

- Song 28 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“The Tragic Results of Bad Association”:** (10 min.)
 Ge 34:1—Dinah repeatedly visited the young women of Canaan (*w97 2/1 30 ¶4*)
 Ge 34:2—Shechem violated Dinah (*lvs 124 ¶14*)
 Ge 34:7, 25—Simeon and Levi killed Shechem and every male in his city (*w09 9/1 21 ¶1-2*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (10 min.)
 Ge 35:8—Who was Deborah, and what can we learn from her? (*it-1 600 ¶4*)

Ge 35:22-26—How do we know that the line leading to the Messiah was not tied to the right of the firstborn? (*w17.12 14*)

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 34:1-19 (5)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 40
- **“Get Rid of the Foreign Gods”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video *“Oppose the Devil”* (video category FAMILY).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jy* chap. 112
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- Song 143 and Prayer

GENESIS 34-35 | The Tragic Results of Bad Association

34:1, 2, 7, 25

Although we likely see some good qualities in our neighbors, workmates, or schoolmates, does that mean that they are good associates? What can help us determine if someone is good association or not?

- Will their companionship help me improve my relationship with Jehovah?
- What do their conversations reveal about what is important to them?—Mt 12:34



ASK YOURSELF, ‘What effect are my associates having on my relationship with Jehovah?’

28 *Gaining Jehovah's Friendship* (Psalm 15)

1. Who is your friend, O God?

Who in your tent may dwell?

Who gains your friendship? Who gains your trust?

Who really knows you well?

All who embrace your Word,

All who have faith in you,

All who are loyal, all who are just,

Living the truth for you.

2. Who is your friend, O God?

Who may approach your throne?

Who brings delight and makes you rejoice?

Whose name to you is known?

All who exalt your name,

All who your Word obey,

All who are faithful, honest in heart,

Truthful in all they say.

3. Throwing our cares on you,

Baring our hearts in prayer,

Drawing us closer, bonding in love,

Feeling your daily care,

We yearn to be your friend.

Long may our friendship grow.

No greater Friend could we ever gain,

No greater Friend we'll know.

Genesis 34-35

34 Now Di'nah, Jacob's daughter by Le'ah, used to go out to spend time with the young women of the land. ² When She'chem, the son of Ha'mor the Hi'vite, a chieftain of the land, saw her, he took her and lay down with her and violated her. ³ And he became very attached to Di'nah, the daughter of Jacob, and he fell in love with the young woman and spoke persuasively to her. ⁴ Finally She'chem said to Ha'mor his father: "Get me this young woman to be my wife."

⁵ When Jacob heard that he had defiled Di'nah his daughter, his sons were with his herd in the field. So Jacob kept silent until they returned. ⁶ Later Ha'mor, She'chem's father, went out to speak with Jacob. ⁷ But the sons of Jacob heard about it and returned from the field right away. They were offended and very angry because he had disgraced Israel by lying down with Jacob's daughter, something that should not be done.

⁸ Ha'mor spoke with them, saying: "My son She'chem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife, ⁹ and form marriage alliances with us. Give us your daughters, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You may dwell with us, and the land will become available for you. Dwell and carry on trade in it and settle in it." ¹¹ Then She'chem said to her father and to her brothers: "Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask me. ¹² You can demand from me a very high bride price and gift. I am willing to give whatever you may say to me. Just give me the young woman as a wife."

¹³ And Jacob's sons answered She'chem and Ha'mor his father deceitfully because he had defiled Di'nah their sister. ¹⁴ They said to them: "We cannot possibly do such a thing, to give our sister to a man who is not circumcised, for that is a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ We can only consent on this condition: that you become like us and circumcise all your males. ¹⁶ Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you do not listen to us and get circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

¹⁸ Their words pleased Ha'mor and She'chem, Ha'mor's son. ¹⁹ The young man did not delay in doing what they asked, because he found delight in Jacob's daughter, and he was the most honorable of the whole house of his father.

²⁰ So Ha'mor and his son She'chem went to the city gate and spoke to the men of their city, saying: ²¹ "These men wish to be at peace with us. Let them dwell in the land and carry on trade in it, for the land is large enough to accommodate them. We can take their daughters as wives, and our daughters we can give to them. ²² Only on this one condition will the men consent to dwell with us in order to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised just the way they are circumcised. ²³ Then, will not their possessions, their wealth, and all their livestock be ours? So let us give them our consent that they may dwell with us." ²⁴ All those going out by the gate of his city listened to Ha'mor and to his son She'chem, and all the males got circumcised, all those going out of the city gate.

²⁵ However, on the third day, when they were still in pain, two sons of Jacob, Sim'e-on and Le'vi, Di'nah's brothers, each took his sword and went into the unsuspecting city and killed every male. ²⁶ They killed Ha'mor and his son She'chem with the sword and then took Di'nah from She'chem's house and left. ²⁷ Jacob's other sons came upon the slain men and plundered the city because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks, their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. ²⁹ They also took all their possessions, captured all their little children and their wives, and plundered everything in the houses.

³⁰ At this Jacob said to Sim'e-on and to Le'vi: "You have brought great trouble on me in making me a stench to the inhabitants of the land, to the Ca'naan-ites and the Per'iz-zites. I am few in number, and they will certainly gather together to attack me and I will be annihilated, I and my house." ³¹ But they said: "Should anyone treat our sister like a prostitute?"

35 After that God said to Jacob: "Rise, go up to Beth'el and dwell there, and make an altar there to the true God, who appeared to you when you were running away from E'sau your brother."

² Then Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him: "Get rid of the foreign gods that are in your midst, and cleanse yourselves and change your garments, ³ and let us rise and go up to Beth'el. There I will make an altar to the true God, who answered me in the day of my distress and

who has been with me wherever I have gone.”⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the earrings that were in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the big tree that was close to She'chem.

⁵ When they traveled on, the terror of God struck the cities around them, so they did not chase after the sons of Jacob.

⁶ Jacob eventually came to Luz, that is, Beth'el, in the land of Ca'naan, he and all the people with him.⁷ There he built an altar and called the place El-beth'el, because there the true God had revealed himself to him when he had run away from his brother.⁸ Later Deb'o-rah, Re-bek'ah's nurse, died and was buried at the foot of Beth'el under an oak. So he named it Al'lon-bac'uth.

⁹ God appeared to Jacob once again while he was coming from Pad'dan-a'ram and blessed him.¹⁰ God said to him: “Your name is Jacob. Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel will be your name.” And he began to call him Israel.¹¹ God further said to him: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and become many. Nations and a congregation of nations will come from you, and kings will descend from you.

¹² As for the land that I have given to Abraham and to Isaac, to you I will give it, and to your offspring after you I will give the land.”¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him.

¹⁴ So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering on it and poured oil on it.¹⁵ And Jacob continued to call the place where God had spoken with him Beth'el.

¹⁶ Then they pulled away from Beth'el. And while they were still some distance from Eph'rath, Rachel began to give birth, and her labor was very difficult. ¹⁷ But while she was struggling to deliver the child, the midwife said to her: "Do not be afraid, for you will have this son also." ¹⁸ Just as her life was slipping away (for she was dying), she named him Ben-o'ni, but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Eph'rath, that is, Beth'le-hem. ²⁰ Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

²¹ After that Israel pulled away and pitched his tent a distance beyond the tower of E'der. ²² Once while Israel was dwelling in that land, Reu'ben went and lay down with Bil'hah his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it.

So there were 12 sons of Jacob. ²³ The sons by Le'ah were Jacob's firstborn Reu'ben, then Sim'e-on, Le'vi, Judah, Is'sa-char, and Zeb'u-lun. ²⁴ The sons by Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁵ And the sons by Bil'hah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naph'ta-li. ²⁶ And the sons by Zil'pah, Le'ah's servant, were Gad and Ash'er. These are Jacob's sons, who were born to him in Pad'dan-a'ram.

²⁷ Jacob eventually came to where his father Isaac was at Mam're, to Kir'i-ath-ar'ba, that is, Heb'ron, where Abraham and also Isaac had resided as foreigners. ²⁸ Isaac lived to be 180 years old. ²⁹ Then Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, after a long and satisfying life; and his sons E'sau and Jacob buried him.

- Song 28 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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GENESIS 34-35 | The Tragic Results of Bad Association

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ASK YOURSELF, ‘What effect are my associates having on my relationship with Jehovah?’

April 27–May 3 / Genesis 34-35

- Song 28 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

“The Tragic Results of Bad Association”: (10 minutes)

Genesis 34:1,2,7,25

Although we likely see some good qualities in our neighbors, workmates, or schoolmates, does that mean that they are good associates? What can help us determine if someone is good association or not?

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- What do their conversations reveal about what is important to them?—Matthew 12:34

Ask yourself, ‘What effect are my associates having on my relationship with Jehovah?’

Genesis 34:1—Dinah repeatedly visited the young women of Canaan

Genesis 34:1: Now Dinah, Jacob's daughter by Leah, used to go out to spend time with the young women of the land.

w97 2/1 30 paragraph 4

How would the young men of the city view this young virgin who regularly visited their city—apparently unaccompanied? A chieftain's son "got to see her and then took her and lay down with her and violated her." Why did Dinah court danger by associating with the immoral Canaanites? Was it because she felt she needed the company of girls her own age? Was she as headstrong and independent as some of her brothers? Read the Genesis account, and try to comprehend the distress and shame that Jacob and Leah must have felt because of the tragic consequences of their daughter's visits to Shechem.—Genesis 34:1-31; 49:5-7; see also *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1985, page 31.

Genesis 34:2—Shechem violated Dinah

Genesis 34:2: When Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, a chieftain of the land, saw her, he took her and lay down with her and violated her.

lvs 124 paragraph 14

Shechem did what seemed natural and acceptable to him. Because he was attracted to Dinah, he “took her” and “violated her.” (Read Genesis 34:1-4.) This crime started a series of events that resulted in tragedy for Dinah and her whole family.—Genesis 34:7,25-31; Galatians 6:7,8.

Genesis 34:7,25—Simeon and Levi killed Shechem and every male in his city

Genesis 34:7: But the sons of Jacob heard about it and returned from the field right away. They were offended and very angry because he had disgraced Israel by lying down with Jacob’s daughter, something that should not be done.

Genesis 34:25: However, on the third day, when they were still in pain, two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and went into the

unsuspecting city and killed every male.

w09 9/1 21 paragraphs 1-2

Oftentimes, those seeking retaliation do so in an effort to ease the emotional pain of an offense. For example, the Bible tells us that when the sons of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob learned that the Canaanite Shechem had violated their sister Dinah, they “became hurt in their feelings and they grew very angry.” (Genesis 34:1-7) To avenge the wrong done to their sister, two of Jacob’s sons plotted against Shechem and his household. Using a ruse, Simeon and Levi entered the Canaanite city and killed every male, including Shechem.— Genesis 34:13-27.

Did all that bloodshed settle the matter? When Jacob learned of his sons’ actions, he rebuked them, saying: “You have brought ostracism upon me in making me a stench to the inhabitants of the land, . . . and they will certainly gather together against me and assault me and I must be annihilated, I and my house.” (Genesis 34:30) Yes, instead of settling matters, their vengeful actions had the opposite effect; Jacob’s family now had to be wary of counterattacks

by angry neighbors. Likely to prevent such an outcome, God instructed Jacob to move his family out of the area to Bethel.—Genesis 35:1,5.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Genesis 35:8—Who was Deborah, and what can we learn from her?

Genesis 35:8: Later Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried at the foot of Bethel under an oak. So he named it Allon-bacuth.

***it-1* 600 paragraph 4**

Rebekah’s nurse. When Rebekah left the household of her father Bethuel to move to Palestine and marry Isaac, Deborah accompanied her. (Genesis 24:59) After years of service in Isaac’s household, Deborah came to be in Jacob’s household, perhaps after the death of Rebekah. Evidently some 125 years after Rebekah’s marriage to Isaac, Deborah died and was buried under a big tree at Bethel. The name given to the tree (Allon-bacuth, meaning “Massive Tree of Weeping”) indicates how beloved she had become to Jacob

and his family.—Genesis 35:8.

Genesis 35:22-26—How do we know that the line leading to the Messiah was not tied to the right of the firstborn?

Genesis 35:22-26: Once while Israel was dwelling in that land, Reuben went and lay down with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it. So there were 12 sons of Jacob. The sons by Leah were Jacob's firstborn Reuben, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons by Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. And the sons by Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali. And the sons by Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher. These are Jacob's sons, who were born to him in Paddan-aramaic

w17.12 14

In ancient Israel, was the line leading to the Messiah tied to the right of the firstborn?

We have at times made comments to that effect. That seemed to agree with what we read at Hebrews 12:16. That verse says that Esau did *"not appreciate sacred things"* and

“gave up [to Jacob the] rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal.” This appeared to suggest that when Jacob gained the “rights as firstborn,” he also came in line to be an ancestor to the Messiah.—Matthew 1:2,16; Luke 3:23,34.

However, a review of Bible accounts shows that a man did not need to be a firstborn son to be an ancestor of the Messiah. Consider some of the evidence:

Of the sons of Jacob (Israel), his firstborn by Leah was Reuben. Later, Jacob’s first son by his favored wife, Rachel, was Joseph. When Reuben became guilty of misconduct, the right of firstborn passed to Joseph. (Genesis 29:31-35; 30:22-25; 35:22-26; 49:22-26; 1 Chronicles 5:1,2) Still, the Messianic line came down through neither Reuben nor Joseph. It was through Judah, Jacob’s fourth son by Leah.—Genesis 49:10.

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 minutes or less) Genesis 34:1-19 (*th* study 5)

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- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

INITIAL CALL

Question: What is God's purpose for humans?

Scripture: **Ge 1:28**

Link: How do we know that God will accomplish his purpose for humans?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:

• *bhs 29 ¶1*



FIRST RETURN VISIT

Question: How do we know that God will accomplish his purpose for humans?

Scripture: **Isa 55:11**

Link: What will life be like when God fulfills his purpose?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:

• *bhs 29 ¶2*



SECOND RETURN VISIT

Question: What will life be like when God fulfills his purpose?

Scripture: **Ps 37:10, 11**

Link: What must we do to benefit from God's promises?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:

• *bhs 35 ¶17*



MEMORIAL INVITATION CAMPAIGN

(March 14–April 7):

“We’re here to invite you to a special event that will be attended by millions of people. It’s the anniversary of Jesus’ death.” Hand the person an invitation. “This invitation shows the time and location of the event in our area. We also invite you to a special talk the weekend before.”

Link When Interest Is Shown: Why did Jesus die?

to all his descendants sin and its penalty, death. We need a ransom to release us from the penalty of death that we inherited from Adam. 📖 *Read Romans 5:12; 6:23.*

Who could pay the ransom to free us from death? When we die, we pay the penalty only for our own sins. No imperfect man can pay for the sins of others. 📖 *Read Psalm 49:7-9.*

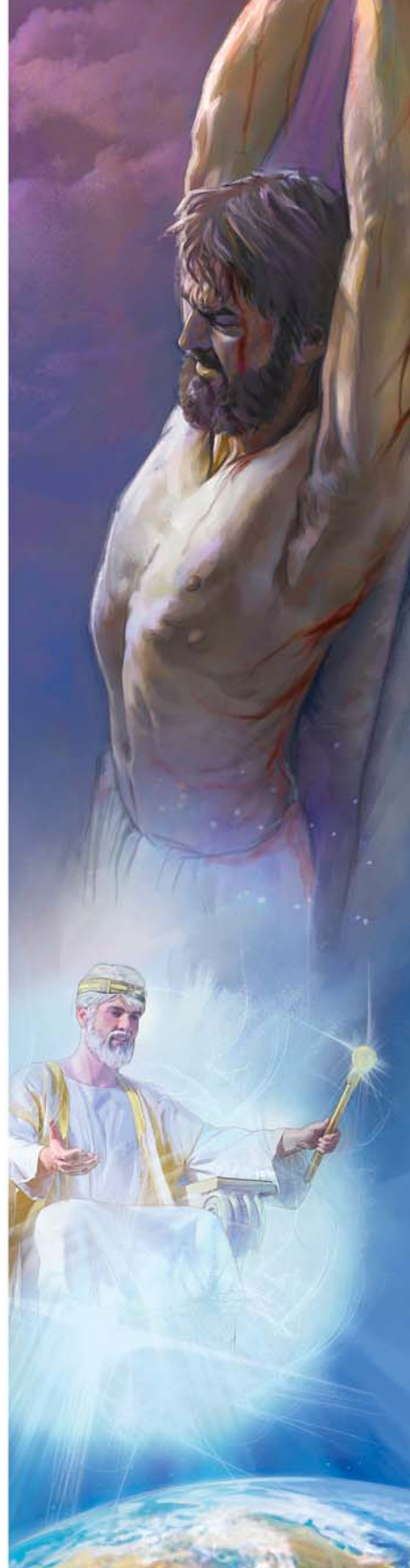
4. Why did Jesus die?

Unlike us, Jesus was perfect. So he did not need to die for his sins—he never committed any. Instead, Jesus died for the sins of others. God expressed extraordinary love for mankind by sending his Son to die for us. Jesus also showed love for us by obeying his Father and giving his life for our sins. 📖 *Read John 3:16; Romans 5:18, 19.*

5. What is Jesus doing now?

When on earth, Jesus cured the sick, raised the dead, and rescued people in peril. He thereby demonstrated what he will do in the future for all obedient mankind. (Matthew 15:30, 31; John 5:28) After Jesus died, God restored him to life as a spirit person. (1 Peter 3:18) Jesus then waited at God's right hand until Jehovah gave him power to rule as King over all the earth. (Hebrews 10:12, 13) Now Jesus is ruling as King in heaven, and his followers are announcing that good news worldwide. 📖 *Read Daniel 7:13, 14; Matthew 24:14.*

Soon, Jesus will use his power as King to bring an end to all suffering and to those who cause it. All who exercise faith in Jesus by obeying him will enjoy life in a paradise on earth. 📖 *Read Psalm 37:9-11.*



40 *To Whom Do We Belong?*

(Romans 14:8)

1. To whom do you belong?

Which god do you now obey?

Your master's the one to whom you bow.

He is your god; you serve him now.

You cannot serve two gods;

Devotion cannot be shared.

And so in the end your choice will depend

On how your heart is prepared.

2. To whom do you belong?

Which god will you now obey?

For one god is false and one is true,

So make your choice; it's up to you.

Will Caesar of this world

Possess your allegiance still?

Or will you obey the true God today

By always doing his will?

3. To whom do I belong?

Jehovah I will obey.

My Father in heaven I will serve;

I'll pay my vows without reserve.

He bought me at great cost;

Devoted to him I'll stay.

To him I will give each moment I live.

His name I'll honor each day.

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“Get Rid of the Foreign Gods”

Jacob knew that Jehovah deserves exclusive devotion, even though He had not yet provided a law against idolatry. (Ex 20: 3-5) So after Jehovah told him to return to Bethel, Jacob instructed everyone with him to get rid of their idols. Jacob then disposed of the idols, including earrings, which were possibly worn as amulets. (Ge 35:1-4) No doubt Jehovah was pleased with Jacob’s actions.

In our day, how can we give Jehovah exclusive devotion? We start by avoiding anything connected to idolatry or spiritism. This would include getting rid of any objects related to the occult and examining our entertainment carefully. For instance, ask yourself: ‘Am I entertained by books or movies featuring such things as vampires, zombies, or the supernatural? Does any of my entertainment portray magic, spells, or curses as harmless fun?’ We should stay far away from anything that Jehovah hates.—Ps 97:10.



WATCH THE VIDEO DRAMATIZATION “OPPOSE THE DEVIL,” AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



- What problem arose in the life of a Bible student named Palesa?



- Why is it wise to seek the help of the elders in cases involving spiritism?



- From what things must those who want Jehovah’s protection completely break free?

- What decisive action did Palesa take?

- Where you live, what are some ways to avoid demon influence?

Oppose the Devil, and draw close to God.—Jas 4:7, 8

A LESSON IN VIGILANCE —THE VIRGINS

MATTHEW 25:1-13

- JESUS GIVES THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE TEN VIRGINS
-

Jesus has been answering his apostles' question regarding the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things. With this in mind, he now gives them wise admonition by means of an additional illustration. Its fulfillment would be observable by those living during his presence.

He introduces the illustration, saying: "The Kingdom of the heavens may be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were discreet."—Matthew 25:1, 2.

Jesus does not mean that half of his disciples who inherit the Kingdom of the heavens are foolish and the other half are discreet. Rather, he is making the point that in connection with the Kingdom, each of his disciples has the capacity to choose to be vigilant



or to be distracted. Jesus has no doubt, though, that each of his servants can remain faithful and receive his Father's blessings.

In the illustration, all ten virgins go out to welcome the bridegroom and to join the wedding procession. When he arrives, the virgins will light the route with their lamps, honoring him as he brings his bride to the house prepared for her. How do things work out, though?

Jesus explains: “The foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them, whereas the discreet took oil in their flasks along with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delaying, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.” (Matthew 25:3-5) The bridegroom does not arrive as soon as expected. There seems to be a long delay, during which the virgins fall asleep. The apostles may recall what Jesus related about a man of noble birth who went away and “*eventually* got back after having secured the kingly power.” —Luke 19:11-15.

In the illustration of the ten virgins, Jesus describes what happens when the bridegroom finally

arrives: “Right in the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here is the bridegroom! Go out to meet him.’” (Matthew 25:6) What is the situation of the virgins as to their preparedness and vigilance?

Jesus continues: “Then all those virgins got up and put their lamps in order. The foolish said to the discreet, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out.’ The discreet answered, saying: ‘Perhaps there may not be enough for both us and you. Go instead to those who sell it, and buy some for yourselves.’”—Matthew 25:7-9.

So the five foolish virgins are not vigilant and are not prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom. They lack sufficient oil for their lamps and need to try to find some. Jesus relates: “While they were going off to buy it, the bridegroom came. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward, the rest of the virgins also came, saying, ‘Sir, Sir, open to us!’ In answer he said, ‘I tell you the truth, I do not know you.’” (Matthew 25:10-12) What a sad outcome for not remaining prepared and vigilant!

The apostles can see that the bridegroom whom Jesus mentions refers to himself. Earlier he had even likened himself to a bridegroom. (Luke 5:34, 35) And the wise virgins? When speaking about the “little flock,” who would be given the Kingdom, Jesus used the words: “Be dressed and ready and have your lamps burning.” (Luke 12:32, 35) So in this illustration about the virgins, the apostles can grasp that Jesus is referring to ones such as themselves. Hence, what is the message that Jesus is conveying with this illustration?

Jesus does not leave any doubt about that. He concludes his illustration by saying: “Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour.”—Matthew 25:13.

Clearly, Jesus is admonishing his faithful followers that in connection with his presence, they will need to “keep on the watch.” He will be coming, and they need to be prepared and vigilant—like the five discreet virgins—in order not to lose sight of their precious hope and miss out on the reward that can be theirs.

- ◇ How do the five discreet virgins differ from the five foolish ones as respects vigilance and preparedness?
- ◇ To whom does the bridegroom refer, and to whom do the virgins refer?
- ◇ What message is Jesus conveying with the illustration of the ten virgins?

143 *Keep Working, Watching, and Waiting*

(Romans 8:20-25)

1. The God of times and of seasons,
Whose name alone is Jehovah—
The time for his vindication
Is near by signs we can see.

(CHORUS)

*Keep on working and watching and waiting,
Joyfully anticipating,
Life as God meant it to be.*

2. The time has long been appointed;
His Son is ready to conquer,
Defeating all who oppose him.
His sword will bring victory.

(Chorus)

3. Though all creation is groaning,
In faith we're eagerly waiting.
Jehovah's day is approaching,
The time for setting us free.

(Chorus)

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THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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APRIL 6–MAY 3, 2020

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COVER PICTURE:

A young Israelite runs to Moses and Joshua to report that two men in the camp are behaving like prophets. Joshua asks Moses to restrain the men, but Moses refuses. Instead, he tells Joshua that he is happy that Jehovah put His spirit on the two men (See study article 8, paragraph 10)

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44 *A Prayer of the Lowly One* (Psalm 4:1)

1. Jehovah God, I call to you and ask you:

“Hear my prayer.”

My wounds are deep and slow to heal;
my load is hard to bear.

Despondent thoughts and disappointed hopes
have left me weak.

O God of comfort, care for me;
your favor I do seek.

(CHORUS)

Do raise me up; help me endure.

When I'm in doubt, make my hope sure.

From deep despair, I turn to you.

Jehovah God, my strength renew.

2. Your Word has been my comfort and
a refuge when I'm weak,

Expressing feelings dear to me
in words I cannot speak.

Please build in me the faith and trust
that your Word does impart.

And help me always know your love
is greater than my heart.

(Chorus)

Let Jehovah Soothe You

“When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.”—PS. 94:19.

SONG 44

A Prayer of the Lowly One

PREVIEW

At times, all of us feel anxious about the problems we face. This article considers the examples of three servants of Jehovah in Bible times who struggled with anxiety. It also discusses how Jehovah comforted and soothed each one of them.

HAVE you ever been plagued by anxiety?* Perhaps you feel anxious because you have been hurt by what others have said or done. Or you may be anxious about what you have said or done. For example, you may have made a mistake, and you worry that Jehovah will never forgive you. To make matters worse, you may believe that because you are overwhelmed by anxiety, you must lack faith—you must be a bad person. But is that true?

² Consider a few Scriptural examples. Hannah, who became the mother of the prophet Samuel, was a woman of great faith. Yet, she was overcome by anxiety when a member of her household treated her badly. (1 Sam. 1:7) The apostle Paul had strong faith, but he was overwhelmed with “anxiety for all the congregations.” (2 Cor. 11:28) King David had such strong faith that Jehovah developed a special fondness for him. (Acts 13:22) Even so, David made mistakes that caused him to suffer bouts of crushing

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness or worry. This can be caused by financial concerns, health issues, family problems, or personal difficulties. We may also feel anxiety about our past mistakes or about future challenges we think we may experience.

1. What may cause anxiety, and how can it affect us?
2. What Scriptural examples show that being anxious does not mean that we lack faith?

anxiety. (Ps. 38:4) Jehovah comforted and soothed each one of them. Let us examine what we can learn from their examples.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM FAITHFUL HANNAH

³ When others speak harshly or act unkindly, we may feel anxious. That is especially true if the one who hurt us is a close friend or relative. We may worry that our relationship with that individual is ruined. At times, the person who hurts us may speak thoughtlessly, and we may feel as if we were stabbed with a sword! (Prov. 12:18) Or someone may even deliberately choose to use words as a weapon. A young sister had to deal with this challenge. “A few years ago,” she says, “somebody I thought was a good friend started spreading rumors about me on-line. I felt hurt and anxious. I just could not understand why she would stab me in the back like that.” If you have been hurt by a close friend or relative, you can learn much from Hannah.

⁴ Hannah had to deal with some difficult problems. For many years she was unable to have children. (1 Sam. 1:2) In Israelite culture, a woman who was barren was believed to be cursed. This left her

-
3. How can the speech of others cause us to feel anxious?
 4. What difficult problems did Hannah have to deal with?

feeling humiliated. (Gen. 30:1, 2) To make matters worse for Hannah, her husband had another wife, Peninnah, who bore him children. Peninnah viewed Hannah as a rival and “taunted her relentlessly in order to upset her.” (1 Sam. 1:6) At first, Hannah did not cope well with these difficult challenges. She was so upset that “she would weep and not eat.” She became “extremely bitter” at heart. (1 Sam. 1:7, 10) How did Hannah find comfort?

⁵ Hannah poured out her feelings to Jehovah in prayer. After she prayed, she explained her situation to High Priest Eli. He then told her: “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition.” What was the result? Hannah “went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer downcast.” (1 Sam. 1:17, 18) Prayer helped Hannah to regain peace.

⁶ *We can regain our peace if we persevere in prayer.* Hannah spent a long time talking to her heavenly Father. (1 Sam. 1:12) We too can talk at length to Jehovah about our anxieties, our fears, and our shortcomings. Our prayers do not have to be poetic or perfectly structured. We may even find ourselves expressing bitter words that are interrupted by sobs of

5. How did prayer help Hannah?

6. What lessons about prayer can we learn from Hannah and from Philippians 4:6, 7?

grief. Even so, Jehovah will never get tired of listening to us. In addition to praying about our problems, we need to remember the advice recorded at **Philippians 4:6, 7. (Read.) Paul specifically mentioned that we should offer prayers of thanksgiving, or gratitude. We have so many reasons to thank Jehovah. For example, we can thank him for the gift of life, for his creative works, for his loyal love, and for the wonderful hope that he has given us. What else can we learn from Hannah?**

⁷ Despite her problems, Hannah regularly went with her husband to Jehovah's place of worship in Shiloh. (1 Sam. 1:1-5) It was while Hannah was at the tabernacle that High Priest Eli encouraged her by saying that he hoped that Jehovah would respond to her prayer.—1 Sam. 1:9, 17.

⁸ *We can regain our peace if we continue attending congregation meetings.* The opening prayer at our meetings often includes a request for God's spirit to be with us. Peace is part of the fruitage of that spirit. (Gal. 5:22) When we attend our meetings even though we are under stress, we give Jehovah and our brothers and sisters the opportunity to encourage us and to help us regain peace of mind and heart.

7. What did Hannah and her husband regularly do?

8. What can meetings do for us? Explain.



Like Hannah in the past, how can we today regain and maintain our inner peace?

(See paragraphs 6-10)

Prayer and meetings are key ways that Jehovah uses to soothe us. (Heb. 10:24, 25) Note another lesson we can learn from Hannah's experience.

⁹ The cause of Hannah's anxiety did not go away immediately. When Hannah returned home from worshipping at the tabernacle, she still had to live in the same household as Peninnah did. And the Bible does not indicate that Peninnah's attitude changed. So Hannah likely had to continue enduring her rival's stabbing words. But Hannah was able to regain and maintain her inner peace. Recall that after leav-

9. What did not change in Hannah's situation, but what did?

ing the matter in Jehovah’s hands, Hannah was no longer overwhelmed by worry. She allowed Jehovah to comfort and soothe her. Sometime later, Hannah was even blessed with children of her own!—1 Sam. 1:19, 20; 2:21.

¹⁰ *We can regain our peace even if the cause of our anxiety remains.* Even though we pray intensely and attend meetings regularly, some problems may persist. But from Hannah’s example, we learn that nothing can stop Jehovah from soothing our troubled heart. Jehovah will never forget us, and sooner or later he will reward our faithfulness.—Heb. 11:6.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL

¹¹ Paul had many reasons for feeling anxious. For instance, because he loved his brothers and sisters, the problems they faced weighed heavily on his mind. (2 Cor. 2:4; 11:28) In his assignment as an apostle, Paul had to deal with opposers who beat him and threw him in prison. He also had to endure hardships that caused anxiety, such as being “low on provisions.” (Phil. 4:12) And considering that he had been shipwrecked at least three times at that point in his life, we can only imagine the anxiety he

10. What do we learn from Hannah’s example?

11. What reasons did Paul have for feeling anxious?

experienced when traveling by boat. (2 Cor. 11:23-27) How did Paul deal with the anxiety?

¹² Paul felt anxious for his brothers and sisters when they faced challenges, but he did not try to fix all their problems by himself. Paul was modest. He arranged for others to help in caring for the congregation. For example, he delegated authority to such trustworthy men as Timothy and Titus. The work those brothers did no doubt helped to reduce Paul's anxiety.—Phil. 2:19, 20; Titus 1:1, 4, 5.

¹³ *Ask others to help you.* Like Paul, many empathetic elders today feel anxious for those in the congregation who are facing trials. But an elder can only do so much. Modesty will move him to share the load with other qualified men and to train young men to help him care for God's flock.—2 Tim. 2:2.

¹⁴ *Acknowledge your need to be comforted.* Paul was humble, so he sought and received encouragement from his friends. He obviously did not worry about being viewed as a weak person if he acknowledged that he had been comforted by others. In writing to Philemon, Paul said: "I received much joy and com-

12. What helped to reduce Paul's anxiety?

13. How can elders imitate Paul?

14. What did Paul not worry about, and what can we learn from his example?



As we learn from the example of the apostle Paul,
what can we do to avoid being overwhelmed by anxiety?
(See paragraphs 13-15)

fort on hearing of your love.” (Philem. 7) Paul mentioned several other fellow workers who had greatly encouraged him during times of distress. (Col. 4:7-11) When we humbly acknowledge that we need encouragement, our brothers and sisters will gladly give us the support we need.

¹⁵ ***Rely on God’s Word.*** Paul knew that the Scriptures would comfort him. (Rom. 15:4) They would also give him wisdom to face any trial. (2 Tim. 3:15, 16) When imprisoned in Rome for the second time,

15. How did Paul find relief when confronted with distressing circumstances?

Paul felt that his death was near. In the face of that distressing situation, what did Paul do? He asked Timothy to come to him quickly and bring “the scrolls.” (2 Tim. 4:6, 7, 9, 13) Why? Because those scrolls were likely portions of the Hebrew Scriptures that Paul could use in his personal Bible study. When we imitate Paul by regularly studying God’s Word, Jehovah will use the Scriptures to soothe us—no matter what trials we face.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM KING DAVID

¹⁶ David had reason to be troubled by a guilty conscience. He had committed adultery with Bathsheba, arranged for the murder of her husband, and for a time tried to cover up the crimes. (2 Sam. 12:9) At first, David ignored his conscience. As a result, he suffered not only spiritually but also mentally and physically. (Ps. 32:3, 4) What helped David to deal with the anxiety he had brought on himself, and what can help us if we make a serious mistake?

¹⁷ *Pray for forgiveness.* David eventually turned to Jehovah in prayer. With heartfelt repentance, he confessed his sins. (Read Psalm 51:1-4.) And what

16. What anxiety did David bring on himself?

17. How is David’s heartfelt repentance revealed in the words found at Psalm 51:1-4?



As in the case of King David, what can help us
if we make a serious mistake?

(See paragraphs 16-19)

relief that finally brought him! (Ps. 32:1, 2, 4, 5) If you commit a serious sin, do not try to cover the error. Instead, openly confess your sin to Jehovah in prayer. You will then begin to feel some relief from the anxiety caused by a guilty conscience. But if you want to restore your friendship with Jehovah, you need to do more than pray.

¹⁸ ***Accept discipline.*** When Jehovah sent the prophet Nathan to expose David's sin, David did not justify himself or try to minimize the sin. He

18. How did David respond to discipline?

immediately acknowledged that he had sinned not only against Bath-sheba's husband but, above all, against Jehovah. David accepted the discipline from Jehovah, and Jehovah forgave him. (2 Sam. 12:10-14) If we have committed a serious sin, we need to talk to those whom Jehovah has appointed to shepherd us. (Jas. 5:14, 15) And we must avoid the urge to justify ourselves. The sooner we accept and apply whatever discipline we receive, the sooner we will regain our peace and joy.

¹⁹ *Be determined to avoid repeating the same mistakes.* King David knew that if he was going to avoid repeating the same sins, he needed Jehovah's help. (Ps. 51:7, 10, 12) After receiving Jehovah's forgiveness, David was determined to avoid harmful thinking. As a result, he regained his inner peace.

²⁰ We show that we appreciate Jehovah's forgiveness when we pray for it, accept discipline, and work hard to avoid repeating our mistakes. When we take these steps, we will regain our inner peace. James, a brother who committed a serious sin, found this to be true. He says: "When I confessed my sin to the elders, I felt that a heavy weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I began to regain my peace of mind."

19. What should we be determined to do?

20. How can we show that we appreciate Jehovah's forgiveness?

How encouraging it is to know that “Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those who are crushed in spirit”—Ps. 34:18.

²¹ As these last days come to a close, the causes of anxiety are likely to increase. When you have anxious thoughts, do not delay in seeking Jehovah’s help. Study the Bible diligently. Learn from the examples set by Hannah, Paul, and David. Ask your heavenly Father to help you identify the cause of your anxiety. (Ps. 139:23) Let him carry your burdens, especially those over which you have little or no control. If you do, you can be like the psalmist who sang to Jehovah: “When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.”—Ps. 94:19.

21. How can we let Jehovah soothe us?

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE WAY THAT JEHOVAH COMFORTED AND SOOTHED . . .

■ Hannah?

■ Paul?

■ David?

SONG 4

“Jehovah Is My Shepherd”

4 “Jehovah Is My Shepherd”

(Psalm 23)

1. Jehovah God is my Shepherd;
I'll follow where he will lead.
He knows my hopes and my heart's desire;
He knows what I truly need.
To watered pastures he leads me,
To places secure and blessed.
And he guides me always with loyal love
To where I find peace and rest.
He guides me always with loyal love
To where I find peace and rest.
2. Refreshing are all your pathways,
The ways of your righteousness.
For your name's sake never let me stray
From walking in faithfulness.
In valleys deep in the shadows,
Assured by your staff and rod,
I will fear no danger of lasting harm,
For you are my Friend and God.
I fear no danger of lasting harm,
For you are my Friend and God.
3. Jehovah, you are my Shepherd;
I follow where you will lead.
You strengthen me, and you give me rest;
You give all I truly need.
As you most surely are living,
So sure is my hope in you.
May your loyal love and your care for me
Pursue me my whole life through.
Your loyal love and your care for me
Pursue me my whole life through.