

- Song 88 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 min.)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“The Ten Commandments and You”:** (10 min.)
Ex 20:3-7—Honor Jehovah, and give him exclusive devotion (w89 11/15 6 ¶1)
Ex 20:8-11—Keep spiritual things first in your life
Ex 20:12-17—Honor and respect fellow humans (w89 11/15 6 ¶2-3)
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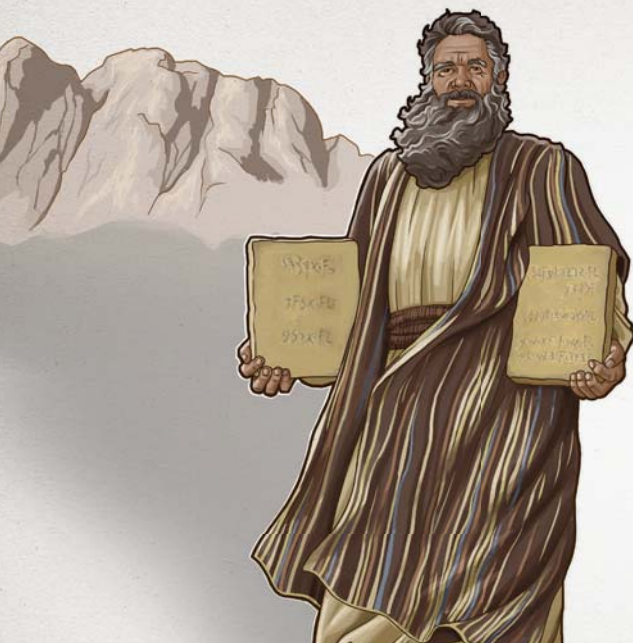
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LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 91
- **How Can I Earn More Freedom?:** (6 min.) Discussion. Play the whiteboard animation (video category TEENAGERS). Then ask young ones in the audience: How can you earn your parents’ trust? What should you do if you make a mistake? Why is honoring your parents vital to earning more freedom?
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EXODUS 19-20 | The Ten Commandments and You



20:3-17

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. (Col 2:13, 14) So, then, what purpose do the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law serve today?

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 **What do you learn about Jehovah from the Ten Commandments?**

Make Me Know Your Ways

(Psalm 25:4)

1. We're gathered together, Jehovah our God,
Accepting your warm invitation.
Your Word is a lamp that lights up our pathway,
The source of divine education.

(CHORUS)

*Teach me your ways, and make me understand;
Incline my ear to hear your wise command.
Cause me to walk in ways of truth and right,
And make your law my principal delight.*

2. Unreachably high is your wisdom, O God;
Your judgments we find reassuring.
Your Word is a source of unending wonder;
Your sayings of truth are enduring.

(Chorus)

Exodus 19-20

19 In the third month after the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the wilderness of Si'nai. ² They pulled away from Reph'i-dim and came to the wilderness of Si'nai and camped in the wilderness. Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

³ Then Moses went up to the true God, and Jehovah called to him from the mountain, saying: "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and to tell the Israelites, ⁴ 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to the Egyptians, in order to carry you on wings of eagles and bring you to myself. ⁵ Now if you will strictly obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will certainly become my special property out of all peoples, for the whole earth belongs to me. ⁶ You will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites."

⁷ So Moses went and summoned the elders of the people and declared to them all these words that Jehovah had commanded him. ⁸ After that all the people answered unanimously: "All that Jehovah has spoken, we are willing to do." Moses immediately took the people's response to Jehovah. ⁹ And Jehovah said to Moses: "Look! I am coming to you in a dark cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and so that they may always put faith in you as well." Then Moses reported the words of the people to Jehovah.

¹⁰ Then Jehovah said to Moses: “Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and they must wash their clothing. ¹¹ And they must be ready for the third day, because on the third day Jehovah will come down upon Mount Si'nai before the eyes of all the people. ¹² You must set boundaries for the people all around it and tell them, ‘Beware of going up to the mountain or touching its border. Anybody touching the mountain will surely be put to death. ¹³ No hand is to touch him, but he will either be stoned or be shot through. Whether beast or man, he will not live.’ But at the sound of the ram’s horn they may come up to the mountain.”

¹⁴ Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and he began to sanctify the people, and they washed their clothing. ¹⁵ He said to the people: “Get ready for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.”

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning, and there was a heavy cloud on the mountain and a very loud sound of a horn, and all the people in the camp began to tremble. ¹⁷ Moses now brought the people out of the camp to meet the true God, and they took their place at the base of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Si'nai smoked all over, because Jehovah came down upon it in fire; and its smoke was rising like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain was trembling violently. ¹⁹ As the sound of the horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and the voice of the true God answered him.

²⁰ So Jehovah came down upon Mount Si'nai to the top of the mountain. Then Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ Jehovah now said to Moses: "Go down and warn the people not to try to force their way through to look at Jehovah, or many of them will perish. ²² And let the priests who regularly come near to Jehovah sanctify themselves, so that Jehovah may not strike them." ²³ Moses then said to Jehovah: "The people are not able to come up to Mount Si'nai because you already warned us, saying, 'Set boundaries around the mountain, and make it sacred.'" ²⁴ However, Jehovah said to him: "Go, descend, and come back up, you and Aaron with you, but do not let the priests and the people force their way through to come up to Jehovah, so that he may not strike them." ²⁵ So Moses descended to the people and told them.

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² "I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ You must not have any other gods besides me.

⁴ "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. ⁵ You must not bow down to them nor be enticed to serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a God who requires exclusive devotion, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing loyal love to

the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ “You must not take up the name of Jehovah your God in a worthless way, for Jehovah will not leave unpunished the one who takes up His name in a worthless way.

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it sacred. ⁹ You are to labor and do all your work for six days, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God. You must not do any work, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your slave man nor your slave girl nor your domestic animal nor your foreign resident who is inside your settlements. ¹¹ For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and he began to rest on the seventh day. That is why Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred.

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that Jehovah your God is giving you.

¹³ “You must not murder.

¹⁴ “You must not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You must not steal.

¹⁶ “You must not testify falsely when you are a witness against your fellow man.

¹⁷ “You must not desire your fellow man’s house. You must not desire your fellow man’s wife nor his slave man nor his

slave girl nor his bull nor his donkey nor anything that belongs to your fellow man.”

¹⁸ Now all the people were witnessing the thunder and lightning, the sound of the horn, and the mountain smoking; and seeing this made them tremble and stand at a distance.

¹⁹ So they said to Moses: “You speak with us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak with us, for fear that we will die.” ²⁰ So Moses said to the people: “Do not be afraid, for the true God has come to put you to the test, in order that the fear of him may continue with you so that you may not sin.” ²¹ So the people kept standing at a distance, but Moses went near to the dark cloud where the true God was.

²² Then Jehovah said to Moses: “This is what you are to say to the Israelites, ‘You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. ²³ You must not make gods of silver alongside me, and you must not make gods of gold for yourselves. ²⁴ An altar of earth you are to make for me, and you will sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, your communion sacrifices, your flock, and your herd. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and I will bless you. ²⁵ If you make an altar of stones for me, you must not build it using stones cut with tools. For if you do use your chisel on it, you will profane it. ²⁶ And you must not go up by steps to my altar, that your private parts may not be exposed upon it.’

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- Opening Comments (1 min.)

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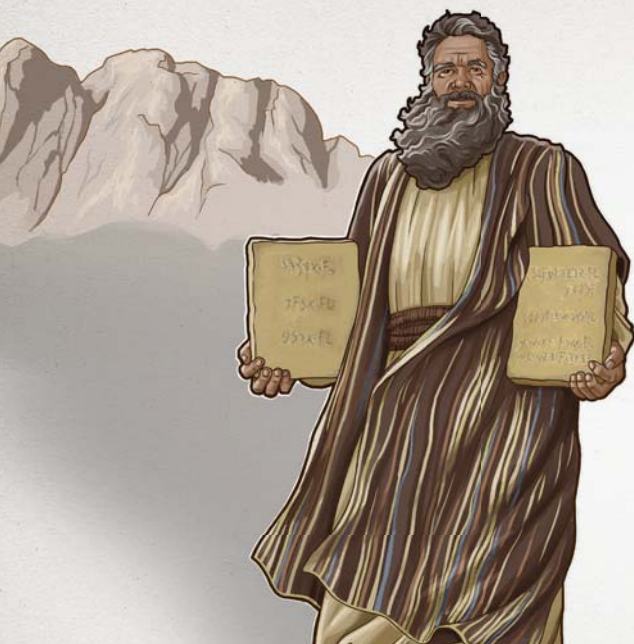
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 **What do you learn about Jehovah from the Ten Commandments?**

August 24-30 / Exodus 19-20

- Song 88 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

"The Ten Commandments and You": (10 minutes)

Exodus 20:3-17

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. (Colossians 2:13, 14) So, then, what purpose do the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law serve today?

Picture: [Image:] Moses standing in front of Mount Sinai, holding the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments.

- They reveal Jehovah's viewpoint on certain matters
- They highlight our responsibilities toward Jehovah
- They define our relationship with our fellowman

What do you learn about Jehovah from the Ten Commandments?

Exodus 20:3-7—Honor Jehovah, and give him exclusive devotion

Exodus 20:3-7: You must not have any other gods besides me. "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be enticed to serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a God who requires exclusive devotion, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing loyal love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You must not take up the name of Jehovah your God in a worthless way, for Jehovah will not leave unpunished the one who takes up His name in a worthless way.

w89 11/15 6 paragraph 1

The first four commandments highlight our responsibilities toward Jehovah. **(First)** He is a God who still exacts exclusive devotion. (Matthew 4:10) **(Second)** None of his worshipers

should use images. (1 John 5:21) **(Third)** Our use of God's name should be proper and dignified, never disrespectful. (John 17:26; Romans 10:13) **(Fourth)** Our whole life should revolve around sacred matters. This enables us to rest, or 'take a sabbath,' from a course of self-righteousness.— Hebrews 4:9, 10.

Exodus 20:8-11—Keep spiritual things first in your life

Exodus 20:8-11: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it sacred. You are to labor and do all your work for six days, but the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God. You must not do any work, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your slave man nor your slave girl nor your domestic animal nor your foreign resident who is inside your settlements. For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and he began to rest on the seventh day. That is why Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred.

Exodus 20:12-17—Honor and respect fellow humans

Exodus 20:12-17: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that Jehovah your God is giving you. “You must not murder. “You must not commit adultery. “You must not steal. “You must not testify falsely when you are a witness against your fellow man. “You must not desire your fellow man’s house. You must not desire your fellow man’s wife nor his slave man nor his slave girl nor his bull nor his donkey nor anything that belongs to your fellow man.”

w89 11/15 6 paragraphs 2-3

(Fifth) The obedience of children to their parents continues to serve as the cornerstone of family unity, bringing with it Jehovah’s blessings. And what a marvelous hope this “first command with a promise” offers! It is not only “that it may go well with you” but also that “you may endure a long time on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3) Now that we are living in “the last days” of this present wicked system, such godly obedience offers young people the prospect of never dying.—2 Timothy 3:1; John 11:26.

Love for our neighbor will prevent us from causing him harm through such wicked deeds as **(Sixth)** murder, **(Seventh)** adultery, **(Eighth)** stealing, and **(Ninth)** making false statements. (1 John 3:10-12; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 5:37; Proverbs 6:16-19) But what of our motives? The **(Tenth)** commandment, against covetousness, reminds us that Jehovah requires that our intentions always be upright in his eyes.—Proverbs 21:2.

Digging for Spiritual Gems: (10 minutes)

Exodus 19:5, 6—Why did ancient Israel lose the opportunity to become “a kingdom of priests”?

Exodus 19:5, 6: Now if you will strictly obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will certainly become my special property out of all peoples, for the whole earth belongs to me. You will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites.”

it-2 687 paragraphs 1-2

The Christian Priesthood. Jehovah had promised that if Israel kept his covenant they would become to Him “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6) However, the priesthood of Aaron’s line was to continue only until the coming of the greater priesthood that it foreshadowed. (Hebrews 8:4, 5) It would endure until the ending of the Law covenant and the inauguration of the new covenant. (Hebrews 7:11-14; 8:6, 7, 13) The offer was first made exclusively to Israel to become Jehovah’s priests serving in God’s promised Kingdom arrangement; in time this offer was extended to the Gentiles.—Acts 10:34, 35; 15:14; Romans 10:21.

Only a remnant of the Jews accepted Christ, the nation thereby failing to provide the members of the real kingdom of priests and the holy nation. (Romans 11:7, 20) Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness God had forewarned them of this by his prophet Hosea centuries before, saying: “Because the knowledge is what you yourself have rejected, I shall also reject you from serving as a priest to me; and because you

keep forgetting the law of your God, I shall forget your sons, even I." (Hosea 4:6) Correspondingly, Jesus told the Jewish leaders: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matthew 21:43) Nevertheless, Jesus Christ, being under the Law while on earth, recognized the Aaronic priesthood as being in force, and he directed ones whom he cured of leprosy to go to the priest and make the required offering.—Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14.

Exodus 20:4, 5—How does Jehovah bring “punishment for the error of fathers” upon future generations?

Exodus 20:4, 5: "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be enticed to serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a God who requires exclusive devotion, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation of those who hate me,

w04 3/15 27 paragraph 1

After reaching an age of responsibility, each individual is judged on the basis of his own conduct and attitude. But when the nation of Israel turned to idolatry, it suffered the consequences of this for generations thereafter. Even the faithful Israelites felt its effects in that the nation's religious delinquency made staying on a course of integrity difficult for them.

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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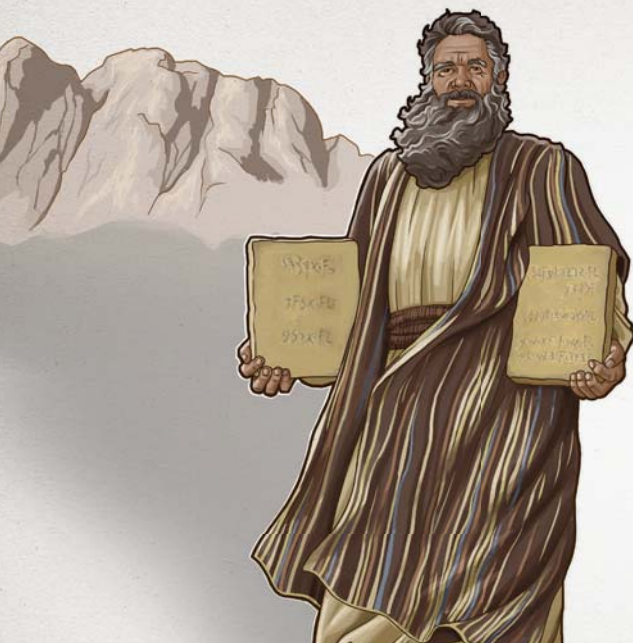
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Our Christian Life and Ministry

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**

17 What many religions teach is shocking. For example, some teach that bad people will burn forever in hell. That lie is an insult to Jehovah. He would never allow people to suffer that way! (**Read 1 John 4:8.**) How would you feel about someone who punishes a child by burning the child's hands in a fire? You would think he is very cruel. You would not want to get to know him. And that is exactly how Satan wants us to feel about Jehovah!

18 Some religions tell us that when people die, they become spirits. Such religions teach that we must respect and even be afraid of those spirits because they can become either powerful friends or terrible enemies. Many people believe that lie. They fear the dead, so they worship them instead of Jehovah. Remember that the dead cannot feel or sense anything, so we don't have to be afraid of them. Jehovah is our Creator. He is the true God, and we should worship only him.—Revelation 4:11.

19 When we know the truth about death, we are set free from religious lies. And this truth helps us to understand the wonderful promises that Jehovah has made about our life and our future.

20 A long time ago, a servant of God named Job asked: "If a man dies, can he live again?" (Job 14:14) Is it really possible for a person who is dead to live again? The answer God gives us in the Bible is very exciting. We will see it in the next chapter.

17. Why does the idea of people burning in hell insult Jehovah?

18. Why shouldn't we fear the dead?

19. How does knowing the truth about death help us?

20. What will we learn in the next chapter?

1. Jehovah, this is the day;

Now from our hearts, we want to pray.
How you have honored us, favored us,
More than words can say!

Upon our labor of love,

We've seen your blessing from above.
And now a building stands, by our hands,
As the proof thereof.

(CHORUS)

Jehovah God, it was a priv'lege

For us to build this place for you.

May we continue in your service throughout our days

And bring you praise in all we do.

2. What happy faces we see,

And what good friends we've come to be!
And how we'll cherish these memories
For eternity!

We saw your spirit, O Lord,

In how we worked with one accord.
And how we've added fame to your name;
What a grand reward!

(Chorus)

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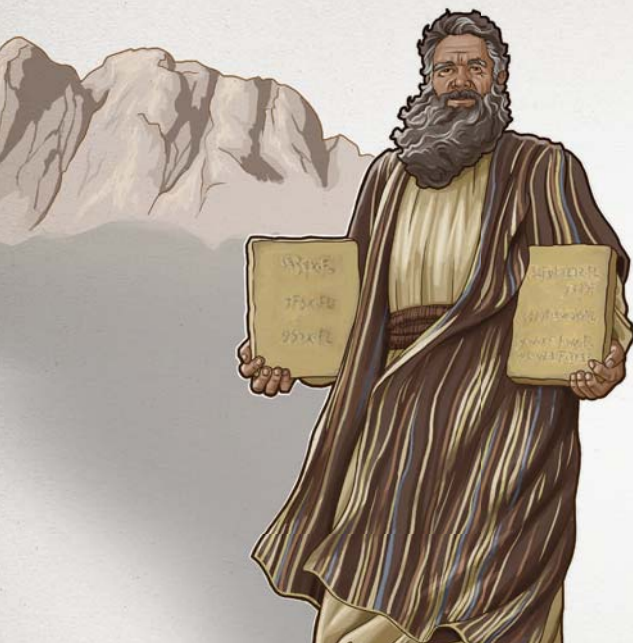
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How Can I Earn More Freedom?

Do you think it's about time you had more freedom?

You may think you're ready to be treated as an adult, but do your parents agree?

Have you proven to them that you can handle more freedom?

You see, if you want more freedom, you have to gain your parents' trust. Earning their trust takes time. But every time you prove yourself responsible, you get one step closer to your goal.

Some ways you can show you are trustworthy are:

- diligently completing your chores,
- especially without being reminded;
- managing your time wisely and being punctual;
- taking care of your things;
- showing that you can handle money in a responsible way;
- and following through on the promises you make.

Of course, nobody's perfect. So if you make a mistake, it's not the end of the world.

Follow the Bible's advice at Hebrews 13:18 to conduct yourself "honestly in all things." Tell the truth and be straightforward. If you admit your mistake and apologize, your parents will see that you are willing to take responsibility for your actions, and they'll appreciate your honesty.

But what if you feel that despite your best efforts, your parents still aren't giving you enough freedom?

Don't just get annoyed—talk to them! Respectfully ask what they think you need to do to earn their trust. You may be surprised to learn of some other areas where you can show you're responsible.

At 2 Corinthians 13:5, the Bible says: "Keep proving what you . . . are." So you need to build up a record of consistency. That way you'll prove you're worthy of trust. Every step you take brings you closer to your goal.

Of course, trust is much harder to gain than it is to lose. But the effort is worth it.

When your parents see you working hard to earn their trust, they will likely be happy to give you more freedom, and you'll be another step closer to becoming a responsible adult.

Honor Your Elderly Parents

(Overall scene: 3 siblings are faced with their mom's hospitalization. Not prepared for her long-term care and suddenly had to make some hardcore decisions for solutions to their situation to ensure they honored their mom in harmony with godly principles.)

This wasn't the first health scare with Mum.

And my brother and sister were always quick to help out.

But this time was different.

She'd be here for at least another week and then more long-term care.

We just weren't prepared for that. I should have accepted more help when the friends offered. I just didn't want to be a burden.

Janice understood, and she was wondering how this might affect her Bethel service. Terrance wished he lived closer so he could do more.

We decided to pray, sleep on it, and regroup after doing some research.

I shared the example of Joseph in Genesis 45, where he told his father: "You must dwell in the land of Goshen, where you

will be near me . . . I will supply you with food.” He didn’t let a long distance get in his way of caring for Jacob. He took practical steps and made his care a priority.

Janice and Terrance too found great articles offering solutions such as asking for periodic help, making more time to communicate with Mum, or even getting a part-time nurse.

We weren’t prepared for her situation to change so suddenly, but Jehovah is guiding us through each new challenge. And with his help, we’re honoring Mum, making her care our continual priority.

In this dramatization, we saw one way that a family decided to care for an aging parent.

Of course, situations will differ from one family to the next.

Each must make a prayerful decision based on their circumstances.

PILATE PROCLAIMS: “LOOK! THE MAN!”

MATTHEW 27:15-17, 20-30 MARK 15:6-19
LUKE 23:18-25 JOHN 18:39–19:5

- PILATE ATTEMPTS TO FREE JESUS
 - THE JEWS ASK FOR BARABBAS
 - JESUS IS MOCKED AND MISTREATED
-

Pilate told the crowd seeking Jesus' death: "I . . . found in this man no grounds for the charges you are bringing against him. In fact, neither did Herod." (Luke 23:14, 15) Now, trying to spare Jesus, Pilate uses another approach, saying to the people: "You have a custom that I should release a man to you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"—John 18:39.

Pilate is aware of a prisoner named Barabbas, who is known as a robber, a seditionist, and a murderer. So Pilate asks: "Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus the so-called Christ?" Having been stirred up by the chief priests, the people ask that Barabbas be released, not Jesus.

Pilate asks again: “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” The crowd shouts: “Barabbas”!—Matthew 27:17, 21.

Dismayed, Pilate asks: “What, then, should I do with Jesus the so-called Christ?” The people roar: “To the stake with him!” (Matthew 27:22) To their shame, they are demanding the death of an innocent man. Pilate pleads: “Why? What bad thing did this man do? I found in him nothing deserving of death; I will therefore punish him and release him.”—Luke 23:22.

Despite Pilate’s repeated efforts, the enraged crowd yells in unison: “To the stake with him!” (Matthew 27:23) The religious leaders have worked the crowd into such a frenzy that they want blood! And it is not the blood of some criminal, some murderer. It is the blood of an innocent man who five days before was welcomed into Jerusalem as King. If Jesus’ disciples are present, they remain silent and inconspicuous.

Pilate sees that his appeals are doing no good. An uproar is arising, so he takes some water and washes his hands before the eyes of the crowd. He tells



SCOURGING

Dr. William D. Edwards in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* describes the Roman practice of scourging:

“The usual instrument was a short whip (flagrum or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals. . . . As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim’s back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.”

them: “I am innocent of the blood of this man. You yourselves must see to it.” Even that does not put the people off. Rather, they say: “Let his blood come upon us and upon our children.”—Matthew 27:24, 25.

The governor wishes to satisfy them more than he wishes to do what he knows is right. So in accord with their demand, Pilate releases Barabbas to the mob. He has Jesus stripped and then scourged.

After this torturous beating, the soldiers take Jesus into the governor’s palace. The body of troops

gather and heap further abuse on him. They braid a crown of thorns and push it down on his head. The soldiers also put a reed in Jesus' right hand and put a scarlet-colored robe on him, such as is worn by royalty. They say with scorn: "Greetings, you King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:28, 29) More than that, they spit on Jesus and keep slapping his face. Taking the sturdy reed from him, they hit him on the head with it, driving deeper into his scalp the sharp thorns of his humiliating "crown."

Jesus' remarkable dignity and strength through all of this so impresses Pilate that he makes another attempt to absolve himself, saying: "See! I bring him outside to you in order for you to know that I find no fault in him." Could Pilate think that bringing Jesus out now, bruised and bleeding, would move the crowds to relent? As Jesus stands before the heartless mob, Pilate proclaims: "Look! The man!"—John 19:4, 5.

Though battered and wounded, Jesus displays a quiet dignity and calm that even Pilate must acknowledge, for his words seem to mingle respect with pity.



- ◇ How does Pilate attempt to have Jesus released and thereby absolve himself of responsibility?
- ◇ What is involved in being scourged?
- ◇ After Jesus is scourged, how is he further mistreated?

Christ, Our Model

(1 Peter 2:21)

1. What love Jehovah showed,
 What goodness from him flowed,
 When for all mankind he offered his Firstborn.
Christ took on human form—
 The Son of man was born—
 By his example, God's name he adorned.
2. Jehovah's Word, he said,
 Sustained his life like bread.
 It gave him wisdom and knowledge and insight.
His Father's willing slave,
 A model Jesus gave;
 To please his Father would bring him delight.
3. Like Jesus, may our days
 Provide Jehovah praise,
 And may his footsteps become our own roadway.
Let Jesus' model be
 Our path eternally,
 And then God's favor we'll know day by day.

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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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102 *“Assist Those Who Are Weak”*

(Acts 20:35)

1. Many are the weaknesses
 That we all possess.
 Still Jehovah cares for us,
 Loves us nonetheless.
He is so merciful;
 His love, so powerful.
 May we show this kind of love,
 Help those in distress.
2. Some at times are weak in faith,
 Strong though they appear.
 By our reassuring words,
 We can calm their fears.
Weak ones to God belong;
 His spirit makes them strong.
 May we feel their pain and cares,
 Help them dry their tears.
3. Rather than condemn the weak,
 We should bear in mind
 How much we can strengthen them
 By our being kind.
May we be diligent,
 Give them encouragement.
 As we lend our kind support,
 Comfort they will find.

“Return to Me”

“Return to me, and I will return to you.”—MAL. 3:7.

SONG 102

“Assist Those Who Are Weak”

PREVIEW

Jehovah wants those who no longer associate with the congregation to return to him. We can do a lot to encourage those who want to accept Jehovah’s invitation: “Return to me.” In this article, we will consider how we can help them to do so.

AS WE discussed in the preceding article, Jehovah likens himself to a good shepherd who tenderly cares for each of his sheep. And he searches for any who go astray. Jehovah told the Israelites who had left him: “Return to me, and I will return to you.” We know that he still feels the same way because he says: “I do not change.” (Mal. 3:6, 7) Jesus said that Jehovah and the angels feel great joy when even one of His servants who has strayed returns to Him.—Luke 15:10, 32.

² Let us consider three of Jesus’ illustrations that focus on helping those who have strayed from Jehovah. We will discuss some specific qualities we need in order to help lost sheep to return to him. And we will see why it is worth the effort to support those who are weak.

SEARCH FOR THE LOST COIN

³ We need to work hard to find those who want to return to Jehovah. In a parable recorded in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus describes how a woman searches for something valuable that was lost—a drachma coin.

-
1. How does Jehovah feel when one of his sheep is rescued?
 2. What will we consider in this article?
 - 3-4. Why did the woman mentioned at Luke 15:8-10 search so carefully for her lost drachma?

This illustration draws our attention to the search itself.—Read Luke 15:8-10.

⁴ Jesus describes the feelings of a woman who finds a precious drachma coin that was lost. In Jesus' day, some Jewish mothers apparently gave a set of ten drachma coins to a daughter on her wedding day. Perhaps the coin was one of such a set. The woman assumes that the coin has fallen on the floor. So she lights a lamp and looks around, but she sees nothing. Her oil lamp may not give her enough light to spot the small silver coin. Finally, she carefully sweeps the whole house. There in the dust she has collected lies her precious drachma, glinting in the light of her lamp. What a relief! She calls her friends and neighbors together to share the good news.

⁵ As we see from Jesus' illustration, it takes work to find something that was lost. Similarly, we might need to work hard to locate those who have left the congregation. Years may have passed since they stopped associating with us. They might even have moved to an area where the local brothers do not know them. But at this very moment, no

5. Why might it be difficult to locate those who have left the congregation?

doubt some of these inactive ones are longing to return to Jehovah. They want to serve Jehovah with his family of true worshippers, but they need our help.

⁶ Who can share in the search for inactive ones? All of us—elders, pioneers, family members, and congregation publishers—can help in locating them. Do you have a friend or a relative who has become inactive? Have you met an inactive one in your house-to-house ministry or while sharing in public witnessing? Explain to the person that if he would appreciate a visit, you would be happy to provide his contact information to the local elders.

⁷ What practical steps can elders in particular take to locate those who want to return to Jehovah? Note the comments of an elder named Thomas,* who lives in Spain. He has helped more than 40 Witnesses to return to the congregation. Thomas says: “First, I ask various brothers and sisters if they know where inactive individuals now live. Or

* Some names have been changed.

6. How can all in the congregation be involved in the search for inactive ones?

7. What do you learn from the comments of an elder named Thomas?

I ask the publishers if they remember any who no longer attend meetings. Most in the congregation respond enthusiastically because they feel involved in the search. Later, when I visit inactive brothers or sisters, I ask about their children and other relatives. Some inactive ones used to bring their children to the meetings, and these children may have been publishers at one time. They too can be helped to return to Jehovah.”

BRING BACK JEHOVAH’S LOST SONS AND DAUGHTERS

⁸ What qualities must we have if we are to help those who want to return to Jehovah? Note some lessons we can learn from Jesus’ illustration of the wayward son who left home. (Read Luke 15:17-24.) Jesus explains how the son finally came to his senses and decided to return home. The father ran to meet his son and gave him a warm embrace, assuring the son of his love. The son had a troubled conscience and felt unworthy of being called a son. The father felt empathy for his son, who poured out his feelings. The father then took practical steps to assure his son that he was welcome back

8. In the illustration of the lost son, found at Luke 15:17-24, how did the father treat his repentant son?

home, not as a hired man, but as a cherished member of the family. To prove the point, the father arranged a feast and provided fine clothes for his repentant son.

⁹ Jehovah is like the father in that illustration. He loves our inactive brothers and sisters and wants them to return to him. By imitating Jehovah, we can help them to return. This calls for patience, empathy, and love on our part. Why should we display those specific qualities, and how can we do so?

¹⁰ We need to be patient because it takes time for a person to heal spiritually. Many formerly inactive ones admit that they responded only after repeated visits by the elders and others in the congregation. A sister named Nancy, from Southeast Asia, writes: “A close friend in the congregation helped me a great deal. She loved me like an older sister. She reminded me of the good times we shared in the past. She would listen patiently as I expressed my feelings, and she did not hesitate to

9. What attitude must we have in order to help inactive ones to return to Jehovah? (See the box “How to Help Those Who Want to Return.”)

10. What part does patience play in helping someone to recover spiritually?



How to Help Those Who Want to Return

Most inactive ones need close friends to give them support. Such friends must . . .

- be willing to keep in contact, even visiting them again and again.
- show them genuine love and assure them that Jehovah loves them and so do the brothers.
- be prepared to listen with empathy. Doing so involves understanding their challenges and avoiding a judgmental attitude.

give me advice. She proved to be a true friend, ready to help at any time.”

¹¹ Empathy is like a powerful ointment; it can help to heal hurt feelings. Some inactive ones have struggled for years with bitter feelings toward someone in the congregation. These feelings have stifled the desire to return to Jehovah. Some may think that they were treated unjustly. They may need someone who will listen to them and understand their feelings. (Jas. 1:19) María, who was inactive at one time, says, “I needed a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, and a helping hand to guide me.”

¹² The Bible describes Jehovah’s love for his people as a cord, or rope. In what sense is God’s love like a rope? Consider this illustration: Imagine that you are drowning in rough seas and someone throws you a life vest. Surely you would appreciate the help because that may ease your struggle to stay afloat. But a life vest will not be enough to keep you alive. The water is cold, and you will not survive unless you can reach a lifeboat. You need someone to throw you a rope and to pull

11. Why do we need empathy to soothe hurt feelings?

12. Illustrate how Jehovah’s love draws inactive ones back to his people.

you toward the lifeboat. Jehovah said about the Israelites who had gone astray: “I kept drawing them, with the cords of love.” (Hos. 11:4) God feels the same way today about those who have stopped serving him and who are drowning in problems and anxiety. He wants them to know that he loves them, and he wants to draw them to him. And Jehovah can use you to express his love to them.

¹³ It is important to assure inactive ones that Jehovah loves them and that we love them too. Pablo, mentioned in the preceding article, was inactive for over 30 years. He says: “One morning, as I was leaving my home, a sweet, elderly sister met me and spoke to me in a loving manner. I began to weep like a child. I told her that it seemed that Jehovah had sent her to speak to me. It was at that moment that I decided to return to Jehovah.”

LOVINGLY SUPPORT THE WEAK

¹⁴ Inactive ones need consistent support from us. Like the lost son in Jesus’ illustration, they may be emotionally scarred. And they are likely

13. Relate an experience that illustrates the power of brotherly love.

14. According to the illustration found at Luke 15:4, 5, what did the shepherd do once he found the lost sheep?

weak spiritually because of what they experienced in Satan's world. We need to help them rebuild their faith in Jehovah. In the illustration of the lost sheep, Jesus describes how the shepherd puts the sheep on his shoulders and carries it back to the flock. The shepherd has already spent time and energy finding the lost sheep. But he realizes that he will need to carry it back to the fold because it will not have the strength to return on its own.—Read **Luke 15:4, 5**.

¹⁵ We may need to invest time and energy in helping some inactive ones to overcome their weaknesses. But with Jehovah's spirit, his Word, and the publications provided through the congregation, we can help them to become spiritually strong again. (Rom. 15:1) How can we do this? One experienced elder says, "Most inactive ones need a Bible study after they decide that they truly want to return to Jehovah."* So if you are asked to

* Some inactive ones may be helped by studying portions of the book *How to Remain in God's Love*, whereas others have benefited from reviewing chapters of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*. The Congregation Service Committee will determine who is best qualified to conduct such a study.

15. How can we support weak ones who want to return to Jehovah? (See the box "An Invaluable Tool.")



Return to Jehovah

An Invaluable Tool

The brochure *Return to Jehovah* can spark a desire in inactive ones to return to the congregation.

María, quoted in the article, says, “This brochure helped me to realize that Jehovah loves me and wants to be by my side always.”

“Part four of the brochure *Return to Jehovah* helped me a lot,” recalls Flora, from Cameroon. “It gave me the strength and the courage to speak wholeheartedly to Jehovah and then to explain my situation to the elders who had been so helpful.”

“The brochure was like a personal invitation from Jehovah,” says Tatyana, from Bulgaria. “It made me realize that Jehovah cares for his lost sheep, regardless of the reasons why they got lost.”

study with an inactive person, why not welcome the privilege? The elder also says, “The publisher who conducts the study needs to be a good friend, someone in whom the inactive one can confide.”

JOY IN HEAVEN AND JOY ON EARTH

¹⁶ Many experiences indicate that the angels are working alongside us to help us find inactive ones who yearn to return to Jehovah. (Rev. 14:6) For example, Silvio, from Ecuador, earnestly prayed for help to return to the congregation. While he was still praying, his doorbell rang. Two elders were at his door. During that visit, they were happy to begin providing him with the help he needed.

¹⁷ We will find much joy in helping the spiritually weak return to Jehovah. Note what Salvador, a pioneer who pays special attention to inactive ones, says: “At times, I find it hard to hold back tears of happiness. It pleases me so much to think that Jehovah has rescued one of his dear sheep from Satan’s world and that I’ve had the privilege of cooperating with Him in this work.”—Acts 20:35.

16. How do we know that we can count on heavenly support?

17. What reward do we receive for helping the spiritually weak?

18 If you have stopped associating with Jehovah’s people, you can be sure that he still loves you. He wants you to return to him. You will have to take some steps to return to him. But like the father in Jesus’ illustration, Jehovah is on the lookout for your return, and he will gladly welcome you home.

18. If you are inactive, of what can you be sure?

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 48: Three different brothers provide help for a brother who wants to return. They do so by keeping in contact, assuring him that he is loved, and listening to him with understanding.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- How can we search for those who have become inactive?
- What three qualities can help us to be successful?
- Why do inactive ones need consistent loving support?

103 *Shepherds—Gifts in Men*

(Ephesians 4:8)

1. Help in our lives, Jehovah provides,
 Shepherds to tend his flock.
 By their example they serve as guides,
 Showing us how to walk.

(CHORUS)

*God gives us men who have earned our trust,
Men who are loyal and true.
They show concern for his precious sheep;
Love them for all that they do.*

2. Shepherds who love us care how we feel;
 Gently they guide the way.
 When we are hurt, they help us to heal,
 Kind in the words they say.

(Chorus)

3. Godly advice and counsel they give,
 That we may never stray.
 Thus they assist us, God's way to live,
 Serving him ev'ry day.

(Chorus)