

- Song 79 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Modest Men Train and Delegate”:** (10 min.)
Ex 18:17, 18—Jethro recognized the heavy load that Moses was carrying (w13 2/1 6)
Ex 18:21, 22—Jethro encouraged Moses to delegate some of his workload to qualified men (w03 11/1 6 ¶1)
Ex 18:24, 25—Moses applied Jethro’s advice (w02 5/15 25 ¶5)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (10 min.)
Ex 17:11-13—How can we imitate the decisive action of Aaron and Hur? (w16.09 6 ¶14)

Ex 17:14—Why are Moses’ writings part of the Bible canon? (it-1 406)

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

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Ex 17:1-16 (10)

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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 31
- **Local Needs:** (15 min.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) jy chap. 128
- Concluding Comments (3 min. or less)
- Song 14 and Prayer

EXODUS 17-18 | Modest Men Train and Delegate

18:17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25

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ASK YOURSELF, ‘What responsibilities can I entrust to others?’



79

Teach Them to Stand Firm

(Matthew 28:19, 20)

1. What a joy to teach Jehovah's sheep
And to see how they have grown.
We have seen how he has guided them
As they've made the truth their own.

(CHORUS)

*Jehovah, may you hear our prayer
And keep them in your watchful care.
In Jesus' name, for them we plead: May they succeed;
May ev'ry one of them stand firm.*

2. Ev'ry day we said a prayer for them,
As their faith was under test.
We made time to teach and care for them;
They've grown strong, and they've been blessed.

(Chorus)

3. May they all maintain their confidence,
Trust in God and in his Son.
Through endurance and obedience,
May their race for life be won.

(Chorus)

Exodus 17-18

17 The entire assembly of the Israelites departed from the wilderness of Sin by stages according to the order of Jehovah, and they camped at Reph'i-dim. But there was no water for the people to drink.

² So the people began quarreling with Moses and saying: "Give us water to drink." But Moses said to them: "Why are you quarreling with me? Why do you keep putting Jehovah to the test?" ³ But the people were very thirsty for water there, and they kept murmuring against Moses and saying: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our sons and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴ Finally Moses cried out to Jehovah: "What should I do with this people? A little longer and they will stone me!"

⁵ Then Jehovah said to Moses: "Go ahead of the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel and your rod with which you struck the Nile River. Take it in your hand and walk on. ⁶ Look! I will be standing before you there on the rock in Hor'eb. You must strike the rock, and water will come out of it, and the people will drink it." Moses did so before the eyes of the elders of Israel. ⁷ So he named the place Mas'sah and Mer'i-bah because of the quarreling of the Israelites and because they put Jehovah to the test by saying: "Is Jehovah in our midst or not?"

⁸ Then the A·mal'ek·ites came and fought against Israel in Reph'i·dim. ⁹ At this Moses said to Joshua: “Choose men for us and go out to fight against the A·mal'ek·ites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill, with the rod of the true God in my hand.” ¹⁰ Then Joshua did just as Moses told him, and he fought against the A·mal'ek·ites. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

¹¹ As long as Moses kept his hands lifted up, the Israelites prevailed, but as soon as he would let down his hands, the A·mal'ek·ites prevailed. ¹² When the hands of Moses were heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands, so that his hands remained steady until the sun set. ¹³ Thus Joshua defeated Am'a·lek and his people with the sword.

¹⁴ Jehovah now said to Moses: “Write this as a memorial in the book and repeat it to Joshua, ‘I will completely wipe out the memory of Am'a·lek from under the heavens.’” ¹⁵ Then Moses built an altar and named it Je·ho'vah-nis'si, ¹⁶ saying: “Because his hand is against the throne of Jah, Jehovah will have war with Am'a·lek from generation to generation.”

18 Now Jeth'ro the priest of Mid'i·an, Moses' father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt.

² Jeth'ro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken in Zip-po'rah, Moses' wife, when she was sent back to him, ³ along with her two sons. One son was named Ger'shom, because Moses said, "I have become a foreign resident in a foreign land," ⁴ and the other was named E-li-e'zer, because he said, "The God of my father is my helper, who rescued me from Phar'aoh's sword."

⁵ So Jeth'ro, Moses' father-in-law, along with Moses' sons and his wife, came to Moses into the wilderness where he was camping at the mountain of the true God. ⁶ Then he sent word to Moses: "I, your father-in-law Jeth'ro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons." ⁷ At once Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him. Each of them asked about the other's welfare, and then they went into the tent.

⁸ Moses related to his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done to Phar'aoh and Egypt in behalf of Israel, all the hardships that had befallen them along the way, and how Jehovah had delivered them. ⁹ Jeth'ro rejoiced over all the good that Jehovah had done for Israel by rescuing them from Egypt. ¹⁰ Then Jeth'ro said: "Praised be Jehovah, who rescued you from Egypt and from Phar'aoh, and who rescued the people from under Egypt's control. ¹¹ Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all the other gods,

because of what he did to those who acted arrogantly against his people.”¹² Then Jeth'ro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before the true God.

¹³ On the next day, Moses sat down as usual to serve as judge for the people, and the people kept standing before Moses from morning until evening.¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said: “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit here alone with all the people standing before you from morning until evening?”¹⁵ Moses said to his father-in-law: “Because the people keep coming to me to inquire of God.¹⁶ When a case arises, it comes to me and I must judge between one person and the other, and I make known the decisions of the true God and his laws.”

¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him: “What you are doing is not good.¹⁸ You will surely wear out, both you and this people who are with you, because this is too big a load for you and you cannot carry it by yourself.¹⁹ Now listen to me. I will give you advice, and God will be with you. You serve as representative for the people before the true God, and you must bring the cases to the true God.²⁰ You should warn them about what the regulations and the laws are and make

known to them the way in which they should walk and the work that they should do. ²¹ But you should select from the people capable men fearing God, trustworthy men hating dishonest profit, and appoint these over them as chiefs over thousands, chiefs over hundreds, chiefs over fifties, and chiefs over tens. ²² They should judge the people when cases arise, and they will bring every difficult case to you, but every minor case they will decide. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the load along with you. ²³ If you do this, and God so commands you, you will be able to stand the strain, and everyone will go home satisfied.”

²⁴ Moses immediately listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose capable men out of all Israel and appointed them heads over the people, as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens. ²⁶ So they judged the people when cases arose. A difficult case they would bring to Moses, but every minor case they would judge. ²⁷ After that Moses saw his father-in-law off, and he went his way to his land.

- Song 79 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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ASK YOURSELF, ‘What responsibilities can I entrust to others?’



August 17-23 / Exodus 17-18

- Song 79 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

“Modest Men Train and Delegate”: (10 minutes)

Exodus 18:17, 18, 21, 22, 24,25

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Pictures: Collage: An experienced elder progressively training

a brother to take on greater responsibility in the congregation. 1. The brother holds the microphone as the experienced elder comments at a meeting. 2. The brother accompanies the experienced elder on a shepherding visit. 3. The brother, now an elder, speaks at an elders' meeting. 4. The new elder conducts the *Watchtower* Study. The experienced elder is the reader.

Exodus 18:17, 18—Jethro recognized the heavy load that Moses was carrying

Exodus 18:17, 18: Moses' father-in-law said to him: "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both you and this people who are with you, because this is too big a load for you and you cannot carry it by yourself.

w13 2/1 6

Moses showed love for his fellow Israelites. They recognized that Jehovah was using Moses to guide his people, so they approached Moses with their various problems. We read: "The people kept standing before Moses from the morning

till the evening.” (Exodus 18:13-16) Imagine how draining it must have been for Moses to listen—hour after hour—as the Israelites unburdened themselves of their concerns! Yet, Moses was happy to help the people he loved.

Exodus 18:21, 22—Jethro encouraged Moses to delegate some of his workload to qualified men

Exodus 18:21, 22: But you should select from the people capable men fearing God, trustworthy men hating dishonest profit, and appoint these over them as chiefs over thousands, chiefs over hundreds, chiefs over fifties, and chiefs over tens. They should judge the people when cases arise, and they will bring every difficult case to you, but every minor case they will decide. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the load along with you.

w03 11/1 6 paragraph 1

These were men who showed certain godly qualities before being appointed to positions of trust. They had already given evidence that they feared God; they had a healthy reverence

for the Creator and feared to displease him. It was clear to everyone that these men did their very best to uphold God's standards. They hated unjust profit, which indicated moral strength that would prevent them from being corrupted by power. They would not abuse trust so as to further their own personal interests or those of relatives or friends.

Exodus 18:24, 25—Moses applied Jethro's advice

Exodus 18:24, 25: Moses immediately listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose capable men out of all Israel and appointed them heads over the people, as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens.

w02 5/15 25 paragraph 5

Moses too was modest and humble. When he was wearing himself out in caring for the problems of others, his father-in-law, Jethro, offered a practical solution: Share some responsibility with other qualified men. Recognizing his own limitations, Moses wisely accepted the suggestion. (Exodus

18:17-26; Numbers 12:3) A modest man is not reluctant to delegate authority to others, nor does he fear that he somehow loses control by sharing appropriate responsibilities with other qualified men. (Numbers 11:16, 17, 26-29) Rather, he is eager to help them to progress spiritually. (1 Timothy 4:15) Should that not be true of us also?

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Exodus 17:11-13—How can we imitate the decisive action of Aaron and Hur?

Exodus 17:11-13: As long as Moses kept his hands lifted up, the Israelites prevailed, but as soon as he would let down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed. When the hands of Moses were heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands, so that his hands remained steady until the sun set. Thus Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the sword.

w16.09 6 paragraph 14

Aaron and Hur literally supported Moses' hands during a battle. As for us, we can look for ways to support and to give practical aid to others. To whom? To those battling the effects of old age, health limitations, opposition from their family, loneliness, or the loss of a loved one. We can also strengthen young ones who are facing pressure to share in wrongdoing or to seek "success" in this system of things, whether academically, financially, or professionally. (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3; 5:11, 14) Look for ways to show genuine interest in others at the Kingdom Hall, in the ministry, while enjoying a meal together, or as you converse on the telephone.

Exodus 17:14—Why are Moses' writings part of the Bible canon?

Exodus 17:14: Jehovah now said to Moses: "Write this as a memorial in the book and repeat it to Joshua, 'I will completely wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.'"

it-1 406

That these writings of Moses were of divine origin, inspired of God, canonical, and a safe guideline for pure worship, there can be no doubt, in the light of internal evidence. It was not through Moses' initiative that he became the leader and commander of the Israelites; at first Moses drew back at the suggestion. (Exodus 3:10, 11; 4:10-14) Rather, God raised Moses up and invested in him such miraculous powers that even Pharaoh's magic-practicing priests were compelled to acknowledge that what Moses did originated with God. (Exodus 4:1-9; 8:16-19) So it was not Moses' personal ambition to be an orator and writer. Rather, in obedience to God's command and with the divine credentials of holy spirit, Moses was moved first to speak and then to write down part of the Bible canon.—Exodus 17:14.

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

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(th study 10)

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Our Christian Life and Ministry

MEETING WORKBOOK

Sample Conversations

INITIAL CALL

Question: Where can we find help to deal with grief?

Scripture: **2Co 1:3, 4**

Link: What happens to someone who dies?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE
TEACHING TOOLBOX:



• **bhs 71 ¶4**

RETURN VISIT

Question: What happens to someone who dies?

Scripture: **Ec 9:5, 10**

Link: What hope do we have for the dead?

FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE
TEACHING TOOLBOX:



• **bhs 63 ¶6**

Oh, Walk With God!

(Micah 6:8)

1. Oh, walk with God in modesty;
Show loyal love, and be true.
Stay close to Jehovah, leaning on him,
And let his strength sustain you.
Keep holding tight to his faithful Word;
You'll never drift away.
So let God lead you by the hand
As you listen and obey.
2. Oh, walk with God in holiness;
Consider things that are pure.
No matter how great temptations may be,
He'll help you to endure them.
Whatever praiseworthy things there are,
Whatever things are true,
Continue to consider them,
And our God will be with you.
3. Oh, walk with God in happiness;
Rejoice that he is your Friend.
Be thankful for all the gifts that he gives
And blessings that are endless.
Oh, walk with God, let your heart be glad;
Express your joy in song.
Your joy will show, and all will know,
To Jehovah you belong.

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FOUND INNOCENT BY BOTH PILATE AND HEROD

MATTHEW 27:12-14, 18, 19 MARK 15:2-5
LUKE 23:4-16 JOHN 18:36-38

- JESUS IS EXAMINED BY PILATE AND BY HEROD

Jesus does not try to conceal from Pilate that he really is a king. Still, his Kingdom is no threat to Rome. “My Kingdom is no part of this world,” Jesus says. “If my Kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my Kingdom is not from this source.” (John 18:36) Yes, Jesus has a Kingdom, but it is not of this world.

Pilate does not leave the issue at that. He asks: “Well, then, are you a king?” Jesus lets Pilate know that he has drawn the right conclusion, answering: “You yourself are saying that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of the truth listens to my voice.”—John 18:37.

Jesus had earlier told Thomas: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” Now even Pilate hears that the purpose of Jesus’ being sent to earth is to bear witness to “the truth,” specifically the truth about his Kingdom. Jesus is determined to be faithful to that truth even if it costs him his life. Pilate asks: “What is truth?” but he does not wait for further explanation. He feels that he has heard enough to judge this man.—John 14:6; 18:38.

Pilate returns to the crowd waiting outside the palace. Jesus apparently is at his side when he tells the chief priests and those with them: “I find no crime in this man.” Angered by that decision, the crowd insists: “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee even to here.”—Luke 23:4, 5.

The Jews’ unreasoning fanaticism must amaze Pilate. As the chief priests and older men continue shouting, Pilate asks Jesus: “Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?” (Matthew 27:13) Jesus makes no attempt to answer. His calm in the face of the wild accusations surprises Pilate.

The Jews indicated that Jesus had ‘started from Galilee.’ Pursuing that clue, Pilate learns that Jesus is, in



fact, a Galilean. This gives Pilate an idea of how he might escape responsibility for judging Jesus. Herod Antipas (the son of Herod the Great) is the ruler of Galilee, and he is in Jerusalem this Passover season. So Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. It was Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist beheaded. Later, at hearing that Jesus was performing miraculous works, Herod was concerned that Jesus might be John raised from the dead.—Luke 9:7-9.

Herod now rejoices at the prospect of seeing Jesus. This is not because he wants to help Jesus or wishes to make any real attempt to learn whether there are valid charges against him. Herod is simply curious, and he is “hoping to see some sign performed by him.” (Luke 23:8) However, Jesus does not satisfy Herod’s curiosity. In fact, as Herod questions him, Jesus says not a word. Disappointed, both Herod and his soldiers treat Jesus “with contempt.” (Luke 23:11) They clothe him with a splendid garment and mock him. Then Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate had been enemies, but now they become good friends.

When Jesus returns, Pilate calls together the chief priests, the Jewish rulers, and the people and says: “I

examined him in front of you but found in this man no grounds for the charges you are bringing against him. In fact, neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us, and look! he has done nothing deserving of death. I will therefore punish him and release him.”
—Luke 23:14-16.

Pilate is eager to free Jesus, for he realizes that it is out of envy that the priests have handed him over. As Pilate tries to release Jesus, he receives further motivation to do so. While he is on his judgment seat, his wife sends him the message: “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I suffered a lot today in a dream [evidently of divine origin] because of him.”
—Matthew 27:19.

How can Pilate release this innocent man, as he should?

- ◇ How does Jesus tell “the truth” regarding his kingship?
- ◇ Pilate reaches what conclusion about Jesus, how do the people respond, and what does Pilate do?
- ◇ Why is Herod Antipas pleased to see Jesus, and what does he do with him?
- ◇ Why does Pilate want to free Jesus?

14 *Praising Earth's New King* (Psalm 2:12)

1. A multitude is gathering
 from ev'ry tribe and nation,
 Collected by the Christ and his
 anointed congregation.
God's Kingdom has been brought to birth;
 We pray his will be done on earth.
This hope is a gift of priceless worth,
 Giving joy and consolation.

(CHORUS)

*Praise our God, Jehovah; Praise his Son forever—
 King of all kings and the Lord of lords.
Now unitedly we bow to his rule
 And praise him with one accord.*

2. We praise the Christ, our reigning King,
 with sounds of jubilation.
 This Prince of Peace will be our Judge
 and bring about salvation.
We see the joys that lie ahead:
 An earth released from fear and dread;
The time for our Lord to raise the dead.
 What a time for exultation!

(Chorus)

JUNE 2020

THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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COVER PICTURE:

A shepherd in ancient Israel cares for a sheep that was lost
(See study article 25, paragraph 9)

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

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WIP20.06-E
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1. God is love, and he invites us:
 ‘Walk with me and love my way.’
When we love both God and neighbor,
 Gracious deeds will fill each day.
Therein lies the key to living;
 Therein lies the life we seek.
Christlike love will never fail us;
 Christlike love through us will speak.
2. Love of truth moves us to action;
 Love of God moves us to love.
When we fail he seeks to help us;
 By his strength we rise above.
Love is pure and never jealous;
 Love is kind and bears all things.
May we grow to love our brother;
 May we taste what true love brings.
3. Never let resentment lead you;
 May it never take your hand.
Look to God, and he will guide you;
 He will teach you these commands:
Love of God and love of neighbor,
 Ev’rything that love should be.
May we always show to others
 Godlike love, yes, tenderly.

“I Myself Will Search for My Sheep”

“I myself will search for my sheep, and I will care for them.”
—EZEK. 34:11.

SONG 105

“God Is Love”

PREVIEW

Why do some who have served Jehovah faithfully for years drift away from the congregation? How does God feel about them? This article considers answers to those questions. It also discusses what we can learn from the way Jehovah helped some in Bible times who temporarily drifted away from him.

“CAN a woman forget her nursing child?” That was a question Jehovah asked in the days of the prophet Isaiah. “Even if these women forget, I would never forget you,” God told his people. (Isa. 49:15) He does not often compare himself to a mother. However, he did so on that occasion. Jehovah used the bond between a mother and her child to reveal how deeply he is attached to his servants. Most mothers can relate to what a sister named Jasmin says, “When you nurse your child, you form a very special bond that lasts a lifetime.”

² Jehovah takes note when even one of his children stops associating with the Christian congregation and engaging in the preaching work. Think, then, of how pained he must be to see thousands of his servants become inactive* each year.

³ Many of these dear brothers and sisters who have become inactive do come back to the congre-

* **EXPRESSION EXPLAINED:** An **inactive** publisher is someone who has not reported any activity in the preaching and disciple-making work for six months or more. Even so, inactive ones are still our brothers and sisters, and we love them.

1. How is Jehovah like a nursing mother?
2. How does Jehovah feel when one of his children drifts away from him?
3. What does Jehovah want?

gation, where they are most welcome! Jehovah wants them to come back, and so do we. (1 Pet. 2: 25) How can we help? Before we answer that question, it would be good to know why some stop attending meetings and sharing in the ministry.

WHY DO SOME STOP SERVING JEHOVAH?

⁴ Some have become absorbed in secular work. “I let myself get overly involved in my secular work,” admits Hung,* a brother who lives in Southeast Asia. “I foolishly told myself that if I were better off materially, I would be better able to serve Jehovah. So I worked more hours. I began to miss more and more meetings until I finally stopped associating with the congregation. It seems that the world is designed to draw people away from God little by little.”

⁵ Some brothers and sisters are overwhelmed by problems. Anne from Britain is a mother of five children. “One of my children was born with severe disabilities,” Anne explains. “In time, one of my daughters was disfellowshipped and a son

* Some names have been changed.

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4. How can secular work affect some?
 5. How did a series of problems affect one sister?

developed a mental illness. I got so depressed that I stopped attending meetings and preaching. Eventually, I became inactive.” Our hearts go out to Anne and her family as well as others who face such challenges!

⁶ **Read Colossians 3:13.** Some of Jehovah’s servants have felt hurt by a fellow believer. The apostle Paul recognized that at times we might have a valid “cause for complaint against” a brother or a sister. We may even have been treated unjustly. If we are not careful, we could become resentful. Bitterness may eventually cause a person to drift away from Jehovah’s people. Consider the experience of Pablo, a brother in South America. He was falsely accused of wrongdoing and, as a result, lost a privilege of service in the congregation. How did he react? “I got angry,” says Pablo, “and I gradually drifted away from the congregation.”

⁷ Or a guilty conscience may torment a person who has broken God’s law in the past, making him feel unworthy of God’s love. Even if he was repentant and was shown mercy, he might feel that he is

6. How could not applying Colossians 3:13 cause someone to drift away from Jehovah’s people?

7. What effect can a guilty conscience have on a person?

no longer good enough to be one of God's people. A brother named Francisco felt that way. "I was reproved for committing sexual immorality," he says. "Although at first I continued to attend meetings, I became depressed and felt unworthy to be among Jehovah's people. My conscience bothered me, and I was convinced that Jehovah had not forgiven me. In time, I stopped associating with the congregation." How do you feel about brothers and sisters who face situations like those just discussed? Do you have empathy for them? More important, how does Jehovah feel about them?

JEHOVAH LOVES HIS SHEEP

⁸ Jehovah does not forget those who once served him but who have temporarily stopped associating with his people; nor does he forget the work they did in his service. (Heb. 6:10) The prophet Isaiah recorded a beautiful illustration to show how Jehovah cares for his people. "Like a shepherd he will care for his flock," Isaiah wrote. "With his arm he will gather together the lambs, and in his bosom he will carry them." (Isa. 40:11) How does the

8. Does Jehovah forget those who once served him? Explain.



Great Shepherd feel when one of his sheep strays from the flock? Jesus revealed Jehovah’s feelings when he asked his disciples: “What do you think? If a man has 100 sheep and one of them strays, will he not leave the 99 on the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying? And if he finds it, I certainly tell you, he rejoices more over it than over the 99 that have not strayed.”—Matt. 18:12, 13.

⁹ Why is it appropriate to liken Jehovah to a shepherd? Because a good shepherd in Bible times cared deeply about his sheep. David, for example, fought a lion and a bear to protect his flock.

9. How did good shepherds in Bible times treat their sheep? (See cover picture.)

An Israelite shepherd cared deeply about a lost sheep
(See paragraphs 8-9)



(1 Sam. 17:34, 35) A good shepherd would certainly notice if even one sheep went missing. (John 10:3, 14) That kind of shepherd would leave his 99 sheep in the safety of a pen or in the care of fellow shepherds and go searching for the missing one. Jesus used that illustration to teach us an important truth: “It is not a desirable thing to my Father who is in heaven for even one of these little ones to perish.”—Matt. 18:14.

JEHOVAH SEARCHES FOR HIS SHEEP

¹⁰ Jehovah loves each one of us, including the “little ones” who have strayed from his flock.

10. According to Ezekiel 34:11-16, what did Jehovah promise to do for his lost sheep?

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God promised that he would search for his lost sheep and help them to regain their spiritual health. And he outlined specific steps that he would take to rescue them, steps that a typical Israelite shepherd would take if a sheep went missing. (Read Ezekiel 34:11-16.) First, the shepherd would search for the sheep, which could require much time and effort. Then, once he located the stray, the shepherd would bring it back to the flock. Further, if the sheep was injured or starving, the shepherd would lovingly support the weak animal, binding its wounds, carrying it, and feeding it. Elders, the shepherds of “the flock of God,” need to take these same steps to help any who have strayed from the congregation. (1 Pet. 5:2, 3) The elders search for them, help them to return to the flock, and show them love by providing the necessary spiritual support.*

¹¹ A good shepherd understood that sheep may get lost. And if a sheep did wander away from the flock, the shepherd did not treat it harshly. Consid-

* The next article will discuss specific ways that elders can follow these steps.

11. What did a good shepherd understand?

er the example that God set when helping some of his servants who, for a while, strayed from Jehovah.

¹² The prophet Jonah ran away from his assignment. Even so, Jehovah did not quickly give up on Jonah. Like a good shepherd, Jehovah rescued him and helped him gain the strength he needed to fulfill his assignment. (Jonah 2:7; 3:1, 2) Later, God used a bottle-gourd plant to help Jonah understand the value of each human life. (Jonah 4:10, 11) The lesson? Elders must not quickly give up on those who become inactive. Instead, the elders try to understand what caused a sheep to stray from the flock. And when that sheep comes back to Jehovah, the elders continue to show loving interest in him.

¹³ The writer of Psalm 73 became discouraged when he observed how the wicked seemed to flourish. He questioned whether doing God's will was worthwhile. (Ps. 73:12, 13, 16) How did Jehovah react? He did not condemn the man. In fact, God had his words recorded in the Bible. Eventually, the

12. How did Jehovah deal with Jonah?

13. What can we learn from Jehovah's reaction to the writer of Psalm 73?

How a Lost Sheep May Feel

Many who have stopped associating with Jehovah's people no doubt feel the same way as those quoted below once felt.

Flora, who lives in Cameroon, says: "I felt a huge void in my life. I had lost my joy and inner peace, and my conscience kept troubling me. I wanted to find peace again and enjoy the company of the brothers and sisters. But above all, I wanted a good relationship with Jehovah."

Note the comment made by an inactive one in Spain: "I want to be reactivated, but it is very difficult. I know what I have to do, and I want to do it. But it is not easy. I have to change my lifestyle and cut ties with some worldly friends. And since I am spiritually weak, I find it hard to get ready to go to meetings when I come home from work exhausted. But I am going to try hard because I still love Jehovah and I want to help my wife and two children."



psalmist came to realize that a good relationship with Jehovah is worth more than anything else, making life worthwhile. (Ps. 73:23, 24, 26, 28) The lesson? Elders should not be quick to judge those who begin to question the benefits of serving Jehovah. Rather than condemn them, elders must try to understand why they speak and act the way they do. Only then can the elders draw attention to the specific Scriptural encouragement that is needed.

¹⁴ The prophet Elijah fled from Queen Jezebel. (1 Ki. 19:1-3) He thought that nobody else was serving as a prophet for Jehovah, and he felt that his work had served no purpose. Elijah became so depressed that he wanted to die. (1 Ki. 19:4, 10) Rather than condemn Elijah, Jehovah assured him that he was not alone, that he could trust in God's power, and that there was still much work for him to do. Jehovah kindly listened to Elijah's concerns and gave him new assignments. (1 Ki. 19:11-16, 18) The lesson? All of us, especially the elders, should treat Jehovah's sheep kindly. Whether a person expresses bitterness or feels unworthy of Jehovah's mercy, elders will listen to him as he pours out his

14. Why did Elijah need help, and how did Jehovah supply it?

heart. Then they will try to assure the lost sheep that Jehovah values him.

HOW SHOULD WE FEEL ABOUT GOD'S LOST SHEEP?

¹⁵ How does Jehovah want us to feel about his lost sheep? Jesus provides the pattern for us. He knew that all of Jehovah's sheep are precious in God's eyes, so Jesus did all he could to help "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" return to Jehovah. (Matt. 15:24; Luke 19:9, 10) As the fine shepherd, Jesus also did his utmost to avoid losing any of Jehovah's sheep.—Read John 6:39.

¹⁶ The apostle Paul urged the elders of the congregation in Ephesus to imitate Jesus' example. "You must assist those who are weak and must keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, when he himself said: 'There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.'" (Acts 20:17, 35) Clearly, elders today have a special responsibility in this regard. "When I think of how much Jehovah cares for his lost sheep, I feel motivated to do all I can

15. According to John 6:39, how did Jesus view his Father's sheep?

16-17. How should elders feel about helping those who have gone astray? (See the box "How a Lost Sheep May Feel.")

to help them,” explains Salvador, an elder in Spain. “As a spiritual shepherd, I am convinced that Jehovah wants me to care for them.”

¹⁷ All those mentioned in this article who had drifted away were helped to come back to Jehovah. At this very moment, many more who have strayed want to do the same. The next article will discuss in more detail what we can do to help them return to Jehovah.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 34-35: Concerned about a lost sheep, an Israelite shepherd would search for it and help it back to the flock. Spiritual shepherds today do the same. **Page 38:** As an inactive sister waits for her bus to depart, she observes two Witnesses who happily share in public witnessing.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why do some brothers and sisters become inactive?
- How does Jehovah feel about his lost sheep?
- Why should we be concerned about inactive ones?

139 *See Yourself When All Is New* (Revelation 21:1-5)

1. Just see yourself, just see me too;
 Just see us all in a world that is new.
Think how you'll feel, how it will be,
 To live in peace, to be truly free.
No evil one will then prevail;
 Rule by our God cannot ever fail.
The time will have come for a new earthly start,
 The song of our praises
 will pour out from our heart:

(CHORUS)

*"We thank you, our God, for all you have done.
All things are new by the rule of your Son.
The fullness of our heart overflows in our song;
All glory and honor and praise to you belong."*

2. Now see yourself, and see me too;
 And look ahead to a world that is new.
No sight we see, no sound we hear
 Will cause alarm or give rise to fear.
All has come true, just as he said;
 Now over mankind, his tent is spread.
He now will awaken those sleeping in death;
 Their voices will join ours with
 ev'ry grateful breath:

(Chorus)

(See also Ps. 37:10, 11; Isa. 65:17; John 5:28; 2 Pet. 3:13.)