneer couple?

consciences to be more balanced. (Heb. 5:14) By their unselfish action, the pioneer couple proved that they loved their new brother and sister not just in word but in deed.—Rom. 14:19-21; 1 John 3:18.

¹³ Another way we could stumble someone is to induce him to commit a sin. How could that happen? Consider this scenario. After a long, hard struggle, a Bible student is finally able to control his addiction to alcohol. He realizes that he must abstain from it completely. He makes rapid progress and gets baptized. Later, a well-meaning host of a Christian gathering urges the new brother to accept an alcoholic beverage, saying: “You are a Christian now; you have Jehovah’s spirit. One aspect of the holy spirit is self-control. If you exercise self-control, you should be able to make moderate use of alcohol.” We can only imagine what the consequences would be if the new brother were to listen to that misguided advice!

¹⁴ Our Christian meetings help us to apply the instructions given at Philippians 1:10 in a number

13. How might we induce someone to commit a sin?

14. How do Christian meetings help us to apply the instructions given at Philippians 1:10?

of ways. First, the program of rich spiritual food reminds us of what Jehovah considers to be more important. Second, we learn how to apply what we learn so that we may be flawless. And third, we are incited “to love and fine works.” (Heb. 10:24, 25) The more we are encouraged by our brothers, the more our love for our God and for our brothers will grow. When these two great loves fill our heart, we will do our very best to avoid stumbling our brothers.

CONTINUE TO “BE FILLED WITH RIGHTEOUS FRUIT”

¹⁵ Paul prayed earnestly that the Philippians would “*be filled with righteous fruit.*” (Phil. 1:11) No doubt this “righteous fruit” included their love for Jehovah and his people. That would also include their speaking to others about their faith in Jesus and their wonderful hope. Philippians 2:15 uses another illustration, namely, “shining as illuminators in the world.” That is fitting because Jesus called his disciples “the light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14-16) He also commanded his followers to “make disciples,” and he said that they would

15. What does it mean to “be filled with righteous fruit”?



Always look for ways to have a full share in the ministry
(See paragraph 17)

“be witnesses . . . to the most distant part of the earth.” (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) We bear “righteous fruit” when we actively share in this most important work.

¹⁶ No matter what our circumstances, we can shine as illuminators. In some cases, what seems to be an obstacle to declaring the good news may turn out to be an opportunity for us to preach. The apostle Paul, for example, was under house arrest in Rome when he wrote his letter to the Phi-

16. How does Philippians 1:12-14 show that we can shine as illuminators even under challenging circumstances? (See cover picture.)

lippians. But his chains did not hold him back from preaching to his captors and to visitors. Paul preached zealously under these circumstances, and this gave the brothers confidence and courage “to speak the word of God fearlessly.” —Read **Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22.**

¹⁷ Many of our brothers and sisters have the opportunity to follow Paul’s courageous example. They live in countries where they cannot preach openly or from door to door, so they find other ways to declare the good news. (Matt. 10:16-20) In one such country, a circuit overseer suggested that each publisher cover his own preaching “territory” made up of relatives, neighbors, schoolmates, workmates, and acquaintances. Within two years, the number of congregations in that circuit increased significantly. We may not live in a country where we cannot preach openly. However, we can learn a valuable lesson from the example of our resourceful brothers and sisters: Always look for ways to have a full share in the ministry, confident that Jehovah will give you the power you need to overcome any obstacle.—Phil. 2:13.

17. Give a modern-day example of bearing fruit under difficult circumstances.

¹⁸ At this momentous time, may we be determined to apply the inspired counsel found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. May we make sure of the more important things, be flawless, avoid stumbling others, and bear righteous fruit. Then we will abound in love and bring honor to our caring Father, Jehovah.

18. What should we be determined to do?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 21: During Kingdom Hall cleaning, one of the brothers, Joe, stops working to talk with a brother and his son. This irritates Mike, the brother who is vacuuming. He thinks, ‘Joe should be working, not talking.’ Later, Mike observes how Joe gently assists an elderly sister. This heartwarming scene reminds Mike to think more about his brother’s good qualities. **Page 26:** In a country where Witnesses cannot preach openly, a brother discreetly shares the Kingdom message with an acquaintance. Later, during a break at his place of work, the brother witnesses to a workmate.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What are some of “the more important things”?
- How can we “be flawless”?
- How can we “be filled with righteous fruit”?

1. Kind and patient, perfect in love,
Was Christ, who came down from above.
He took care of our needs
With words and by deeds;
He gave of his time and his love.
He would keep the lowly in mind
By healing the sick, deaf, and blind.
To his royal commission he proved true
And willingly said: “I want to.”

2. We now try to follow his way
In all of our dealings each day.
We are loving and kind
To all whom we find;
We help them to learn and obey.
We respond to friends when in need;
We love them in word and in deed.
So if widows and orphans should ask you,
Then readily say: “I want to.”

