

- Song 108 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- “Jehovah Always Does What He Promises”: (10 min.)
 Ge 21:1-3—Sarah became pregnant and bore a son (wp17.5 14-15)
 Ge 21:5-7—Jehovah made the impossible a reality
 Ge 21:10-12, 14—Abraham and Sarah had strong faith in Jehovah's promise regarding Isaac

- Digging for Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)
 Ge 20:12—How was Sarah Abraham's sister? (wp17.3 12, ftn.)

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What spiritual gems from this week's Bible reading would you like to share regarding Jehovah God, the field ministry, or something else?

- Bible Reading: (4 min. or less) Ge 20:1-18 (5)

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- Bible Study: (5 min. or less) bhs 35 ¶19-20 (3)

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 111
- Annual Service Report: (15 min.) Talk by an elder. After reading the announcement from the branch office regarding the annual service report, interview publishers, selected in advance, who had encouraging experiences in the ministry during the past year.
- Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) jy chap. 105
- Concluding Comments (3 min. or less)
- Song 119 and Prayer


GENESIS 20-21 | Jehovah Always Does What He Promises



21:1-3, 5-7, 10-12, 14

Jehovah rewarded Abraham and Sarah for their faith by giving them a son. Later, their obedience under trial showed their remarkable faith in Jehovah's promises for the future.



 How does my obedience during trials show that I trust in Jehovah's promises for the future? How can I strengthen my faith?



1. Loyal love! God is love.

We can sense his care from above.
 God by means of his precious Son
 Paid the ransom for ev'ryone,
 Giving hope that we might possess
 Life eternal and happiness.

(CHORUS)

*Hey there, all you thirsty ones,
 Come and drink life's water free.
 Yes, come drink, you thirsty ones;
 God's loyal love you'll see.*

2. Loyal love! God is love.

All his works give proof of his love.
 Love Jehovah has further shown,
 Giving Jesus the kingly throne.
 God's own purpose has come to pass.
 See! His Kingdom is here at last!

(Chorus)

3. Loyal love! God is love.

May his spirit move us to love.
 As we loyally help the meek,
 God's commandments they learn to keep.
 We are serving with godly fear,
 Preaching boldly for all to hear.

(Chorus)

Genesis 20-21

20 Now Abraham moved his camp from there to the land of the Neg'eb and began dwelling between Ka'desh and Shur. While he was residing at Ge'rar, ² Abraham repeated concerning his wife Sarah: "She is my sister." So A·bim'e·lech king of Ge'rar sent for Sarah and took her. ³ Afterward, God came by night to A·bim'e·lech in a dream and said to him: "Here you are as good as dead because of the woman whom you have taken, since she is married and belongs to another man." ⁴ However, A·bim'e·lech had not gone near her. So he said: "Jehovah, will you kill a nation that is really innocent? ⁵ Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and did she too not say, 'He is my brother'? I did this with an honest heart and innocent hands." ⁶ Then the true God said to him in the dream: "I know that you did this with an honest heart, so I held you back from sinning against me. That is why I did not allow you to touch her. ⁷ Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will make supplication for you and you will keep living. But if you are not returning her, know that you will surely die, you and all who are yours."

⁸ A·bim'e·lech got up early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things, and they became very frightened. ⁹ Then A·bim'e·lech called Abraham and said to him: "What have you done to us? What sin have I committed against you that you would bring upon me and my kingdom such a great sin? What you have done to me was not right." ¹⁰ And A·bim'e·lech went on to say to Abraham:

“What were your intentions when you did this thing?”

¹¹ Abraham said: “It was because I said to myself, ‘Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ ¹² And besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ So when God caused me to wander from the house of my father, I said to her: ‘Let this be how you show loyal love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

¹⁴ A·bim'e·lech then took sheep and cattle and male and female servants and gave them to Abraham, and he returned his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ A·bim'e·lech also said: “Here my land is available to you. Dwell wherever you please.” ¹⁶ And to Sarah he said: “Here I give 1,000 pieces of silver to your brother. It is a sign of your innocence to all who are with you and before everybody, and you are cleared of reproach.” ¹⁷ And Abraham began to make supplication to the true God, and God healed A·bim'e·lech and his wife and his slave girls, and they began having children; ¹⁸ for Jehovah had made all the women of the house of A·bim'e·lech barren because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

21 Jehovah turned his attention to Sarah just as he had said, and Jehovah did for Sarah what he had promised. ² So Sarah became pregnant and then bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the appointed time God had promised him. ³ Abraham named his newborn son, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when

he was eight days old, just as God had commanded him.

⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Then Sarah said: "God has brought me laughter; everybody hearing of it will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added: "Who would have said to Abraham, 'Sarah will certainly nurse children'? Yet, I have given birth to a son for him in his old age."

⁸ Now the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham prepared a big feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ But Sarah kept noticing that the son of Ha'gar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, was mocking Isaac. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham: "Drive out this slave girl and her son, for the son of this slave girl is not going to be an heir along with my son, with Isaac!" ¹¹ But what she said about his son was very displeasing to Abraham. ¹² Then God said to Abraham: "Do not be displeased by what Sarah is saying to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her, for what will be called your offspring will be through Isaac. ¹³ As for the son of the slave girl, I will also make a nation out of him, because he is your offspring."

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin bottle of water and gave it to Ha'gar. He set these on her shoulder and then sent her away along with the boy. So she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Be'er-she'ba. ¹⁵ Finally the water in the skin bottle was used up, and she pushed the boy under one of the bushes.

¹⁶ Then she went on and sat down by herself, about the

distance of a bowshot away, because she said: "I do not want to watch the boy die." So she sat down at a distance and began to cry aloud and to weep.

¹⁷ At that God heard the voice of the boy, and God's angel called to Ha'gar from the heavens and said to her: "What is the matter with you, Ha'gar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy there where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, lift the boy and take hold of him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the skin bottle with water and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ And God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an archer. ²¹ He took up dwelling in the wilderness of Pa'ran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

²² At that time A-bim'e-lech together with Phi'col the chief of his army said to Abraham: "God is with you in everything you are doing. ²³ So now swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me and with my offspring and with my descendants, and that you will deal with me and with the land where you have been residing with the same loyal love that I have shown you." ²⁴ So Abraham said: "I swear to this."

²⁵ However, Abraham complained to A-bim'e-lech about the well of water that the servants of A-bim'e-lech had violently seized. ²⁶ A-bim'e-lech replied: "I do not know who did this; you did not tell me about it, and I heard nothing about it until today." ²⁷ At that Abraham took sheep and

cattle and gave them to A·bim'e·lech, and the two of them made a covenant. ²⁸ When Abraham set seven female lambs apart from the flock by themselves, ²⁹ A·bim'e·lech said to Abraham: “Why have you set these seven female lambs here by themselves?” ³⁰ Then he said: “You are to accept the seven female lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well.” ³¹ That is why he called that place Be'er-she'ba, because there both of them had taken an oath. ³² So they made a covenant at Be'er-she'ba, after which A·bim'e·lech got up together with Phi'col the chief of his army, and they returned to the land of the Phi-lis'tines. ³³ After that he planted a tamarisk tree at Be'er-she'ba, and there he called on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Phi-lis'tines for a long time.

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- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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21:1-3, 5-7, 10-12, 14

Jehovah rewarded Abraham and Sarah for their faith by giving them a son. Later, their obedience under trial showed their remarkable faith in Jehovah's promises for the future.



 How does my obedience during trials show that I trust in Jehovah's promises for the future? How can I strengthen my faith?



February 24–March 1 / Genesis 20-21

- Song 108 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 minutes)

Treasures From God's Word

“Jehovah Always Does What He Promises”: (10 minutes)

Genesis 21:1-3, 5-7, 10-12, 14

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Genesis 21:1-3—Sarah became pregnant and bore a son

Genesis 21:1-3: Jehovah turned his attention to Sarah just as he had said, and Jehovah did for Sarah what he had promised. So Sarah became pregnant and then bore a son to

Abraham in his old age at the appointed time God had promised him. Abraham named his newborn son, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

wp17.5 14-15

Was Sarah's laughter evidence that she lacked faith? Not at all. The Bible says: "By faith also Sarah received power to conceive offspring, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who made the promise."

(Hebrews 11:11) Sarah knew Jehovah; she knew that he could fulfill any promise that he made. Who of us does not need more faith of that kind? We do well to get to know the God of the Bible better. As we do, we will see that Sarah was right to have the faith that she did. Jehovah truly is faithful and carries out his every promise—at times, he might even do so in ways that surprise us into amazed or incredulous laughter!

"Listen to Her"

At 90 years of age, Sarah finally got to relish the moment she had longed for all her adult life. She bore a son to her beloved husband, now a century old! Abraham named the

baby Isaac, or "Laughter," just as God had said. We may picture Sarah's weary but glowing smile as she explained: "God has brought me laughter; everybody hearing of it will laugh with me." (Genesis 21:6) This miraculous gift from Jehovah surely delighted her till the end of her days. However, it also brought her great responsibilities.

When Isaac was five years old, the family held a feast to mark the occasion of the weaning of the child. But not all was well. We read that Sarah "kept noticing" a troubling pattern of behavior. Ishmael, the 19 year old son of Hagar, kept mocking little Isaac. This was not mere playful teasing. The apostle Paul was later inspired to call Ishmael's behavior persecution. Sarah saw this bullying for what it was: a serious threat to the well-being of her son. Sarah knew well that Isaac was more than just her son; he was assigned a key role in Jehovah's purpose. So she mustered up courage and spoke forthrightly to Abraham. She asked him to send Hagar and Ishmael away.—Genesis 21:8-10; Galatians 4:22, 23, 29.

How did Abraham respond? We read: "What she said about his son was very displeasing to Abraham." He was fond of

Ishmael, and he could not see past his own fatherly emotions on this issue. However, Jehovah saw the matter clearly, so he intervened. We read: "Then God said to Abraham: 'Do not be displeased by what Sarah is saying to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her, for what will be called your offspring will be through Isaac.'" Jehovah assured Abraham that Hagar and the boy would be provided for. Faithful Abraham complied.—Genesis 21:11-14.

Genesis 21:5-7—Jehovah made the impossible a reality

Genesis 21:5-7: Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Then Sarah said: "God has brought me laughter; everybody hearing of it will laugh with me." And she added: "Who would have said to Abraham, 'Sarah will certainly nurse children'? Yet, I have given birth to a son for him in his old age."

Genesis 21:10-12, 14—Abraham and Sarah had strong faith in Jehovah's promise regarding Isaac

Genesis 21:10-12: So she said to Abraham: "Drive out this slave girl and her son, for the son of this slave girl is not going to be an heir along with my son, with Isaac!" But what she said about his son was very displeasing to Abraham. Then God said to Abraham: "Do not be displeased by what Sarah is saying to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her, for what will be called your offspring will be through Isaac.

Genesis 21:14: So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin bottle of water and gave it to Hagar. He set these on her shoulder and then sent her away along with the boy. So she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. [End of inserted scriptures.]

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Genesis 20:12—How was Sarah Abraham's sister?

Genesis 20:12: And besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.

***wp17.3* 12, footnote**

* Sarah was the half sister of Abraham. Terah was father to both of them, but they had different mothers. (Genesis 20:12) While such a marriage is improper today, it is important to keep in mind how different things were back then. Humans were closer to the perfection that Adam and Eve had enjoyed but lost. For such robust people, marriage between close relatives evidently did not present genetic dangers to offspring. Some 400 years later, though, life spans were similar to ours. At that time, the Mosaic Law outlawed all sexual unions between close relatives.—Leviticus 18:6.

Genesis 21:33—How did Abraham call “on the name of Jehovah”?

Genesis 21:33: After that he planted a tamarisk tree at Beer-sheba, and there he called on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God.

w89 7/1 20 paragraph 9

Abram responded with another act of faith. As the account says: “He built an altar there to Jehovah.” (Genesis 12:7) Likely, this included offering up an animal sacrifice, for the Hebrew word for “altar” means “place of sacrifice.” Later, Abram repeated these acts of faith in other parts of the land. In addition, he ‘called on the name of Jehovah.’ (Genesis 12:8; 13:18; 21:33) The Hebrew phrase “call on the name” also means “declare (preach) the name.” Abram’s household as well as the Canaanites must have heard him boldly declare the name of his God, Jehovah. (Genesis 14:22-24) Likewise, all who seek God’s friendship today must call upon his name in faith. This would include sharing in public preaching, “always offer[ing] to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name.”—

Hebrews 13:15; Romans 10:10.

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study 5)

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APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

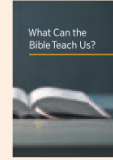
○ SECOND RETURN VISIT

○ **Question:** What blessings will people enjoy in the future that God promises?

Scripture: Isa 65:21-23

Link: What role will God's Son play in bringing about these blessings?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:



• *bhs* 35 ¶20

VIDEO TRANSCRIPTION

Dave (Publisher 1): Good morning, Tony.

Tony (Civilian): Hi Dave, Hi, Jeff.

Jeff (Publisher 2): Good morning.

Dave (Publisher 1): Do you have a moment to consider the question from yesterday?

Tony (Civilian): Sure.

Dave (Publisher 1): Okay, You might remember that we discuss how people's traits are fulfilling Bible prophecy. Then I raised a question, what blessings will people enjoy in the future that God promises?

Tony (Civilian): Right?



Dave (Publisher 1): One of the promises God makes is found here at Isaiah 65:21-23 Jeff, would you mind reading that for us please?

Jeff (Publisher 2): Sure,

²¹ “They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. ²² They will not . . .”

Dave (Publisher 1) Thinking: What can I say that would make this promise real to Tony?, He told me before that he works as a gardener, but he lives in a small apartment and he finds it challenging to care for his wife and two small children. I can encourage him to visualize the paradise by imagining his own home and garden.

Jeff (Publisher 2): “. . . because they are the offspring made up of those blessed by Jehovah and their descendants with them.

Dave (Publisher 1): So Tony, can you picture yourself there? What about that promise appeals to you?

Tony (Civilian): Hmm, it says they will build houses and plant and vineyards.



Dave (Publisher 1): Yes. But who will live in the houses and eat the fruit age of the vineyards?

Tony (Civilian): Those who worked on them.

Dave (Publisher 1): That's exactly right, what will that mean for you?

Tony (Civilian): I'll get to have my own house.

Jeff (Publisher 2): Yes, that's what Jehovah promises.

Dave (Publisher 1): Pages 35 through 37 of this book, “What can the Bible Teach Us?” Describe more blessings that God will bring soon. I'd like to discuss it with you further. Do you text?

Tony (Civilian): Yeah, my number is . . .

video source:

https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/VODSampleConversations/pub-mwbv_202002_3_VIDEO



Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

Abraham teaches young Isaac about Jehovah

INITIAL CALL

Question: How can we know the future?

Scripture: Isa 46:10

Link: What Bible prophecies are we seeing fulfilled?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:



- *bhs* 29 ¶2
- *fg* lesson 3 ¶2

FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: What Bible prophecies are we seeing fulfilled?

Scripture: 2Ti 3:1-5

Link: What blessings will people enjoy in the future that God promises?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:



- *bhs* 98 ¶10
- *fg* lesson 1 ¶3

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- *bhs* 35 ¶20

16 Jesus promised that those who live in God's new world will be given "everlasting life." (Mark 10:30) What must we do to receive this gift? Please **read John 3:16 and 17:3** to find the answer. Let us now see what the Bible says life will be like in the earthly Paradise.

17 Wickedness, war, crime, and violence will be gone. There will not be any wicked people left on earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11) God will bring "an end to wars throughout the earth." (Psalm 46:9; Isaiah 2:4) The earth will be full of people who love God and are obedient to him. There will be peace forever.—Psalm 72:7.

18 Jehovah's people will feel secure. In Bible times, when the Israelites obeyed God, they were safe because he protected them. (Leviticus 25:18, 19) In the Paradise, we will not be afraid of anything or anybody. We will always feel secure!—**Read Isaiah 32:18; Micah 4:4.**

19 There will be plenty of food. "There will be an abundance of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains it will overflow." (Psalm 72:16) Jehovah, "our God, will bless us," and "the earth will give its produce."—Psalm 67:6.

20 The whole earth will become a paradise. People will have beautiful houses and gardens. (**Read Isaiah**

16. What wonderful gift will God give to those who live in his new world, and what must we do to receive this gift?

17, 18. How do we know that there will be peace everywhere on the earth and that we will feel secure?

19. Why can we be sure that there will be plenty of food in God's new world?

20. How do we know that the earth will become a paradise?

65:21-24; Revelation 11:18.) The whole earth will be as beautiful as the garden of Eden was. Jehovah will always give us everything that we need. The Bible says about him: “You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”—Psalm 145:16.

21 There will be peace between humans and animals. Animals will not harm humans anymore. Little children will feel safe, even around animals that are dangerous to us today.—**Read Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25.**

22 No one will be sick. When Jesus was on earth, he healed many people. (Matthew 9:35; Mark 1:40-42; John 5:5-9) But as King of God’s Kingdom, Jesus will heal everyone. No one will ever say: “I am sick.”—Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6.

23 The dead will live again. God promises that he will resurrect millions of people who have died. “There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”—**Read John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.**

24 We all have a choice. We can choose to learn about Jehovah and serve him, or we can just do what we want to do. If we choose to serve Jehovah, we can have a wonderful future. When a man asked Jesus to remember him after he died, Jesus promised him: “You will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) Let us learn more about Jesus Christ and how he will make God’s wonderful promises come true.

21. How do we know that there will be peace between humans and animals?

22. What will Jesus do for those who are sick?

23. What will God do for those who have died?

24. How do you feel about living in Paradise?

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)

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- Song 111
- Annual Service Report: (15 min.) Talk by an elder. After reading the announcement from the branch office regarding the annual service report, interview publishers, selected in advance, who had encouraging experiences in the ministry during the past year.
- Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) jy chap. 105
- Concluding Comments (3 min. or less)
- Song 119 and Prayer


GENESIS 20-21 | Jehovah Always Does What He Promises



21:1-3, 5-7, 10-12, 14

Jehovah rewarded Abraham and Sarah for their faith by giving them a son. Later, their obedience under trial showed their remarkable faith in Jehovah’s promises for the future.



 How does my obedience during trials show that I trust in Jehovah’s promises for the future? How can I strengthen my faith?



Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



1 Kingdom Way, Chelmsford CM2 8FW Telephone: 020 8906 2211

February 1, 2020

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Re: Annual Service Report

Dear Brothers:

We are pleased to share encouraging highlights from the 2019 service year report of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. The peak number of publishers was 8,683,117. Jehovah's people spent a total of 2,088,560,437 hours in the ministry. An outstanding highlight is the 303,866 who were baptized! For the first time since 1999, the number baptized exceeded 300,000; this is evidence that Jehovah's people are taking seriously the commission to "make disciples." (Matt. 28:19) The worldwide Memorial attendance figure was 20,919,041. Other aspects of the service year report are available on jw.org and in *JW Library*, *Watchtower ONLINE LIBRARY*, and *Watchtower Library*.

We continue to see encouraging progress in many areas. There is steady growth in the multi-language field, with groups and congregations starting in several additional languages for the first time. This includes indigenous languages such as Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. Significant progress is being made in specialized forms of ministry, such as in prisons and harbours. In addition, many publishers are enthusiastically taking part in special witnessing initiatives to reach people wherever they may be found. It has been especially heartwarming to note the level of support for the field ministry, while so many have also been busy in other aspects of sacred service. The Local Design/Construction Department continues to expand the Kingdom Hall construction activity and the branch relocation project reached its peak during the last service year. We rejoice to see the way Jehovah is blessing those who work so hard in various aspects of his service.

Be assured that Jehovah values your faithful service and that he will continue to give you the necessary strength to "fully accomplish your ministry" in the coming year! —2 Tim. 4:5; Isa. 40:31.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Circuit overseers

PS to coordinators of the bodies of elders:

Please arrange for this letter to be read to the congregation by the elder handling the part "Annual Service Report" during the midweek meeting the week of February 24, 2020. Thereafter, the letter should be posted on the information board for one month.

2019

Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide

2019 Grand Totals

Branches of Jehovah's Witnesses:	87
Number of Lands Reporting:	240
Total Congregations:	119,712
Worldwide Memorial Attendance:	20,919,041
Memorial Partakers Worldwide:	20,526
Peak of Publishers*:	8,683,117
Average Publishers Preaching Each Month:	8,471,008
Percentage of Increase Over 2018:	1.3
Total Number Baptized [#] :	303,866
Average Pioneer [△] Publishers Each Month:	1,277,738
Average Auxiliary Pioneer Publishers Each Month:	464,980
Total Hours Spent in Field:	2,088,560,437
Average Bible Studies [⊠] Each Month:	9,618,182

During the 2019 service year,[□] Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$224 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and circuit overseers in their field service assignments. ■ Worldwide, a total of 20,858 ordained ministers staff the branch facilities. All are members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses.

* A publisher refers to one who actively publishes, or preaches, the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) For a complete explanation of how this figure is determined, see the jw.org article "How Many of Jehovah's Witnesses Are There Worldwide?"

[#] For more information on the steps leading to baptism as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, see the jw.org article "How Do I Become One of Jehovah's Witnesses?"

[△] A pioneer is an exemplary baptized Witness who volunteers to spend a specified number of hours each month in preaching the good news.

[⊠] For more information, see the jw.org article "What Is a Bible Study?"

[□] The 2019 service year ran from September 1, 2018, through August 31, 2019.

Country and Territory Reports

Country or Territory	Population	2019 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2019 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2018	2019 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Memorial Attendance
Albania	2,881,000	5,642	514	5,605		175	1,333	87	12,135
American Samoa	55,000	180	357	154	-8	4	29	3	595
Andorra	77,000	179	445	173	1	3	11	3	332
Angola	31,825,000	165,631	199	159,758	7	13,490	24,685	2,269	696,384
Anguilla	15,000	67	234	64	2		11	1	288
Antigua	97,000	475	214	454	-2	12	42	7	1,392
Argentina	44,781,000	154,673	292	153,203	2	4,917	24,422	1,976	330,166
Armenia	2,958,000	10,924	276	10,702	-2	294	2,102	129	20,968
Aruba	106,000	1,097	98	1,078	3	28	110	14	3,084
Australia	25,203,000	68,646	372	67,816		1,367	6,935	762	118,279
Austria	8,955,000	21,614	417	21,483		308	1,759	298	34,213
Azerbaijan	9,982,000	1,490	6,937	1,439	2	77	346	14	3,053
Azores	243,000	795	320	759	3	26	118	15	1,622
Bahamas	389,000	1,776	229	1,695	1	61	251	28	4,977
Bangladesh	163,046,000	324	517,606	315	5	14	151	6	980
Barbados	287,000	2,439	119	2,414	-1	26	181	30	6,190
Belarus	9,452,000	6,211	1,541	6,132	3	208	1,312	81	10,140
Belgium	11,431,000	25,173	459	24,923		513	2,028	336	42,925
Belize	390,000	2,702	148	2,642	1	133	541	61	8,306
Benin	11,801,000	14,203	884	13,346	4	805	1,804	225	45,475
Bermuda	63,000	483	146	432	3	4	83	5	851
Bolivia	11,513,000	28,732	407	28,255	3	1,129	7,288	427	94,104
Bonaire	20,000	131	165	121	-3		17	2	370
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,301,000	1,065	3,159	1,045	-3	9	175	17	1,794
Botswana	2,339,000	2,251	1,052	2,223		103	331	47	6,707
Brazil	210,396,000	893,784	240	875,987	2	32,943	116,547	12,408	1,922,286
Britain	64,345,000	137,029	478	134,718		2,409	14,706	1,618	222,033
Bulgaria	7,000,000	2,556	2,773	2,524	1	77	677	52	5,444
Burkina Faso	20,321,000	2,042	11,283	1,801	2	100	268	48	4,851
Burundi	11,531,000	15,565	783	14,734	6	927	2,310	271	61,157
Cambodia	16,487,000	1,182	14,188	1,162	2	54	637	17	3,033
Cameroon	25,876,000	45,092	616	41,998	3	2,071	5,502	500	101,818
Canada	37,411,000	115,634	326	114,591		1,935	13,449	1,326	186,020
Cape Verde	550,000	2,327	241	2,283	2	79	397	35	8,377
Cayman Islands	65,000	274	247	263	7	1	39	3	730
Central African Republic	4,745,000	2,901	1,727	2,747	2	178	298	58	18,890
Chad	15,947,000	887	18,608	857	4	69	73	19	4,765
Chile	18,952,000	82,305	236	80,475	3	2,461	13,689	955	184,610
Chuuk	49,000	48	1,195	41	-7	2	13	2	207
Colombia	50,339,000	187,229	274	183,945	4	6,754	27,861	2,248	567,889
Congo, Dem. Republic of	86,791,000	243,146	386	225,009	2	17,800	21,347	3,880	1,264,290
Congo, Republic of	5,381,000	8,808	651	8,260	10	732	970	98	34,754
Cook Islands	18,000	206	96	188	2	8	30	3	549
Costa Rica	5,048,000	32,125	159	31,798	2	1,181	3,807	446	71,472
Côte d'Ivoire	25,717,000	12,194	2,159	11,913	4	531	1,645	325	75,755
Croatia	4,130,000	4,965	850	4,858	-2	64	434	58	7,843
Cuba	11,333,000	94,873	120	94,628		2,923	9,532	1,457	223,403
Curaçao	163,000	2,060	81	2,024		75	226	26	5,605
Cyprus	1,199,000	2,704	448	2,675	2	32	451	43	4,966
Czech Republic	10,669,000	15,471	693	15,396		254	1,287	213	26,748
Denmark	5,814,000	14,622	399	14,555		247	1,143	173	20,756
Dominica	72,000	442	175	411	4	11	57	10	1,561
Dominican Republic	10,739,000	38,754	283	37,974	1	1,402	7,171	572	116,498
Ecuador	17,374,000	100,038	178	97,454	3	4,175	18,462	1,154	290,701
El Salvador	6,454,000	40,392	161	40,017	-1	1,053	4,898	701	86,133
Equatorial Guinea	1,356,000	2,586	598	2,267	11	205	311	25	8,989
Estonia	1,325,000	4,012	333	3,979		63	522	57	6,199
Eswatini	1,148,000	3,354	352	3,261	2	49	334	80	9,248
Ethiopia	112,079,000	10,760	10,652	10,522	2	418	2,336	219	25,543
Falkland Islands	3,000	15	214	14	8		1	1	31
Faroe Islands	52,000	131	409	127	9	1	31	4	235
Fiji	890,000	3,151	289	3,082	3	131	518	80	11,186
Finland	5,524,000	18,260	304	18,178		281	2,116	285	25,064
France	65,130,000	131,078	502	129,820	1	3,240	15,615	1,610	222,855
French Guiana	291,000	2,842	106	2,754	5	181	429	47	11,318
Gabon	2,173,000	4,869	493	4,410	4	204	602	57	13,288
Gambia	2,348,000	238	10,344	227	5	10	36	5	637

Country or Territory	Population	2019 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2019 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2018	2019 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Memorial Attendance
Georgia	3,724,000	18,021	208	17,865	-1	489	3,242	215	31,451
Germany	83,517,000	165,393	508	164,363		2,869	14,571	2,091	267,562
Ghana	30,418,000	144,570	218	139,792	3	6,257	15,539	2,167	381,212
Gibraltar	34,000	137	264	129	4	1	17	2	162
Greece	10,722,000	28,171	382	28,089		717	4,071	358	45,637
Greenland	56,000	153	389	144	-9		31	5	315
Grenada	112,000	550	213	526	-4	7	69	10	1,487
Guadeloupe	400,000	8,376	49	8,143		208	716	121	19,385
Guam	167,000	767	223	748	3	19	172	10	1,900
Guatemala	17,581,000	40,525	438	40,154		1,406	6,603	873	98,161
Guinea	12,771,000	1,031	12,620	1,012	8	69	125	23	4,243
Guinea-Bissau	1,921,000	191	10,440	184	11	15	51	3	699
Guyana	783,000	3,293	248	3,155	2	139	493	50	13,942
Haiti	11,263,000	20,433	570	19,768	1	981	2,662	276	87,267
Honduras	9,746,000	23,016	428	22,767		819	4,091	439	63,652
Hong Kong	7,524,000	5,617	1,348	5,583	2	441	1,180	64	9,349
Hungary	9,773,000	21,256	464	21,060	-1	408	1,832	293	37,992
Iceland	357,000	390	957	373		2	56	7	741
India	1,366,418,000	49,743	27,752	49,236	4	2,512	7,797	692	137,439
Indonesia	270,626,000	29,107	9,605	28,177	3	1,046	4,450	514	58,878
Ireland	6,802,000	7,059	994	6,845	2	134	1,114	121	11,818
Israel	9,260,000	1,879	5,044	1,836	4	58	329	32	3,166
Italy	60,550,000	251,303	242	250,538		4,278	37,512	2,892	414,595
Jamaica	2,948,000	11,334	266	11,090	-1	334	1,408	174	34,703
Japan	126,860,000	212,651	597	212,438		2,118	66,100	2,991	291,206
Kazakhstan	18,551,000	17,485	1,072	17,307		479	3,959	262	30,516
Kenya	52,574,000	29,935	1,833	28,681	3	1,445	3,648	647	78,322
Kiribati	118,000	134	952	124	-7	2	32	3	438
Korea, Republic of	51,709,000	102,456	507	101,970	1	1,800	45,242	1,266	136,891
Kosovo	1,796,000	267	6,803	264	2	6	120	8	594
Kosrae	7,000	20	412	17	6		5	1	96
Kyrgyzstan	6,390,000	5,300	1,226	5,214	1	192	1,233	85	10,489
Latvia	1,920,000	2,188	896	2,142	-2	46	324	33	3,367
Lesotho	2,125,000	4,365	506	4,202	3	257	545	93	12,087
Liberia	4,937,000	7,851	715	6,904	4	411	722	145	52,616
Liechtenstein	38,000	91	427	89	2	2	4	1	159
Lithuania	2,794,000	2,977	948	2,948	-2	55	446	46	4,682
Luxembourg	616,000	2,156	290	2,123		27	197	31	3,802
Macao	672,000	358	1,948	345	8	4	102	4	810
Madagascar	26,969,000	37,730	732	36,847	7	3,591	6,385	832	146,622
Madeira	254,000	1,157	221	1,149	2	32	129	20	1,868
Malawi	18,629,000	102,773	196	95,229	2	6,103	7,374	1,636	342,426
Malaysia	31,950,000	5,521	5,862	5,450	5	204	1,579	120	13,492
Mali	19,658,000	361	59,570	330	7	26	58	7	1,345
Malta	494,000	769	660	748	-2	12	96	10	1,344
Marshall Islands	59,000	158	421	140	-11	3	24	4	771
Martinique	376,000	4,780	80	4,688	-1	118	594	61	10,317
Mauritius	1,270,000	1,910	676	1,879	1	68	208	27	4,322
Mayotte	266,000	188	1,486	179	6	8	54	3	427
Mexico	127,576,000	874,491	148	862,590	1	30,403	138,474	13,074	2,258,524
Moldova	3,157,000	18,808	170	18,584	-2	436	2,199	208	32,872
Mongolia	3,225,000	471	7,026	459	4	13	217	9	1,433
Montenegro	628,000	279	2,309	272	3	7	64	5	536
Montserrat	5,000	39	147	34	10		19	1	216
Mozambique	30,366,000	67,758	463	65,593	9	7,162	6,114	1,315	334,110
Myanmar	54,330,000	4,821	11,564	4,698	7	206	831	91	10,437
Namibia	2,495,000	2,647	1,007	2,477	3	133	296	46	8,629
Nauru	11,000	21	647	17		2	2	1	102
Nepal	28,609,000	2,659	10,890	2,627	1	136	890	42	6,995
Netherlands	17,097,000	29,525	583	29,305		628	2,116	352	49,159
Nevis	12,000	74	176	68	10		3	1	223
New Caledonia	283,000	2,536	115	2,458	3	124	276	33	7,050
New Zealand	4,783,000	14,201	341	14,027	1	294	1,391	183	26,856
Nicaragua	6,546,000	29,567	227	28,896	1	1,598	4,411	468	87,706
Niger	23,311,000	322	76,430	305	-1	3	42	9	924
Nigeria	200,964,000	402,541	546	367,876	2	14,239	41,038	6,566	835,850
Niue	2,000	22	100	20	-5		2	1	53
Norfolk Island	2,000	7	333	6	-14		1	1	23
North Macedonia	2,083,000	1,287	1,640	1,270		27	168	23	2,752
Norway	5,346,000	11,809	456	11,727	1	204	1,189	167	17,536
Pakistan	216,565,000	1,122	210,053	1,031	1	50	82	20	4,259

Country or Territory	Population	2019 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2019 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2018	2019 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Memorial Attendance
Palau	18,000	83	234	77	7	2	12	2	239
Palestinian Territories	4,981,000	63	83,017	60	-3		9	2	130
Panama	4,246,000	18,068	240	17,662	1	621	2,988	323	54,878
Papua New Guinea	8,776,000	5,281	1,829	4,797	13	160	617	118	43,275
Paraguay	7,045,000	10,988	656	10,738	2	439	1,977	234	25,805
Peru	32,510,000	132,559	252	128,834	2	4,855	28,724	1,562	398,335
Philippines	108,117,000	222,911	489	220,996	3	10,264	48,212	3,472	612,911
Pohnpei	36,000	55	692	52	-9		15	1	170
Poland	37,973,000	115,229	332	114,542	-1	1,560	8,435	1,277	177,379
Portugal	9,780,000	49,692	198	49,286	1	1,117	4,864	652	88,099
Puerto Rico	2,933,000	23,656	127	23,147	1	477	3,804	237	45,314
Réunion	889,000	3,340	270	3,296	1	146	453	41	6,557
Rodrigues	38,000	62	667	57	6	4	16	1	202
Romania	19,365,000	39,389	493	39,265	-1	775	4,167	540	74,476
Rota	2,500	9	313	8	-11		3	1	21
Rwanda	12,374,000	30,723	423	29,236	5	2,046	5,298	553	95,239
Saba	2,000	13	167	12	33		3		74
St. Barthélemy	10,000	35	357	28	17		5	1	84
St. Eustatius	3,000	28	111	27			3	1	124
St. Helena	4,000	114	36	110	-3	2		3	253
St. Kitts	35,000	222	164	214	4	5	30	3	695
St. Lucia	183,000	819	233	786		19	117	11	2,091
St. Maarten	42,000	333	131	321	-2	17	40	6	1,158
St. Martin	38,000	299	147	259	-2	5	23	5	1,072
St. Pierre and Miquelon	6,000	10	600	10			6	1	14
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	111,000	322	356	312	-3	4	41	8	1,080
Saipan	48,000	230	222	216	2	14	40	3	509
Samoa	197,000	557	373	528	1	26	109	12	2,492
San Marino	34,000	201	172	198	3		47	2	323
São Tomé and Príncipe	215,000	924	241	893	4	69	141	14	3,631
Senegal	16,296,000	1,376	12,143	1,342	2	48	180	29	2,859
Serbia	6,964,000	3,943	1,811	3,845		95	659	64	7,750
Seychelles	98,000	340	302	324	2	8	37	5	979
Sierra Leone	7,813,000	2,465	3,427	2,280	2	123	316	41	9,272
Slovakia	5,452,000	11,147	493	11,054	-1	188	899	132	20,910
Slovenia	2,084,000	1,825	1,155	1,804	-1	26	250	30	2,857
Solomon Islands	670,000	2,053	353	1,896	-1	115	219	51	10,203
South Africa	58,780,000	104,451	568	103,430		4,473	13,299	2,056	281,511
South Sudan	11,062,000	1,595	8,098	1,366	10	128	192	32	7,187
Spain	46,737,000	116,118	406	115,099	2	2,441	17,464	1,485	192,303
Sri Lanka	21,324,000	6,669	3,272	6,518	3	150	813	116	15,409
Sudan	42,813,000	662	67,000	639	4	45	115	14	2,297
Suriname	581,000	3,149	187	3,102	1	151	356	58	10,980
Sweden	10,281,000	22,311	464	22,166		295	2,480	295	34,897
Switzerland	8,591,000	19,281	451	19,058	1	251	1,421	270	31,108
Tahiti	282,000	3,273	87	3,243	1	124	496	46	9,571
Taiwan	23,774,000	11,284	2,137	11,126	5	430	3,862	188	20,794
Tanzania	58,005,000	19,459	3,127	18,547	4	1,146	2,075	446	62,398
Thailand	69,626,000	5,392	13,127	5,304	6	270	2,096	136	10,700
Timor-Leste	1,293,000	392	3,466	373	8	45	91	5	981
Tinian	3,100	13	258	12	-14		1	1	41
Togo	8,082,000	22,691	374	21,621	3	1,470	2,353	318	67,573
Tonga	104,000	211	584	178	-1	4	35	2	624
Trinidad & Tobago	1,395,000	10,146	139	10,037	1	346	1,328	131	25,478
Turkey	83,430,000	4,221	21,213	3,933	19	141	1,205	52	7,786
Turks and Caicos	38,000	346	114	333	2	10	48	6	1,141
Tuvalu	12,000	93	152	79	1	3	5	1	221
Uganda	44,270,000	8,652	5,303	8,348	6	603	1,164	164	31,284
Ukraine	43,994,000	129,310	344	128,070	-2	2,804	17,777	1,520	208,844
United States	329,065,000	1,237,054	273	1,207,438		28,611	182,882	12,594	2,416,752
Uruguay	3,462,000	12,109	291	11,887	1	367	1,306	151	23,581
Vanuatu	300,000	788	431	696	1	42	97	17	3,065
Venezuela	28,516,000	137,052	209	136,245	-4	7,445	30,110	1,743	470,857
Virgin Islands, British	30,000	241	132	228	-3		35	4	733
Virgin Islands, U.S.	105,000	588	190	554	-2	13	114	9	2,012
Wallis & Futuna Islands	11,000	63	208	53	15	2	3	1	221
Yap	11,000	54	324	34	31	4	10	1	142
Zambia	17,861,000	223,720	87	206,397	4	16,167	17,531	3,402	979,338
Zimbabwe	14,645,000	50,403	305	47,980	3	3,258	7,341	1,271	122,790
33 Other Lands		213,205		210,920	-2.1	4,477	42,896	3,323	320,885
Grand Total (240 Lands)		8,683,117		8,471,008	1.3	303,866	1,277,738	119,712	20,919,041

A FIG TREE IS USED TO TEACH A LESSON ABOUT FAITH

MATTHEW 21:19-27 MARK 11:19-33
LUKE 20:1-8

-
- THE WITHERED FIG TREE—A LESSON ABOUT FAITH
 - JESUS' AUTHORITY IS CHALLENGED
-

Leaving Jerusalem on Monday afternoon, Jesus returns to Bethany on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. He likely spends the night at the home of his friends Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

Now it is the morning of Nisan 11. Jesus and his disciples are on the road again, heading back to Jerusalem where he will be at the temple for the last time. And it is the final day of his public ministry before he celebrates the Passover, institutes the Memorial of his death, and then faces trial and execution.

En route from Bethany over the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem, Peter notices the tree that Jesus cursed the previous morning. “Rabbi, see!” he ex-



claims, “the fig tree that you cursed has withered.”
—Mark 11:21.

But why did Jesus cause the tree to wither? He reveals the reason in his response: “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what I did to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And all the things you ask in prayer, having faith, you will receive.” (Matthew 21: 21, 22) He is thus repeating the point he made earlier about faith being able to move a mountain.
—Matthew 17:20.

So by causing the tree to wither, Jesus provides an object lesson on the need to have faith in God. He states: “All the things you pray and ask for, have faith that you have received them, and you will have them.” (Mark 11:24) What an important lesson for all of Jesus’ followers! It is especially appropriate for the apostles in view of the difficult tests they will soon face. There is yet another connection between the withering of the fig tree and the quality of faith.

Like this fig tree, the nation of Israel has a deceptive appearance. The people of this nation are in a covenant relationship with God, and they might outwardly appear to observe his Law. However, the nation as a whole has proved to be both lacking faith and barren of good fruitage. They even reject God's own Son! Hence, by causing the unproductive fig tree to wither, Jesus demonstrates what the end will be for this fruitless, faithless nation.

Shortly, Jesus and his disciples enter Jerusalem. As is his custom, Jesus goes to the temple and begins teaching. The chief priests and elders of the people, likely having in mind what Jesus did the day before to the money changers, challenge him: "By what authority do you do these things? Or who gave you this authority to do these things?"—Mark 11:28.

Jesus replies: "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism by John from heaven or from men? Answer me." Now his opponents are the ones being challenged. The priests and elders

consult one another about how to answer: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’ But dare we say, ‘From men?’” They reason this way because they are in fear of the crowd, “for these all held that John had really been a prophet.”—Mark 11:29-32.

Those opposing Jesus cannot come up with an appropriate answer. So they reply: “We do not know.” Jesus, in turn, says: “Neither am I telling you by what authority I do these things.”—Mark 11:33.

- ◇ Why is Nisan 11 significant?
- ◇ Jesus teaches what lessons with the fig tree that he caused to wither?
- ◇ How does Jesus confound those who ask by what authority he does things?

(Hebrews 10:38, 39)

1. On many occasions God spoke to men
By means of his prophets of old.
Today he is saying, 'Let all repent,'
By God's own Son we are told.

(CHORUS)

*Do we have strong faith? Is it real?
We must build such faith to survive.
Is our faith proved true by our works?
By means of faith, we'll be preserved alive.*

2. We gladly obey Christ Jesus' command
To share Kingdom truth far and wide.
We boldly declare God's message of hope;
His promise we'll never hide.

(Chorus)

3. Our faith is an anchor firm and secure;
We never will shrink back in fear.
Our trust in Jehovah helps us endure;
We know salvation is near.

(Chorus)

DECEMBER 2019

THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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COVER PICTURE:

In the new world, we will enjoy doing useful and satisfying work
(See study article 50, paragraph 17)

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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)

Parents—Train Your Children to Love Jehovah

“Children are an inheritance from Jehovah.”—PS. 127:3, ftn.

SONG 134

Children Are a Trust From God

PREVIEW

Should a married couple have children? If they do, how many children should they have? And how can they train their children to love and serve Jehovah? This article presents modern-day examples and points to Bible principles that can help us answer those questions.

JEHOVAH created the first couple with the desire to have children. The Bible rightly says: “Children are an inheritance from Jehovah.” (Ps. 127:3, ftn.) What does that mean? Imagine that a close friend asks you to look after a large amount of money for him. How would you feel? Likely, you would be honored that he trusts you. But you might worry about how you will keep the fortune safe. Jehovah, our closest Friend, gives parents something to look after that is far more valuable than money. He entrusts them with the welfare and happiness of their children.

² Who should decide if and when a married couple will have children? And what can parents do to help their children have a happy life? Consider just some of the principles found in God’s Word that can help Christian couples to make wise decisions.

RESPECT A COUPLE’S DECISION

³ In some cultures, newly married couples are expected to start having children as soon as possible. They may even feel pressure from their family and others to follow that custom. Jethro, a brother in

-
1. Jehovah entrusts parents with what?
 2. What questions will we discuss?
 3. (a) Who should decide if a couple will have children? (b) What Bible principle should a couple’s friends and family keep in mind?

Asia, says, “In the congregation, some who have children pressure the childless couples to start a family.” Jeffrey, another brother in Asia, observes, “Some tell childless couples that they will have no one to take care of them when they grow old.” However, each couple should decide for themselves whether to have children. That is for them to decide; it is their responsibility. (Gal. 6:5, ftn.) Understandably, friends and family want a newly married couple to be happy. But all need to remember that the decision whether to have children or not belongs to the couple.—1 Thess. 4:11.

⁴ A couple who decide to have children do well to discuss two important questions: First, *when* do they want to have children? Second, *how many* children do they want? When is the best time for a couple to have such a discussion? And why are those two subjects so important?

⁵ In most cases, before they get married, a couple do well to address the subject of having children. Why then? One good reason is that being of the same mind on this matter is important. Also, they will need to consider whether they are ready for that responsibility. Some couples have decided to

4-5. What two subjects do couples need to discuss, and when is it best to have such a discussion? Explain.

wait at least a year or two after their wedding before having children because becoming parents will consume much time and energy. They reason that by waiting for a while, they will give themselves time to adjust to married life and draw closer to each other.—Eph. 5:33.

⁶ Other Christians have chosen to consider the pattern set by Noah’s three sons and their wives. Those three couples did not have children immediately. (Gen. 6:18; 9:18, 19; 10:1; 2 Pet. 2:5) Jesus likened our time to “the days of Noah,” and there is no doubt that we are living in “critical times hard to deal with.” (Matt. 24:37; 2 Tim. 3:1) With that reality in mind, some couples have concluded that they would like to postpone having children so that they can devote more time to sharing in the Christian ministry.

⁷ When deciding whether to have children and how many children to have, wise couples “calculate the expense.” (Read Luke 14:28, 29.) Experienced parents confirm that raising children not only costs money but also costs time and energy. Thus, it is important for a couple to consider such questions as:

-
6. How have the times in which we live affected some couples?
 7. How can the principles found at Luke 14:28, 29 and Proverbs 21:5 help a couple?



When deciding whether to have children and how many to have, wise couples “calculate the expense”

(See paragraph 7)

‘Would both of us have to work to supply the family’s basic needs? Do we agree on what our “basic needs” are? If we both would have to work, who would look after our children? Who would influence their thinking and actions?’ Couples who calmly discuss those questions take to heart the words of **Proverbs 21:5**.—Read.

⁸ A child requires and deserves considerable time

8. What challenges do Christian mates need to anticipate, and what will a loving husband do?



A loving husband will do what he can to support his wife
(See paragraph 8)

and energy from each parent. So if a couple have a number of children who are close in age, the parents may find it challenging to give each child the needed attention. Some couples who had a number of young children confessed that they felt overwhelmed. A mother may struggle with feeling drained physically and emotionally. Could that have an impact on her being able to study, pray, and share in the ministry regularly? A related challenge is being able to pay attention during Christian meetings and to benefit from them. Of course, a loving husband will do what he can to support his wife when their children need

attention, both at meetings and at home. For example, he could help his wife with household chores. He will work hard to ensure that all benefit from a regular Family Worship program. And Christian fathers will regularly accompany the family in field service.

TEACHING CHILDREN TO LOVE JEHOVAH

⁹ What are some things that parents can do to help their children learn to love Jehovah? How can they protect their children from moral dangers? Consider some steps that parents can take.

¹⁰ *Pray for Jehovah's help.* Note the example set by Manoah and his wife, who became the parents of Samson. When Manoah found out that he and his wife were going to have a son, he pleaded with Jehovah for guidance on how to raise their child.

¹¹ Nihad and Alma, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, learned from Manoah's example. They explain: "Like Manoah, we pleaded with Jehovah to instruct us how to be good parents. And Jehovah answered our prayers in various ways—through the Scriptures, Bible literature, congregation meetings, and conventions."—Read Judges 13:8.

9-10. What is vital for parents who want to help their children?

11. How can parents imitate Manoah's example, as related at Judges 13:8?

¹² ***Teach by example.*** What you say is important; however, what you do will likely have a bigger impact on your child. We can be sure that Joseph and Mary set an excellent example for their children, including Jesus. Joseph worked hard to support his family. In addition, Joseph encouraged his household to appreciate spiritual things. (Deut. 4:9, 10) Though Joseph was not required by the Law to take his family with him to Jerusalem “from year to year” to celebrate the Passover, he did. (Luke 2:41, 42) Some fathers in his day may have viewed such a family trip as inconvenient, time-consuming, and expensive. Yet, Joseph obviously appreciated spiritual things and taught his children to do the same. Also, Mary knew the Scriptures well. By her words and actions, she no doubt taught her children to love God’s Word.

¹³ Nihad and Alma, mentioned earlier, wanted to follow the example set by Joseph and Mary. How did that help them to raise their son to love and serve God? They say, “By our way of life, we tried to show our son how good it is to live according to Jehovah’s principles.” Nihad adds, “Be the kind of person you want your child to be.”

12. What example did Joseph and Mary set for their children?

13. How did one couple follow the example of Joseph and Mary?

¹⁴ Help your children to choose good associates. Both mother and father need to know whom their children are associating with and what they are doing. That includes the parents' knowing whom their children are communicating with through social media and on their mobile phone. Those associates can impact how the children think and act.—1 Cor. 15:33.

¹⁵ What can parents do if they are unfamiliar with computers or mobile devices? Jessie, a father in the Philippines, says: “We knew little about technology. But that did not stop us from making our children aware of the possible dangers of electronic devices.” Jessie did not ban his children from using such devices just because he was unfamiliar with them. He explains: “I encouraged my children to use their electronic devices to learn a new language, to study for the meetings, and to read the Bible daily.” If you are parents, have you read and discussed with your children the balanced advice about texting and online photo sharing that you can find on the “Teenagers” section of jw.org[®]? Have you reviewed with them the videos *Who's in Control—You or Your*

14. Why do parents need to know whom their children associate with?

15. What can parents learn from the example of Jessie?

*Devices? and Be Social-Network Smart?** That material can be valuable as you teach your children how to use electronic devices wisely.—Prov. 13:20.

¹⁶ Many parents exert themselves to arrange opportunities for their children to associate with those who set a good example in serving God. For instance, N'Déni and Bomine, a couple in Côte d'Ivoire, often invited the circuit overseer to stay in their home. N'Déni relates: “This had a very good effect on our son. He began pioneering and now serves as a substitute circuit overseer.” Can you arrange similar association for your children?

¹⁷ *Start training children as early as possible.* The earlier parents begin training their children, the better. (Prov. 22:6) Consider Timothy, who in time traveled with the apostle Paul. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois trained him “from infancy.”—2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.

¹⁸ Another couple in Côte d'Ivoire, Jean-Claude and Peace, were able to raise all six of their children to love and serve Jehovah. What helped them to be

* See also *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1, chap. 36, and Volume 2, chap. 11.

16. What have many parents done, and with what result?

17-18. When should parents begin training children?



Parents need to determine how to train each of their children
(See paragraph 20)

successful? They followed the example of Eunice and Lois. They say, “We inculcated God’s Word in our children from infancy, starting shortly after they were born.”—Deut. 6:6, 7.

¹⁹ What does it mean to “inculcate” Jehovah’s Word in your children? “To inculcate” means “to teach and impress by frequent repetitions.” To do so, parents need to spend time regularly with their young ones. It could at times seem frustrating to have to repeat instructions to the children. However,

19. What is involved in inculcating God’s Word in your children?

parents can strive to see this as a way to help their children understand God’s Word and apply it.

²⁰ *Be discerning.* Psalm 127 compares children to arrows. (Read Psalm 127:4.) Just as arrows can be made from different materials and can vary in size, no two children are precisely alike. So parents need to determine how to train each of their children. A couple in modern-day Israel who successfully raised two children to serve Jehovah tell what they found to be helpful, “We conducted a Bible study with each child separately.” Of course, each family head will decide whether studying in that way is necessary or possible.

JEHOVAH WILL HELP YOU

²¹ Parents may at times feel overwhelmed by the challenges they face, but children are a gift from Jehovah. He is always available to help. He willingly listens to the prayers of parents. And he answers those prayers by means of the Bible, our publications, and the example and advice of other mature parents in the congregation.

²² It has been said that raising children is a

20. Explain how Psalm 127:4 can be applied to raising children.

21. What help can parents expect from Jehovah?

22. What are among the best things parents can provide?

20-year project, but parents never really stop being parents. Among the very best things they can give their children are love, time, and Bible-based training. Each child will respond differently to the training. However, many of them who have been raised by parents who love Jehovah feel as does Joanna Mae, a sister in Asia: “Looking back on the training I received from my parents, I am so thankful that they disciplined me and taught me to love Jehovah. They did not just give me life, they gave me a meaningful life.” (Prov. 23:24, 25) Millions of Christians could express similar sentiments.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 43: A Christian couple discuss whether they will have children, evaluating both the joys and the obligations.

Page 49: A couple study separately with their children because of the children’s ages and abilities.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Why should couples not feel pressured to have children?
- What factors should a couple consider when deciding whether to have children?
- How can parents train their children to love Jehovah?

1. Praise Jah with me;
Come! Let us sing!
He gives us life, breath, and ev'ry good thing.
Each day and night,
His name we bless,
Praising his love and his almightiness.
We sing his praise, and his name we confess.
2. Praise Jah with me;
He satisfies.
He hears our prayers as our needs he supplies.
His mighty arm
Strengthens the weak;
His holy spirit sustains all the meek.
His name we praise; Of his power we speak.
3. Praise Jah with me;
Our God is just.
He brings us comfort, in him we can trust.
Wrongs he will right;
Hearts he will heal.
Rich Kingdom blessings all mankind will feel.
Come let us praise him with joy and with zeal!