

Saturday, December 18

Advise the younger women . . . to love their children.—Titus 2:4.

Mothers, you may have been raised by parents who easily lost their temper and spoke harshly to their children. So you may have grown up thinking that this was a normal way to raise a family. Even after learning Jehovah's standards, you might find it a challenge to remain calm and patient with your children, especially if they misbehave when you are tired. (Eph. 4: 31) At such times, you need more than ever to rely on Jehovah in prayer. (Ps. 37:5) Some mothers find it difficult to express their love for their children. They may have been raised in a household where their parents did not have a warm relationship with their children. If that is how you were raised, you do not have to repeat your parents' mistakes. A mother who submits to Jehovah's will may have to learn how to express love for her children. It may be difficult for her to make the change. But it can be done, and it will benefit both her and her family. *w19.09 18-19 ¶19-20*

Sunday, December 19

*No one can slave for two masters.
—Matt. 6:24.*

A person who worships Jehovah while also spending excessive time and effort trying to gain this world's riches would, in a sense, be trying to serve two masters. He would not be giving Jehovah exclusive devotion. Near the end of the first century C.E., members of the congregation in the city of Laodicea boasted: "I am rich and have acquired riches and do not need anything at

all." But in the eyes of Jehovah and Jesus, they were "miserable and pitiful and poor and blind and naked." Jesus counseled them, not because they were wealthy, but because their love of riches was damaging their relationship with Jehovah. (Rev. 3:14-17) If we detect that a desire to pursue riches is growing in our heart, we must act quickly to correct our thinking. (1 Tim. 6:7, 8) If we do not, our heart will be divided and Jehovah will not accept our worship. He "requires exclusive devotion."—Deut. 4:24. *w19.10 27 ¶5-6*

Monday, December 20

Men spoke from God as they were moved by holy spirit.—2 Pet. 1:21.

The Greek word translated "moved" literally means "carried along; borne along." A similar form of the same Greek word was used by Luke, the writer of Acts, to describe a ship that is "driven along" by the wind. (Acts 27:15) So when the apostle Peter wrote that Bible writers were "borne along," he used "a fascinating maritime metaphor," as one Bible scholar put it. Peter said, in effect, that just as a ship is carried along by the wind to accomplish its journey, so Bible prophets and writers were borne along by holy spirit to accomplish their task. The same scholar said: "The prophets raised their sails, so to speak." Jehovah did his part. He provided "the wind," or holy spirit. The Bible writers did their part. They worked in harmony with the direction of that spirit. And today, like a favorable wind on a stormy sea, holy spirit moves us forward through stormy trials to the haven of God's promised new world. *w19.11 9 ¶7-9*

Tuesday, December 21

If you become discouraged in the day of distress, your strength will be meager.—Prov. 24:10.

At times we may feel discouraged. But we must not allow our problems to dominate our thinking. If we do, we might lose sight of the marvelous hope that Jehovah has given us. (Rev. 21:3, 4) Feelings of discouragement could then drain our strength and cause us to give up. Consider how a sister in the United States is maintaining her faith while caring for her seriously ill husband. She wrote: "Our situation has been stressful and discouraging at times, but our hope is strong. I am so very impressed with the information we have been getting to strengthen our faith and lift our spirits. We really need this counsel and encouragement. It keeps us going and helps us to endure." We learn from this sister's comments that we can overcome discouragement! How? View your trials as being a test from Satan. Recognize Jehovah as being the Source of comfort. And appreciate the spiritual food he provides. *w19.11 16 ¶9-10*

Wednesday, December 22

The trustworthy person keeps a confidence.—Prov. 11:13.

Elders in particular must apply this Bible principle. An elder realizes that he must not reveal the "confidential talk" of those in the congregation. If he did, he would lose their trust and ruin his reputation. Those who are appointed to a position of trust in the congregation cannot be "double-tongued," or deceitful. (1 Tim. 3:8; ftn.) That is, they cannot be devious or inclined

to gossip. If an elder loves his wife, he will not burden her with information that she does not need to know. A wife can help her husband maintain a good reputation by not pressuring him to talk about matters that should be kept confidential. When a wife applies this advice, she not only supports her husband but also shows honor to those who have confided in him. And most important, she makes Jehovah happy because she is contributing to the peace and unity of the congregation.—Rom. 14:19. *w20.03 22 ¶13-14*

Thursday, December 23

*Jehovah will appear to you.
—Lev. 9:4.*

In 1512 B.C.E., when the tabernacle was set up at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses presided over a ceremony to install Aaron and his sons as priests. (Ex. 40:17; Lev. 9:1-5) How did Jehovah show his approval of the newly installed priesthood? As Aaron and Moses blessed the people, Jehovah caused fire to consume the remainder of the sacrifice on the altar. (Lev. 9:23, 24) What was accomplished by the awesome display at the installation of the high priest? Jehovah thereby showed his full support of the Aaronic priesthood. When the Israelites saw this clear evidence of Jehovah's backing of the priests, they had good reason to give them full support. Is that relevant to us? Yes! The priesthood in Israel was just a shadow of a much greater priesthood—the 144,000, who will serve alongside Christ in heaven. (Heb. 4:14; 8:3-5; 10:1) Without a doubt, Jehovah is guiding and generously blessing his organization today. *w19.11 23 ¶13; 24 ¶14, 16*

Friday, December 24

We were working night and day so as not to impose an expensive burden on any one of you.

—2 Thess. 3:8.

While in Corinth, the apostle Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla and “worked with them, for they were tentmakers by trade.” That Paul worked “night and day” did not mean that he worked nonstop. He took breaks from tentmaking, such as on the Sabbath. That day provided him with opportunities to witness to Jews, who also were not working on the Sabbath. (Acts 13:14-16, 42-44; 16:13; 18:1-4) Paul had to do secular work; still, he made sure to share regularly “in the holy work of the good news of God.” (Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:23) He urged others to do likewise. Consequently, Aquila and Priscilla were his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 12:11; 16:3) Paul urged the Corinthians to have “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:8) Jehovah even inspired the apostle Paul to write: “If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat.”—2 Thess. 3:10. *w19.12 5 ¶12-13*

Saturday, December 25

Children are an inheritance from Jehovah.—Ps. 127:3, ftn.

Jehovah created the first couple with the desire to have children. But who should decide if and when a married couple will have children? In some cultures, newly married couples are expected to start having children as soon as possible. They may even feel pressure from their family and others to follow that custom. Jethro, a brother in Asia, says, “In the congregation, some who have children pressure the childless

couples to start a family.” Jeffrey, another brother in Asia, observes, “Some tell childless couples that they will have no one to take care of them when they grow old.” However, each couple should decide for themselves whether to have children. That is for them to decide; it is their responsibility. (Gal. 6:5, ftn.) Understandably, friends and family want a newly married couple to be happy. But all need to remember that the decision whether to have children or not belongs to the couple.—1 Thess. 4:11. *w19.12 22 ¶1-3*

Sunday, December 26

You must pray, then, this way:

“Our Father.”—Matt. 6:9.

Do you find it difficult to think of God as your Father? Some may feel small and insignificant in comparison to Jehovah. They doubt that Almighty God cares about them as individuals. Yet, our loving Father does not want us to feel that way. He gave us life and wants us to have a relationship with him. After stating this truth, the apostle Paul explained to his listeners in Athens that Jehovah “is not far off from each one of us.” (Acts 17:24-29) God wants each one of us to go to him just as a child naturally goes to a loving and caring parent. Others may find it hard to view Jehovah as their Father because their own human father showed them little or no love and affection. One Christian sister says: “My father was very abusive. When I first began to study the Bible, it was difficult for me to relate to a heavenly Father.” Do you have similar feelings? If so, be assured that you too can come to see Jehovah as the best possible Father. *w20.02 3 ¶4-5*

Song 127 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

 TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

“Jephthah—A Spiritual Man”: (10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

Jg 11:1—How do we know that Jephthah was not an illegitimate son? (*it-2* 26)

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.) Jg 10:1-18 (5)

 APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

Initial Call: (3 min.) Use the tract *How Do You View the Bible?* to start the sample conversation. (1)

Return Visit: (4 min.) Begin with the sample conversation. Offer the *Enjoy Life Forever!* brochure. (4)

Bible Study: (5 min.) *Iffi* lesson 02 point 5 (3)

 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 138

From Youth, a Life Dedicated to Jehovah:

(15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: What did the video teach you about the value of training? making a dedication early in life? making yourself available to be used by Jehovah’s organization?

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) *rr* chap. 17 ¶15-21

 Jephthah—A Spiritual Man

Jephthah set aside personal differences with others (Jg 11:5-9; *w16.04* 7 ¶9)

Jephthah was a student of Jehovah’s dealings with His people (Jg 11:12-15; *it-2* 27 ¶2)

Jephthah kept his focus on the central issue—Jehovah’s Godship (Jg 11:23, 24, 27; *it-2* 27 ¶3)

In what specific ways am I demonstrating that I am a spiritual person?



The Sort of Person I Should Be

(2 Peter 3:11)

Db Bbm7 Gb Ebm7

How can I re-pay you, what gift can I give To

Gb/Ab Ab/Gb Db/F F7b9b13/A Bbm7 Eb13sus4 Eb7

thank you, Je-ho - vah, for the life that I live? I

Ebm Ab7/Eb Db/F Gb Ab Bbm9/11 Bbm

look in my heart with your Word as my mir - ror; The

Bridge

Gb Db/F Ebm11 Gb/Ab Ab7 Dbsus4 Db

per - son I see, may you help me see clear - er. My

The Sort of Person I Should Be

Chords: Gbma7, Ab/Gb, Gbma7, Ab/Gb, Fm7, Cb/Db

life I have prom - ised in ser - vice to you, But

Chords: Gbma7, Ab/Gb, Gbma7, Bbm/G, C7sus4, C7, Fm

not from mere du - ty will I do what I do. Whole -

Chords: D°, Ebm11, Ebm, Gbm/A

souled and whole - heart - ed I serve you by

Chords: Db/Ab, Bbm/G, Gb/Ab, Fm/Ab

choice; May I be one more who makes you re - jice.

The Sort of Person I Should Be

Ebm7/Ab Ab7 Db Bbm7 Gb Ebm7

Help me to ex-am-ine, and help me to see Just

Gb/Ab Ab/Gb Db/F F7b9b13/A Bbm7 Eb13sus4 Eb7

what sort of per-son you de-sire me to be. Those

Ebm Ab7/Eb Db/F Gb Ab Bbm9/11 Bbm

loy-al to you, you will loy-al-ly trea-sure; May

Gb Db/F Ebm11 Gb/Ab Ab7 Dbsus4 Db

I be a-mong those who bring your heart plea-sure.

and fought against A-bim'e-lech. **40** A-bim'e-lech pursued him, and Ga'al fled from him, and many fell slain as far as the entrance of the city gate.

41 And A-bim'e-lech continued to dwell in A-ru'mah, and Ze'bul^a drove Ga'al and his brothers out of She'chem.

42 The next day the people went out into the field, and A-bim'e-lech was told about it. **43** So he took the people and divided them into three bands and lay in wait in the field. When he saw the people going out of the city, he attacked them and struck them down. **44** A-bim'e-lech and the bands with him charged forward and took a position at the entrance of the city gate, while two bands attacked all who were in the field, and they struck them down. **45** A-bim'e-lech fought against the city all that day and captured it. He killed the people in it, and then he pulled the city down^b and sowed it with salt.

46 When all the leaders of the tower of She'chem heard about this, they immediately went to the vault* of the house[#] of El-be'rith.^c **47** As soon as it was reported to A-bim'e-lech that all the leaders of the tower of She'chem had gathered together, **48** A-bim'e-lech and all the men with him went up Mount Zal'mon. A-bim'e-lech took an ax in his hand and cut off a tree branch and lifted it on his shoulder and said to the people with him: "What you saw me do, hurry and do the same!" **49** So all the people also cut off branches and followed A-bim'e-lech. Then they put the branches against the vault and set the vault on fire. So all the people of the tower of She'chem also died, about 1,000 men and women.

9:46 *Or "stronghold." #Or "temple."

CHAP. 9
a Jg 9:30

b 1Ki 12:25

c Jg 8:33
Jg 9:4, 27

Second Col.
a 2Sa 11:21

b Ge 9:6
Jg 9:5, 24

c Jg 9:7, 20

d Jg 6:32

CHAP. 10
e Jg 2:16

f De 3:14

50 A-bim'e-lech then went to The'bez; he camped against The'bez and captured it.

51 There was a strong tower in the middle of the city, and all the men and women and all the city leaders fled there. They shut themselves in and climbed onto the roof of the tower.

52 A-bim'e-lech made his way to the tower and attacked it. He approached the entrance of the tower to set it on fire. **53** Then one of the women dropped an upper millstone on A-bim'e-lech's head and crushed his skull.^a **54** He quickly called the attendant bearing his weapons and said to him: "Draw your sword and put me to death, so that they may not say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his attendant ran him through, and he died.

55 When the men of Israel saw that A-bim'e-lech was dead, they all went back home.

56 Thus God repaid A-bim'e-lech for the evil that he had done to his father by killing his 70 brothers.^b **57** God also made all the evil of the men of She'chem come back on their own heads. So the curse of Jo'tham^c the son of Jer-ub-ba'al^d came upon them.

10 After A-bim'e-lech, To'la the son of Pu'ah, the son of Do'do, a man of Is'sa-char, rose up to save Israel.^e He lived in Sha'mir in the mountainous region of E'phra'im. **2** He judged Israel for 23 years. Then he died and was buried in Sha'mir.

3 After him Ja'ir the Gil'e-adite rose up and judged Israel for 22 years. **4** He had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys, and they had 30 cities, which to this day are called Hav'voth-ja'ir;^f they are in the land of Gil'e-ad. **5** After that Ja'ir died and was buried in Ka'mon.

6 Again the Israelites did what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah,^a and they began to serve the Ba'als,^b the Ash'to-reth images, the gods of A'ram,* the gods of Si'don, the gods of Mo'ab,^c the gods of the Am'mon-ites,^d and the gods of the Phi-lis'tines.^e They abandoned Jehovah and did not serve him. 7 Then Jehovah's anger blazed against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Phi-lis'tines and the Am'mon-ites.^f 8 So they crushed and greatly oppressed the Israelites in that year—for 18 years they oppressed all the Israelites on the side of the Jordan that had been the land of the Am'or-ites in Gil'e-ad. 9 The Am'mon-ites would also cross the Jordan to fight against Judah and Benjamin and the house of E'phra-im; and Israel was greatly distressed. 10 Then the Israelites called to Jehovah for help,^g saying: "We have sinned against you, for we abandoned our God and served the Ba'als."^h

11 But Jehovah said to the Israelites: "Did I not save you from Egyptⁱ and from the Am'or-ites,^j the Am'mon-ites, the Phi-lis'tines,^k 12 the Si-do'ni-ans, Am'a-lek, and Mid'i-an when they oppressed you? When you cried out to me, I saved you out of their hand. 13 But you abandoned me and served other gods.^l That is why I will not save you again."^m 14 Go to the gods whom you have chosen and call for help.ⁿ Let them save you in your time of distress."^o 15 But the Israelites said to Jehovah: "We have sinned. Do to us whatever is good in your eyes. Only save us, please, this day." 16 And they removed the foreign gods from their midst and served Jehovah,^p so that he could no longer tolerate* Israel's suffering.^q

10:6 *Or "Syria." 10:16 *Or "and his soul became impatient because of."

CHAP. 10

- a Jg 2:19
Jg 4:1
Jg 6:1
Ne 9:28
b Jg 3:7
Ps 106:36-38
c Nu 25:1, 2
d 1Ki 11:5
2Ki 23:13
e Jg 16:23
1Sa 5:4
2Ki 1:2
f De 28:15, 48
De 31:17
Jg 2:14
Jg 4:2
g De 4:30
h Jg 2:13
Jg 3:7
1Sa 12:9, 10
i Ex 14:30
j Nu 21:23-25
k Jg 3:31
l Jg 2:12
m 2Ch 15:2
Mic 3:4
n 1Ki 18:27
o Jer 2:28
p De 7:26
q 2Ch 7:14
2Ch 33:13, 15
Ps 106:44
Isa 63:9

Second Col.

- a Ge 19:36, 38
Jg 3:13
b Jg 11:1

CHAP. 11

- c Jg 12:7
1Sa 12:11
Heb 11:32
d Jg 10:17
e Jg 11:2
f Jg 10:18

17 In time the Am'mon-ites^a were called together, and they pitched camp in Gil'e-ad. So the Israelites gathered together and pitched camp in Miz'pah.

18 The people and the princes of Gil'e-ad said to one another: "Who will take the lead in fighting against the Am'mon-ites?^b Let him become the chief over all the inhabitants of Gil'e-ad."

11 Now Jeph'thah^c the Gil'e-ad-ite was a mighty warrior; he was the son of a prostitute, and Gil'e-ad was Jeph'thah's father. 2 But Gil'e-ad's wife also bore him sons. When the sons of his wife grew up, they drove Jeph'thah out and said to him: "You will have no inheritance in our father's household, for you are the son of another woman." 3 So Jeph'thah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob. And idle men joined company with Jeph'thah, and they followed him.

4 After a while, the Am'mon-ites fought against Israel.^d

5 And when the Am'mon-ites fought against Israel, the elders of Gil'e-ad immediately went to bring Jeph'thah back from the land of Tob. 6 They said to Jeph'thah: "Come and serve as our commander, so that we can fight against the Am'mon-ites."

7 But Jeph'thah said to the elders of Gil'e-ad: "Was it not you who hated me so much that you drove me out of my father's house?^e Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?" 8 At this the elders of Gil'e-ad said to Jeph'thah: "That is why now we have returned to you. If you go with us and fight against the Am'mon-ites, you will become our leader over all the inhabitants of Gil'e-ad."^f 9 So Jeph'thah said to the elders of Gil'e-ad: "If you bring me back to fight against the Am'mon-ites and Jehovah defeats them for

me, then I will indeed become your leader!" **10** The elders of Gil'e-ad said to Jeph'thah: "Let Jehovah be the witness* between us if we do not do as you say." **11** So Jeph'thah went with the elders of Gil'e-ad, and the people made him their leader and commander. And Jeph'thah repeated all his words before Jehovah in Miz'pah.^a

12 Jeph'thah then sent messengers to the king of the Am'mon-ites,^b saying: "What do you have against me* that you have come to attack my land?" **13** So the king of the Am'mon-ites said to the messengers of Jeph'thah: "It is because Israel took my land when they came up out of Egypt,^c from the Ar'non^d to the Jab'bok and as far as the Jordan.^e Now return it peaceably." **14** But Jeph'thah sent messengers back to the king of the Am'mon-ites **15** to say to him:

"This is what Jeph'thah says: 'Israel did not take the land of the Mo'ab-ites^f and the land of the Am'mon-ites,^g **16** for when they came up out of Egypt, Israel walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea^h and came to Ka'desh.ⁱ **17** Then Israel sent messengers to the king of E'dom,^j saying: "Please let us pass through your land," but the king of E'dom did not listen. Also to the king of Mo'ab^k they sent word, but he did not consent. So Israel kept dwelling in Ka'desh.^l **18** When they walked through the wilderness, they bypassed the land of E'dom^m and the land of Mo'ab. They traveled east of the land of Mo'abⁿ and camped in the region of the Ar'non; they did not come within the boundary of Mo'ab,^o for the Ar'non was the boundary of Mo'ab.

11:10 *Lit., "the one who hears." 11:12 *Lit., "What to me and to you?"

CHAP. 11

- a Jg 10:17
- Jg 11:34
- b Ge 19:36, 38
- c Nu 21:23, 24
- d Nu 21:26
- e De 3:16, 17
- f Ge 19:36, 37
- De 2:9
- g De 2:19, 37
- h Nu 14:25
- i Nu 20:1
- j Ge 36:1
- Nu 20:14
- De 2:4
- k Ge 19:36, 37
- l Nu 20:22
- m Nu 21:4
- n Nu 21:11
- o Nu 21:13

Second Col.

- a Nu 21:21-26
- De 2:26, 27
- b De 2:32, 33
- c Jos 13:15, 21
- d De 2:36
- e Ne 9:22
- f 1Ki 11:7
- g Ex 23:28
- Ex 34:11
- Nu 33:53
- De 9:5
- De 18:12
- h Nu 22:2, 3
- Jos 24:9
- i Nu 21:25
- j Nu 21:26
- k Isa 33:22

19 "After that Israel sent messengers to Si'hon king of the Am'or-ites, king of Hesh'bon, and Israel said to him: "Please let us pass through your land to our own place."^a **20** But Si'hon did not trust Israel to cross through his territory, so Si'hon gathered all his people together and encamped in Ja'haz and fought against Israel.^b **21** At this Jehovah the God of Israel gave Si'hon and all his people into Israel's hand, so that they defeated them and Israel took possession of all the land of the Am'or-ites, the inhabitants of that land.^c **22** Thus they took possession of all the territory of the Am'or-ites from the Ar'non to the Jab'bok and from the wilderness to the Jordan.^d

23 "It was Jehovah the God of Israel who drove out the Am'or-ites from before his people Israel,^e and now would you drive them out? **24** Do you not possess whatever your god Chemosh^f gives you to possess? So everyone whom Jehovah our God has driven out from before us is the one we will drive out.^g **25** Now are you any better than Ba'lak^h the son of Zip'por, the king of Mo'ab? Did he ever contend with Israel, or did he ever fight against them? **26** While Israel was dwelling in Hesh'bon and its dependent* townsⁱ and in A-ro'er and its dependent towns and in all the cities that are by the banks of the Ar'non for 300 years, why did you never try to take them back during that time? **27** I have not sinned against you, but you are wrong to attack me. Let Jehovah the Judge^k be judge today between the people of Israel and the people of Am'mon."

28 But the king of the Am'mon-ites would not listen to the

11:26 *Or "surrounding."

message that Jeph'thah sent to him.

29 Jehovah's spirit came upon Jeph'thah,^a and he passed through Gil'e-ad and Ma-nas'seh to go to Miz'peh of Gil'e-ad,^b and from Miz'peh of Gil'e-ad he continued on to the Am'mon-ites.

30 Then Jeph'thah made a vow^c to Jehovah and said: "If you give the Am'mon-ites into my hand, **31** then whoever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Am'mon-ites will become Jehovah's,^d and I will offer that one up as a burnt offering."^e

32 So Jeph'thah went to fight against the Am'mon-ites, and Jehovah gave them into his hand. **33** He struck them down with a very great slaughter from A-ro'er all the way to Min'nith—20 cities—and as far as A'bel-ker'a-mim. Thus the Am'mon-ites were subdued before the Israelites.

34 Finally Jeph'thah came to his home in Miz'pah,^f and look! his daughter was coming out to meet him, playing the tambourine and dancing! Now she was his one and only child. Besides her, he had neither son nor daughter. **35** When he saw her, he ripped his garments and said: "Oh no, my daughter! You have broken my heart,^g for you have become the one I have banished. Now I have opened my mouth to Jehovah, and I am unable to turn back."^g

36 But she said to him: "My father, if you have opened your mouth to Jehovah, do to me as you have promised,^h since Jehovah has executed vengeance for you upon your enemies, the Am'mon-ites." **37** She then said to her father: "Let this be done for me: Let me be alone for two months, and let me go away into the mountains, and let me weep

11:35 *Lit., "You brought me very low."

CHAP. 11

a Jg 3:9, 10
Zec 4:6

b Jg 10:17

c De 23:21

d 1Sa 1:11

e 1Sa 1:24

f Jg 10:17
Jg 11:11

g Nu 30:2
Ps 15:4
Ec 5:4

h Jg 11:30, 31

Second Col.

a 1Sa 1:22, 24

CHAP. 12

b Jg 8:1

c Jg 11:29

d De 3:12, 13

e Jg 3:28
Jg 7:24

over my virginity with my female companions."*

38 At this he said: "Go!" So he sent her away for two months, and she went to the mountains with her companions to weep over her virginity. **39** At the end of two months, she returned to her father, after which he carried out the vow he had made regarding her.^a She never had relations with a man. And it became a custom* in Israel: **40** From year to year, the young women of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jeph'thah the Gil'e-ad-ite four days in the year.

12 Then the men of E'phra-im were summoned, and they crossed over to Za'phon* and said to Jeph'thah: "Why did you not call us to go with you when you crossed over to fight against the Am'mon-ites?^b We will burn your house down with you in it." **2** But Jeph'thah said to them: "Along with my people, I was engaged in a great conflict with the Am'mon-ites. I did call to you for help, but you did not save me from their hand. **3** When I saw that you would not save me, then I decided to risk my life* and go against the Am'mon-ites,^c and Jehovah handed them over to me. So why have you come today to fight against me?"

4 Jeph'thah then gathered all the men of Gil'e-ad,^d and they fought E'phra-im; the men of Gil'e-ad defeated E'phra-im, who had said: "You are only fugitives from E'phra-im, you Gil'e-ad-ites in E'phra-im and Ma-nas'seh." **5** Gil'e-ad captured the fords of the Jordan^e ahead of E'phra-im; and when the men of E'phra-im

11:37 *Or "weep with my friends because I will never marry." 11:39 *Or "regulation." 12:1 *Or possibly, "crossed over northward." 12:3 *Or "I put my soul in my hand."

were trying to escape, they would say, "Let me cross over"; then the men of Gil'e-ad would ask each one, "Are you an E'phra-im-ite?" When he would reply, "No!" **6** they would say to him, "Please say Shib'bo-leth." But he would say, "Sib'bo-leth," as he was unable to say the word correctly. Then they would seize him and slay him at the fords of the Jordan. So 42,000 E'phra-im-ites fell at that time.

7 Jeph'thah judged Israel for six years, after which Jeph'thah the Gil'e-ad-ite died and was buried in his city in Gil'e-ad.

8 Ib'zan from Beth'le-hem judged Israel after him.^a **9** He had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He sent his daughters to marry men outside his clan, and he brought in 30 women to marry his sons. He judged Israel for seven years. **10** Then Ib'zan died and was buried in Beth'le-hem.

11 After him E'lou the Ze-bu'lu-nite judged Israel; he judged Israel for ten years. **12** Then E'lou the Ze-bu'lu-nite died and was buried in Ai'ja-lou in the land of Zeb'u-lou.

13 After him Ab'don the son of Hil'lel the Pir'a-thon-ite judged Israel. **14** He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on 70 donkeys. He judged Israel for eight years. **15** Then Ab'don the son of Hil'lel the Pir'a-thon-ite died and was buried in Pir'a-thon in the land of E'phra-im in the mountain of the A-mal'ek-ite.^b

13 Again the Israelites did what was bad in Jehovah's eyes,^c and Jehovah gave them into the hand of the Phi-lis'tines^d for 40 years.

2 Meanwhile, there was a man of Zo'rah^e of the family of the Dan'ites,^f whose name was Ma-no'ah.^g His wife was barren and childless.^h **3** In time Jehovah's

CHAP. 12
a Jg 2:16

b Ge 36:12
Ex 17:16
Nu 13:29
1Sa 15:2

CHAP. 13
c Jg 2:11, 19
Jg 10:6

d Jos 13:1-3
Jg 10:7

e Jos 15:20, 33
Jos 19:41, 48

f Ge 49:16

g Jg 16:31

h Ge 30:22, 23

Second Col.

a Ge 18:10
1Sa 1:20
Lu 1:11, 13

b Nu 6:2, 3
Lu 1:15

c Le 11:26, 27

d Nu 6:2, 5

e Jg 2:16
Jg 13:1
Ne 9:27

f Jg 13:17, 18

g Jg 13:3

angel appeared to the woman and said to her: "Look, you are barren and childless. But you will conceive and give birth to a son.^a **4** Now be careful not to drink wine or anything alcoholic,^b and do not eat anything unclean.^c **5** Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor should touch his head,^d because the child will be a Naz'i-rite of God from birth,^e and he will take the lead in saving Israel out of the hand of the Phi-lis'tines."^e

6 Then the woman went and told her husband: "A man of the true God came to me, and his appearance was like an angel of the true God, very awe-inspiring. I did not ask him where he was from, nor did he tell me his name.^f **7** But he said to me, 'Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now do not drink wine or anything alcoholic, and do not eat anything unclean, because the child will be a Naz'i-rite of God from birth* until the day of his death.'^g

8 Ma-no'ah pleaded with Jehovah and said: "Pardon me, Jehovah. Please let the man of the true God whom you just sent come again to instruct us about what we should do with the child who will be born."^g **9** So the true God listened to Ma-no'ah, and the angel of the true God came again to the woman while she was sitting in the field; her husband Ma-no'ah was not with her. **10** The woman quickly ran and told her husband: "Look! The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me."^g

11 Then Ma-no'ah got up and went with his wife. He came to the man and said to him: "Are you the man who spoke to my wife?" He said: "I am."^g **12** Then Ma-no'ah said: "May your words come true! What will be the

13:5, 7 *Lit., "from the womb."

Song 127 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

 TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

“Jephthah—A Spiritual Man”: (10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

Jg 11:1—How do we know that Jephthah was not an illegitimate son? (*it-2* 26)

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.) Jg 10:1-18 (5)

 APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

Initial Call: (3 min.) Use the tract *How Do You View the Bible?* to start the sample conversation. (1)

Return Visit: (4 min.) Begin with the sample conversation. Offer the *Enjoy Life Forever!* brochure. (4)

Bible Study: (5 min.) *Iffi* lesson 02 point 5 (3)

 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 138

From Youth, a Life Dedicated to Jehovah:

(15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: What did the video teach you about the value of training? making a dedication early in life? making yourself available to be used by Jehovah’s organization?

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) *rr* chap. 17 ¶15-21

 Jephthah—A Spiritual Man

Jephthah set aside personal differences with others (Jg 11:5-9; *w16.04* 7 ¶9)

Jephthah was a student of Jehovah’s dealings with His people (Jg 11:12-15; *it-2* 27 ¶2)

Jephthah kept his focus on the central issue—Jehovah’s Godship (Jg 11:23, 24, 27; *it-2* 27 ¶3)

In what specific ways am I demonstrating that I am a spiritual person?



December 20-26 / Judges 10-12

Song 127 and Prayer

Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

"Jephthah—A Spiritual Man": (10 minutes)

Jephthah set aside personal differences with others

Judges 11:5-9: And when the Ammonites fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead immediately went to bring Jephthah back from the land of Tob. They said to Jephthah: "Come and serve as our commander, so that we can fight against the Ammonites." But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead: "Was it not you who hated me so much that you drove me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?" At this the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah: "That is why now we have returned to you. If you go with us and fight against the Ammonites, you will become our leader over all the inhabitants of Gilead." So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead: "If you bring me back to fight against the Ammonites and Jehovah defeats them for me, then I will indeed become your leader!"

w16.04 7 paragraph 9

Examples of faithful ones like Joseph, who showed mercy to his brothers—even though "they began to hate him"—may also have influenced Jephthah's response. (Genesis 37:4; 45:4, 5) Meditating on such examples would have helped Jephthah to choose a course of action that was pleasing to Jehovah. The conduct of his brothers no doubt hurt him deeply, but he would not hold back from serving Jehovah and His people. (Judges 11:9) The fight to defend Jehovah's name was more important to Jephthah than any personal conflicts. He was determined to be faithful to Jehovah, resulting in good for himself and for others.—Hebrews 11:32, 33.

Jephthah was a student of Jehovah's dealings with His people

Judges 11:12-15: Jephthah then sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, saying: "What do you have against me that you have come to attack my land?" So the king of the Ammonites said to the messengers of Jephthah: "It is because Israel took my land when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and as far as the Jordan. Now return it peaceably." But Jephthah sent

messengers back to the king of the Ammonites to say to him: "This is what Jephthah says: 'Israel did not take the land of the Moabites and the land of the Ammonites,

it-2 27 paragraph 2

Jephthah, a man of action, lost no time in exercising vigorous leadership. He sent a message to the king of Ammon, pointing out that Ammon was the aggressor in invading Israel's land. The king replied that it was land Israel had taken from Ammon. (Judges 11:12, 13) Here Jephthah showed himself to be, not a mere rough, uncultured warrior, but a student of history and particularly of God's dealings with his people. He refuted the Ammonite argument, showing that (1) Israel did not molest Ammon, Moab, or Edom (Judges 11:14-18; Deuteronomy 2:9, 19, 37; 2 Chronicles 20:10, 11); (2) Ammon had not possessed the disputed land at the time of the Israelite conquest, because it was in the hands of the Canaanite Amorites and God had given their king, Sihon, and his land into Israel's hand; (3) Ammon had not disputed Israel's occupation for the past 300 years; therefore, on what valid basis could they do so now?—Judges 11:19-27.

Jephthah kept his focus on the central issue —Jehovah's Godship

Judges 11:23, 24: "It was Jehovah the God of Israel who drove out the Amorites from before his people Israel, and now would you drive them out? Do you not possess whatever your god Chemosh gives you to possess? So everyone whom Jehovah our God has driven out from before us is the one we will drive out.

Judges 11:27: I have not sinned against you, but you are wrong to attack me. Let Jehovah the Judge be judge today between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon."

it-2 27 paragraph 3

Jephthah got at the heart of the matter when he showed that the issue revolved around the matter of worship. He declared that Jehovah God had given Israel the land and that for this reason they would not give an inch of it to worshipers of a false god. He called Chemosh the god of Ammon. Some have thought this to be an error. But, although Ammon had the god Milcom, and though Chemosh was a god of Moab, those related nations worshiped many gods. Solomon even wrongly brought the worship of Chemosh into Israel because of his foreign wives. (Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 11:1, 7, 8, 33; 2 Kings 23:13) Furthermore, "Chemosh" may mean "Subduer, Conqueror," according to some scholars. (See *Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, translated by S. Tregelles, 1901, page 401.) Jephthah may have called attention to this god as being given credit by the Ammonites for 'subduing' or

'conquering' others and giving them land.

In what specific ways am I demonstrating that I am a spiritual person?

[Image:] Collage: 1. A brother reads the Bible. 2. The brother speaks lovingly to his wife. 3. The brother and his wife respectfully remain seated when others stand to salute the flag.

Spiritual Gems

Judges 11:1—How do we know that Jephthah was not an illegitimate son?

Judges 11:1: Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior; he was the son of a prostitute, and Gilead was Jephthah's father.

***it-2* 26**

Jephthah a Legitimate Son. The mother of Jephthah was "a prostitute woman," not meaning, however, that Jephthah was born of prostitution or was illegitimate. His mother *had been* a prostitute prior to her marriage as a secondary wife to Gilead, just as Rahab had once been a prostitute but later married Salmon. (Judges 11:1; Joshua 2:1; Matthew 1:5) That Jephthah was not illegitimate is proved by the fact that his half brothers by Gilead's primary wife drove him out so that he would not share in the inheritance. (Judges 11:2) Additionally, Jephthah later became the accepted leader of the men of Gilead (of whom Jephthah's half brothers seemed to be foremost). (Judges 11:11) Moreover, he offered a sacrifice to God at the tabernacle. (Judges 11:30, 31) None of these things would have been possible for an illegitimate son, for the Law specifically stated: "No illegitimate son may come into the congregation of Jehovah. Even to the tenth generation none of his may come into the congregation of Jehovah."—Deuteronomy 23:2.

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 minutes) Judges 10:1-18 (*th* study 5)

Song 127 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

 TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

“Jephthah—A Spiritual Man”: (10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

Jg 11:1—How do we know that Jephthah was not an illegitimate son? (*it-2* 26)

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 APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

Initial Call: (3 min.) Use the tract *How Do You View the Bible?* to start the sample conversation. (1)

Return Visit: (4 min.) Begin with the sample conversation. Offer the *Enjoy Life Forever!* brochure. (4)

Bible Study: (5 min.) *Iffi* lesson 02 point 5 (3)

 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 138

From Youth, a Life Dedicated to Jehovah:

(15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: What did the video teach you about the value of training? making a dedication early in life? making yourself available to be used by Jehovah’s organization?

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.) *rr* chap. 17 ¶15-21

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Jephthah set aside personal differences with others (Jg 11:5-9; *w16.04* 7 ¶9)

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Jephthah kept his focus on the central issue—Jehovah’s Godship (Jg 11:23, 24, 27; *it-2* 27 ¶3)

In what specific ways am I demonstrating that I am a spiritual person?





INCREASE YOUR JOY IN THE MINISTRY

Accept Jehovah's Help Through Prayer

It is Jehovah who makes the seed of truth take root and grow in someone's heart. (1Co 3:6-9) Therefore, in order to succeed in the ministry, we must rely on Jehovah to help us and our Bible students.

Ask Jehovah to help your students to endure pressures and to overcome obstacles. (Php 1:9, 10) Be specific. Pray for holy spirit to guide your thoughts and actions. (Lu 11:13) Teach your Bible students how to pray, and urge them to do so. Pray with and for your Bible students, using their name.

WATCH THE VIDEO DRAMATIZATION *EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF DISCIPLE-MAKING—ACCEPT JEHOVAH'S HELP—PRAYER, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:*

- What challenge did Neeta encounter in her study with Jade?

- How did 1 Corinthians 3:6 help Neeta?

- How was Neeta's challenge resolved?



SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

Initial Call November (Special Campaign)

Question: Is an end to violence and war realistic?

Scripture: Ps 37:10, 11

Link: What Bible promise gives us hope?

- ▶ FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:
 - wp21.2 5

Initial Call December*

Question: How do you view the Bible?

Scripture: Ro 15:4

Link: What Bible promise gives us hope?

- ▶ FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:
 - Iffi 5

Return Visit*

Question: What Bible promise gives us hope?

Scripture: Re 21:3, 4

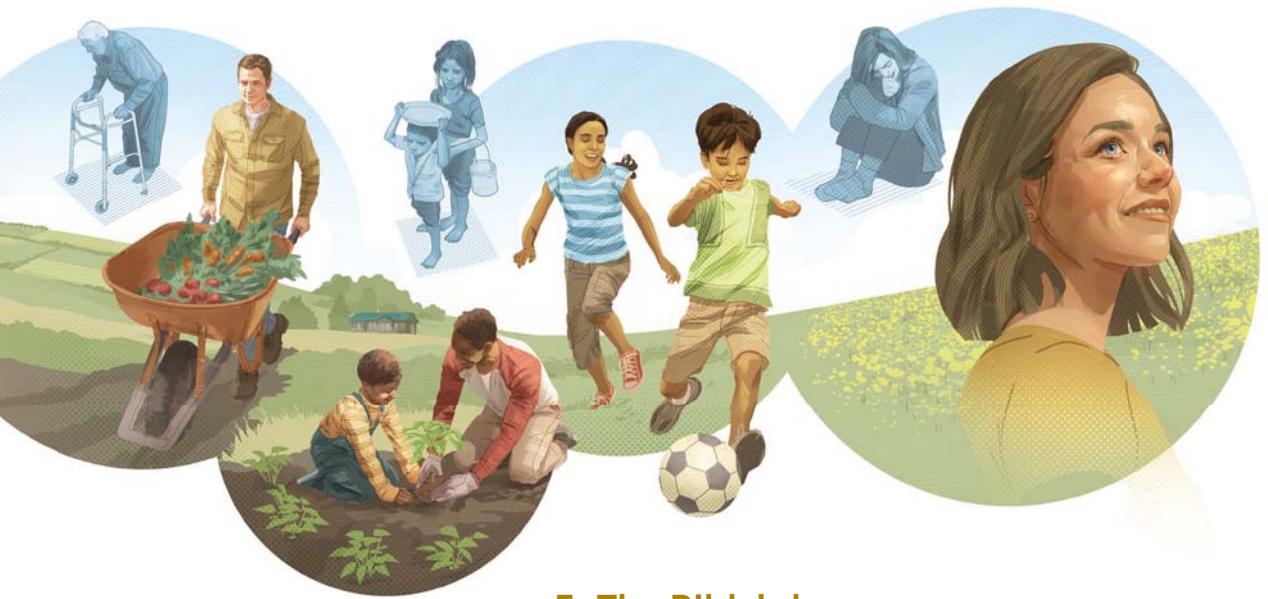
Link: How can we understand the Bible?

- ▶ FIND THIS SCRIPTURE IN THE TEACHING TOOLBOX:
 - Iffi 7; wp21.2 14

* You may adjust the question and link according to local circumstances.



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5. The Bible's hope can make a difference

Many people are discouraged or even angered by the problems they see around them. Some fight to try to change things for the better. See how the Bible's promise that things will get better helps people now. [Play the VIDEO](#), and then discuss the questions that follow.

- In the video, what injustice troubled Rafika?
- Although the injustice that she saw did not go away, how did the Bible help her?

The hope that the Bible offers for the future can help us to battle discouragement and cope with our problems successfully. [Read Proverbs 17:22 and Romans 12:12](#), and then discuss these questions:

- Do you think that the message of hope found in the Bible could make a difference in your life now? Why?



VIDEO: *I Wanted to Fight Injustice*
(4:07)



SOME PEOPLE SAY: “The Bible’s promises for the future are too good to be true.”

- Why do you think it is important to examine the evidence?

Beauty in Gray-Headedness

(Proverbs 16:31)

F Bbm/F Dm

Here with us are a - ged ones, Those whose youth has
Splend - id is gray - head - ed - ness Found in ways of

Am Bbadd9 Bb Gm9 Gm

passed.
right. Here a - mong us they en - dure;
Beau - ti - ful are faith - ful ones

Eb9 Gm7/C C7 F

Still they're hold - ing fast. Loss of strength be -
In Je - ho - vah's sight. May we al - ways

Bbm/F Dm Am

sets them all; Loss of mates for some.
rec - og - nize They were once young too.

Beauty in Gray-Headedness

Ab Fm6/G G7sus4 G7 Bbm7/C Bbm6/C C7

Fa - ther, please con - firm their faith In the life to
Loy - al - ly they gave their best When their strength was

F Chorus Am Bb

come.
new. Fa - ther, you re - mem - ber

Am F7 Bb Dm7

How in faith they've run. Give them your as -

G9 Bb/C C7sus4 Bb/C F

sur - ance; May they hear, "Well done!"

Song 127 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

 TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

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Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

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 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 138

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(15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category INTERVIEWS AND EXPERIENCES). Then ask the following questions: What did the video teach you about the value of training? making a dedication early in life? making yourself available to be used by Jehovah’s organization?

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Jephthah kept his focus on the central issue—Jehovah’s Godship (Jg 11:23, 24, 27; *it-2* 27 ¶3)

In what specific ways am I demonstrating that I am a spiritual person?



Robert P. Johnson: From Youth, a Life Dedicated to Jehovah

Mark Sanderson: I'm so happy to welcome today a very dear friend of mine, Brother Robert P. Johnson. R. P., welcome to the program.

Robert P. Johnson: Thank you, Mark. I appreciate being here.

Mark Sanderson: Now, you're here, R.P., because you are a wonderful example of someone who's had a life filled with blessings in Jehovah's service.

Robert P. Johnson: OK.

Mark Sanderson: So I know that your family goes way back in the truth.

Robert P. Johnson: Yes.

Mark Sanderson: In fact, I understand that your great grandfather learned the truth in Brother Russell's time, even before 1914.

Robert P. Johnson: That's right!

Mark Sanderson: So that means you're a fourth-generation Witness.

Robert P. Johnson: Mm-hm.

Mark Sanderson: But now, like so many who are watching our program, you were a little boy growing up in a congregation of Jehovah's people. So how did you come to the decision that you wanted to dedicate your life to serve Jehovah and then get baptized?

Robert P. Johnson: Well, Mark, thinking back, I can identify at least two outstanding influences in my life. And the first was my parents. Having that heritage in the truth helped me. I was just an average kid in my early years. But the parents instilled in me a desire to please Jehovah and make it my life to do that. They set goals before me. They taught me the truth. I learned enough from them to be able to make a dedication to Jehovah God and to have a close relationship with him. And so early on, that's what I did. I remember that evening after supper in my bedroom praying to Jehovah to accept my dedication. The date was May 25, 1949. I was 11 years old at the time. I told my parents, and they were happy, but they just wanted me to wait longer to make sure especially how I would handle the teenage years and so on, so I waited.

Mark Sanderson: And so then when did the moment come for you to finally get baptized?

Robert P. Johnson: It was at the 1953 international convention in Yankee Stadium in New York on July 22, 1953, when I was baptized. And again, I remember that like it was yesterday. When I

came up out of the water, I thanked Jehovah that finally, “I am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses!” and I also, like a child, added, “You can bring the end anytime now.”

Mark Sanderson: So you mentioned your parents, the good influence they had on you, but was there another influence on you that helped you?

Robert P. Johnson: Yes. At the 1953 convention, Brother Knorr had identified that there would be a special program for training people in the truth. And from the congregation, there was a brother of the anointed named Charles Richardson, and my father asked Brother Richardson to train me in this training program. And Brother Richardson was a mentor to me for the next five years of my life. Over the years, he helped me view the ministry as an opportunity to help people develop a relationship with Jehovah and, therefore, to reach out to them in teaching them the truth—the doctrinal truth—but to help them to see that Jehovah is a real person. And he helped me to enjoy the ministry. That is what has kept me happy in Jehovah’s service down to this day.

Mark Sanderson: Now, just from your expressions and what you talked about with me before, I could see that this Brother Richardson had a tremendous impact on your life. And I think, R.P., it really made you want to be a trainer of other people because that’s how I first met you, right?

Robert P. Johnson: Right. Right.

Mark Sanderson: You were the brother assigned to be my trainer when I came to the Service Department.

Robert P. Johnson: I remember that fondly.

Mark Sanderson: And I know that I’m not the only one. I mean, you’ve really spent your whole life training other people.

Robert P. Johnson: Well, it’s been a privilege. And I was trained; I was helped along the way. I was nobody special, but Jehovah has extended undeserved kindness to me and made all these things possible. So there’s no excuse for me not passing along the baton. And it’s a delight for me to see others carry it.

So now, let’s come back. You’re 15 years old. You get baptized at Yankee Stadium, and now as a result of being baptized at this age, how do you feel you benefited?

Robert P. Johnson: For one thing, if you know what you want to do and you stay focused on it, it makes it easier to deal with whatever challenges come later. And so being dedicated and baptized early in life helped me to stay focused on the truth. I still remember that dedication. It means something to me, and I tried to make it mean something to others (for as young as they can possibly make it). And they’ll find the same thing I found: Jehovah’s blessing will be with them.

Mark Sanderson: So now, at 15, what doors start to open up? What opportunities come to you because you are a baptized brother?

Robert P. Johnson: At age 17, I was appointed as a ministerial servant. I started pioneering right out of high school at age 18. And serving where the need was greater, I got a chance to work at starting a new congregation. And so at 21, I was congregation servant, or an elder, at that point. Then there was a need: The organization was looking for brothers who could do traveling work. So at age 25, I had the privilege of being a traveling overseer.

Mark Sanderson: So now, how did you feel being an elder at 21? being a circuit overseer at 25? Was it a little bit overwhelming at such a young age?

Robert P. Johnson: I was scared. I knew the truth, but I was uncertain about myself, but then I also knew Jehovah would help me. I learned a lot as a young traveling overseer, and I thank Jehovah that the people in the circuits that I served endured those three years that I was with them.

Mark Sanderson: But now, those were the challenges, but what do you see as being the benefits of being a young traveling overseer?

Robert P. Johnson: For the congregation, they had somebody who could stay out in field service long hours. And also the younger traveling overseer could relate to the young people and the younger adults in the congregation. There were other benefits that even today different ones that I served in earlier circuits bring forth to me. For example, after having a good time in field service and then the meetings, I would do recreational things with the kids. And we ran track out in the streets, and we played board games, softball, basketball, and then we had good times just talking about the truth and also talking about how you can put your ministry first, and there's plenty of time for seeking a mate later.

Mark Sanderson: So now, for a time, you were serving as a single brother, but at some point, that changed. When did that happen?

Robert P. Johnson: I have enjoyed the best of two worlds. I enjoyed singleness and the blessings Jehovah gave me. But when I was 28 years old, I married a beautiful pioneer sister, and I had already gotten adjusted in my circuit work. This was my second circuit. So, thanks to Jehovah, we were able to be married, and to this day Gracie and I continue in full-time service after 52 years of marriage.

Mark Sanderson: So R.P., you started with circuit work, and then later you went on to district work.

Robert P. Johnson: Right.

Mark Sanderson: And then you were teaching the Kingdom Ministry School.

Robert P. Johnson: Mm-hm.

Mark Sanderson: And then you got invited to Bethel.

Robert P. Johnson: Right.

Mark Sanderson: And 31 years at Bethel, right?

Robert P. Johnson: Oh, yes.

Mark Sanderson: And now you and Gracie are doing special pioneer work.

Robert P. Johnson: Right, in Orlando, Florida.

Mark Sanderson: So you have more than 60 years of full-time service to Jehovah.

Robert P. Johnson: It's because of Jehovah's blessing, and it's made me happy.

Mark Sanderson: So the question I want to ask you is: When you're looking back now to these 60 wonderful years—more than 60 wonderful years—what would you say to young people who are facing the same decision that you faced when you were a little boy growing up in the truth?

Robert P. Johnson: It's the best thing I could've done with my life, and I had many opportunities. Jehovah blessed my humble efforts as he has blessed you and others too. The young people today have even more opportunities because Jehovah's organization under the leadership of Jesus Christ is expanding and moving fast. And, like Brother Richardson taught me, if you just make yourself available, then the organization will find a place for you and use you, and that's so true today. One of my greatest joys is to see the young people take the baton and run with it, and I have no regrets. There's been no challenge that has overwhelmed me and made me regret things. There were challenges, of course, but with Jehovah's help, well, I'm here today. And that can be true of our young people. So seize the opportunity while you're young and experience the blessing that Jehovah gives those who serve him from youth onward.

Mark Sanderson: R.P., it has been such a wonderful joy to have you here on this program and to hear about your life filled with joy, your life filled with blessings, all because of the decision you made just as a little boy to dedicate your life to Jehovah and get baptized. Thank you so much.

Robert P. Johnson: Thank you. I appreciate talking about it.

15, 16. When will Gog of Magog invade our restored spiritual land?

17, 18. How will Jehovah guide matters during the great tribulation?

The Land—When, Why, and How Will Gog Invade It?

15 It is sobering to think that soon a coalition of earthly nations will invade our precious spiritual land. Since this foretold attack will involve us as Jehovah’s pure worshippers, we want to know more about it. Consider three questions that naturally arise.

16 *When will Gog of Magog invade our restored spiritual land?* The prophecy answers: “In the final part of the years you will invade the land.” (Ezek. 38:8) This suggests a time close to the end of this system of things. Remember that the great tribulation will begin with the destruction of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. *After* false religious institutions have been destroyed and *before* Armageddon begins, Gog will launch a final, all-out attack on true worshippers.

17 *Why will Gog invade the restored land of Jehovah’s pure worshippers?* Ezekiel’s prophecy reveals two factors—first, Jehovah’s guiding hand and, second, Gog’s evil motives.



¹⁸ *Jehovah's guiding hand.* (Read Ezekiel 38:4, 16.) Notice what Jehovah says to Gog: "I will . . . put hooks in your jaws" and, "I will bring you against my land." Do those words mean that Jehovah will force the nations to attack his own worshippers? Of course not! He would never cause evil to befall his people. (Job 34:12) But Jehovah knows his enemies—that they will hate pure worshippers and will not be able to resist an opportunity to try to wipe them out. (1 John 3:13) As if putting hooks in Gog's jaws and leading him along, Jehovah will guide matters so that events will unfold according to His will and timetable. At some point following the destruction of Babylon the Great, Jehovah may in some way lure the nations into carrying out what is already in their hearts. Jehovah will thus set the stage for the attack that leads to Armageddon, earth's greatest war. Then he will deliver his people, magnify his sovereignty, and sanctify his holy name.—Ezek. 38:23.

¹⁹ *Gog's evil motives.* The nations will "devise an evil plan." They will seek to vent their long-standing rage and hatred on

19. What will motivate Gog to try to plunder pure worship?



Gog will "devise an evil plan" in a futile attempt to wipe out pure worship
SEE PARAGRAPH 19

20. How will Gog invade the spiritual land, or paradise?

21. Why are you thankful that Jehovah has warned us about what is just ahead?

The nations will seek to plunder pure worship because they hate it and all who promote it

Jehovah’s worshippers, who will seem vulnerable, as if “living in settlements unprotected by walls, bars, or gates.” The nations will also be eager to “take much spoil and plunder” from those “who are accumulating wealth.” (Ezek. 38:10-12) What “wealth”? Jehovah’s people have great spiritual wealth; our most precious possession is our pure worship, which we give to Jehovah alone. The nations will seek to plunder pure worship, not because they value it, but because they hate it and all who promote it.

²⁰ *How will Gog invade the spiritual land, or paradise?* The nations may try to disrupt our way of life and stop us from carrying out our worship. To that end, perhaps they will try to interrupt the flow of spiritual food, prevent us from meeting together, break up the unity we enjoy, and stop us from zealously proclaiming God’s message. All of those are elements of the spiritual paradise. Egged on by Satan, the nations will try to efface true worshippers—and along with them pure worship—from the earth.

²¹ The coming attack by Gog of Magog will affect all true worshippers in the God-given spiritual land. How thankful we are that Jehovah has warned us about what is just ahead! Meanwhile, as we await the great tribulation, may we be determined to uphold pure worship, giving it priority in our lives. By so doing, we will contribute to the beauty of the restored land now. And we will put ourselves in line to witness something truly spectacular in the near future: How Jehovah will stand up for his people and his holy name at Armageddon, as the next chapter will explain.

YOUR PLACE IN PURE WORSHIP

- 1 Explain the identity of Gog of Magog.
- 2 What is the spiritual land, and how can you beautify it?
- 3 While awaiting the great tribulation, what should we be determined to do, and why?

Fear Them Not!

(Matthew 10:28)

G/D D7 G Am11 D7/A G/B E+5 E/D Am/C E7/B Am

Ev - er on - ward, O my peo - ple, Let the King - dom tid - ings go.
E - ven though your foes are man - y, Though they threat - en and re - vile,
Nev - er fear you are for - got - ten; I am still your strength and shield.

D7 D° D7 G G° G

Trem - ble not be - fore our foe. Let all lov - ers of truth know
Though they flat - ter and they smile, To mis - lead and to be - guile.
Though you die up - on the field, E - ven death to me will yield.

G/D D7 G Am11 D7/A G/B E+5 E/D A/C# D A7/E D/F#

That my reign - ing Son, Christ Je - sus, To the earth has cast the foe,
Fear them not, my faith - ful peo - ple, Nor their per - se - cu - tion's heat,
Fear them not who kill the bod - y But can - not de - stroy the soul.

F° D/F# Am6/C B7 D/E E9 G/A A7 D D7

Soon to bind the Dev - il, Sa - tan, Let - ting all his vic - tims go.
For I will pre - serve the faith - ful Till the vic - t'ry is com - plete.
To the end may you be faith - ful; I will bring you to your goal!

Fear Them Not!

Chorus

G Bm/D D/C G/B G/D D7 C/G G

Fear them not, O my be - lov - ed,

R.H.

D7 C/D D7 D+5 G G#° D7/A D7

Though their boast - ing threats may fly.

G Bm/D D/C G/B B7 D/C C Am7 A#°

I will keep my faith - ful ser - vant

G/B Bb° D7/A G G/D D7 G G/B Am11 G

As the ap - ple of my eye.

(See also Deut. 32:10; Neh. 4:14; Ps. 59:1; 83:2, 3.)

OCTOBER 2021

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
DECEMBER 6, 2021–JANUARY 2, 2022

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COVER PICTURE:

Although Noah preached faithfully for many years, no one joined him in the ark except for his immediate family. Even so, Noah was successful in obeying God! (See study article 43, paragraph 11)

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Holding Fast to Our Hope

(Hebrews 6:18, 19)

Dm Dsus4 Dm A Dm/A Gadd9/B A/C# Dm Gm/D

Man - kind has stum - bled for cen - tu - ries in dark - ness.
 "God's day is near!" rings the King - dom proc - la - ma - tion;

Dm Dsus4 Dm A Dm/A Gadd9/B A/C# Dm

Vain is their quest as they try to catch the wind.
 Men will no long - er cry out to God: "How long?"

Dm7 Gm Gm/Bb G7/B C Bb/D C7/E F F/A

Man's trag - ic flaw is re - vealed in its stark - ness;
 Soon he will free all his groan - ing cre - a - tion.

Bb Gm6/Bb Bb Gm6/Bb Bb6 E7/B B° A/C#

None can they save, for they all have sinned.
 Praise God Al - might - y, and join our song.

Holding Fast to Our Hope

Chorus

D Dma7 G G/B Gm/Bb A Bm7 A7/C# D F#/C#
 Sing with good cheer, for God's King - dom is here! His

Bm Bm/A G Em7 A7 G/B A7/C# D
 Son's might - y reign brings us free - dom from fear.

Dma7 G G/B Gm/Bb A Bm7 A7/C# D F#/C#
 Through him, at last, e - vil soon will be past; This

Bm Bm/A G G/B Gm/Bb A7 G/A A7 D
 hope, like an an - chor, is hold - ing us fast.

SONG 142

Holding Fast to Our Hope

PREVIEW

In this article, we will look at the pattern of true worship set by Jesus and examine how his early disciples followed it. We will also provide evidence that Jehovah's Witnesses are following that pattern of true worship today.

Hold Fast to the Truth With Strong Conviction

“Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine.”

—1 THESS. 5:21.

THERE may be tens of thousands of so-called Christian denominations that claim to worship God acceptably. No wonder many people are confused! They ask, “Is there one true religion, or do all religions please God?” Are we strongly convinced in our own mind that what we are teaching is the truth and that the pattern of worship that Jehovah's Witnesses are following today is the one that is acceptable to Jehovah? Is it really possible to have such conviction? Let us consider the evidence.

² The apostle Paul was strongly convinced of the truth. **(Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5.)** That conviction was not based on emotion. Paul was a diligent student of God's Word. He believed that “all Scripture is inspired of God.” (2 Tim. 3:16) What did his studies reveal? In the Scriptures, Paul found undeniable proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah—evidence that the Jewish religious leaders chose to ignore. Those religious hypocrites claimed to represent God but denied him by their works. (Titus 1:16) Unlike them, Paul did not pick and choose which parts of God's Word he would believe. He was ready to teach and apply “all the counsel of God.”—Acts 20:27.

³ Some feel that the true religion should be able to

1. Why are many people confused?
2. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, why was the apostle Paul convinced of the truth?
3. To have strong conviction, must we have the answers to *all* our questions? (See also the box “Jehovah's Works and Thoughts—Too Numerous to Recount.”)

answer every question, even questions that are not specifically addressed in the Bible. Is that a realistic expectation? Consider Paul's example. He encouraged fellow believers to "make sure of all things," but he also admitted that there were many things he did not understand. (1 Thess. 5:21) "We have partial knowledge," he wrote, adding, "we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror." (1 Cor. 13:9, 12) Paul did not understand everything; nor do we. But Paul did see the general outline of Jehovah's purposes. He knew enough to be convinced that he had the truth!

⁴ One way we can strengthen our conviction that we have found the truth is by comparing the pattern of worship set by Jesus with what Jehovah's Witnesses are doing today. In this article, we will see that true Christians (1) reject idolatry, (2) respect Jehovah's name, (3) love the truth, and (4) love one another intensely.

WE REJECT IDOLATRY

⁵ Moved by his deep love for God, Jesus worshipped Jehovah exclusively, both when he was in heaven and when he was on earth. (Luke 4:8) He taught his disciples to do likewise. Neither Jesus nor his faithful disciples ever used images in worship. Since God is a Spirit, nothing that man could possibly conceive could even come close to representing Jehovah's glory! (Isa. 46:5)

4. How can we strengthen our conviction that we have found the truth, and what will we consider about true Christians?

5. What do we learn from Jesus about the proper way to worship God, and how can we apply what he taught?

Jehovah's Works and Thoughts—"Too Numerous to Recount"

To have strong conviction that we have the truth, must we have the answers to *all* our questions now or do we have to be able to answer every question that is asked of us? No. As shown by the following scriptures, we will never know all there is to know about Jehovah's works and thoughts. We will continue to learn about our God on into eternity. In the meantime, Jehovah has revealed enough about himself and his purposes to allow us to build strong faith in him and to explain to others the primary teachings of his Word.

- Psalm 40:5: "How many things you have done, O Jehovah my God, your wonderful works and your thoughts toward us. None can compare to you; if I were to try to tell and speak of them, they would be too numerous to recount!"
- Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has even put eternity in their heart; yet mankind will never find out the work that the true God has made from start to finish."
- Isaiah 55:9: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
- Romans 11:33: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and beyond tracing out his ways are!"

But what about making images of so-called saints and praying to them? In the second of the Ten Commandments, Jehovah said: “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 . . . You must not bow down to them.” (Ex. 20:4, 5) Those words are clear to those who desire to please God.

⁶ Secular historians have acknowledged that the early Christians gave exclusive devotion to God. For instance, the book *History of the Christian Church* states that the early Christians “would have looked with horror” at the suggestion of having images in places of worship. Today, Jehovah’s Witnesses follow the pattern set by the first-century Christians. We do not pray to images of “saints” or angels; we do not even pray to Jesus. And we do not perform acts of worship to symbols of the State. Come what may, we are determined to obey Jesus’ words: “It is Jehovah your God you must worship.”—Matt. 4:10.

⁷ Today many follow charismatic church leaders. Enthusiasm for such men sometimes borders on idolatry. People pack their churches, buy their books, and donate heavily to the causes these leaders promote. Some individuals hang on to their every word. It is hard to imagine that these churchgoers could be more excited if Jesus himself were to appear to them! In contrast, true worshippers of Jehovah have no

clergy. Although we respect those who are taking the lead, we accept Jesus’ clear teaching: “All of you are brothers.” (Matt. 23:8-10) We do not idolize men, whether they are religious leaders or political rulers. And we do not support their causes. Rather, we remain neutral and separate from the world. In these areas, we stand out as different from the many groups of professed Christians.—John 18:36.

WE RESPECT JEHOVAH’S NAME

⁸ On one occasion, Jesus prayed: “Father, glorify your name.” Jehovah himself answered that prayer with a thunderous voice from heaven, promising that he would glorify his name. (John 12:28) Throughout his ministry, Jesus glorified his Father’s name. (John 17:26) So it is reasonable to expect that true Christians would be proud to use God’s name and to make it known to others.

⁹ In the first century C.E., shortly after the Christian congregation was established, Jehovah “turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name.” (Acts 15:14) Those first-century Christians were proud to use God’s name and to make it known to others. They used the divine name prominently in their ministry and in their writings.* They proved themselves to be a people for God’s name.—Acts 2:14, 21.

* See the box “Did the First Christians Use God’s Name?” in *The Watchtower*, July 1, 2010, p. 6.

6. What pattern of worship do Jehovah’s Witnesses follow today?

7. What clear distinctions exist between Jehovah’s Witnesses and other religions?

8. How do we know that Jehovah wants his name to be glorified and widely known?

9. How did the first-century Christians prove that they respected God’s name?



True Christians are proud to tell others about Jehovah (See paragraphs 8-10)

¹⁰ Are Jehovah’s Witnesses a people for Jehovah’s name? Consider the evidence. Today many religious leaders have done everything in their power to conceal the fact that God has a personal name. They have removed it from their Bible translations and, in some cases, have banned the use of that name in their religious services.* Can anyone deny that Jehovah’s Witnesses are the only ones who give Jehovah’s name the respect and honor it deserves? We are making God’s personal name

* For example, in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI directed that God’s name is “neither to be used [n]or pronounced” in Catholic religious services, hymns, or prayers.

10. What evidence is there that Jehovah’s Witnesses are a people for Jehovah’s name?

more widely known than any other religious group! In that regard, we are doing our very best to live up to our name, Jehovah’s Witnesses. (Isa. 43:10-12) We have produced over 240 million copies of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which uses Jehovah’s name in places where it has been omitted by other Bible translators. And we produce Bible-based publications that promote Jehovah’s name in more than 1,000 languages!

WE LOVE THE TRUTH

¹¹ Jesus loved the truth, that is, the truth about God and His purposes.

11. How did the early Christians manifest their love for truth?

Jesus lived in harmony with that truth, and he made that truth known to others. (John 18:37) Jesus' true followers also deeply loved the truth. (John 4:23, 24) In fact, the apostle Peter referred to Christianity as "the way of the truth." (2 Pet. 2:2) Because of their strong love for truth, the early Christians rejected religious ideas, cultural traditions, and personal opinions that were out of harmony with the truth. (Col. 2:8) Likewise today, true Christians strive to "go on walking in the truth" by strictly basing all their beliefs and their way of life on Jehovah's Word.—3 John 3, 4.

¹² God's people today do not claim to have perfect or complete knowledge of the truth. At times, they have made mistakes in doctrinal matters and in organizational direction. That should not surprise us. The Scriptures make it clear that accurate knowledge increases with time. (Col. 1:9, 10) Jehovah reveals the truth gradually, and we must be willing to wait patiently for the light of truth to get brighter. (Prov. 4:18) When those taking the lead realize that our understanding on a certain point of truth needs to be clarified, they do not hesitate to make the needed adjustments. While many denominations in Christendom make changes to please their congregations or to get closer to the world, the changes made by Jehovah's organization are designed to draw us closer to God and to the pattern of worship established by Jesus. (Jas. 4:4) The adjustments we make are driven, not by mod-

12. What happens when those taking the lead realize that our understanding needs to be clarified, and why do they take that action?

ern trends or popular demands, but by a clearer understanding of the Scriptures. We love the truth!—1 Thess. 2:3, 4.

WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER INTENSELY

¹³ Of all the qualities that defined the first-century Christian congregation, the most important was love. Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) Today, Jehovah's Witnesses enjoy a loving unity on a global scale. Like no other organization, our close-knit brotherhood rises above national, racial, and social boundaries. We see evidence of genuine love at our meetings, assemblies, and conventions. That evidence strengthens our conviction that our form of worship is the one approved by Jehovah.

¹⁴ The Scriptures urge us to "have intense love for one another." (1 Pet. 4:8) One way we show such love is by forgiving one another and putting up with one another's imperfections. We also look for opportunities to be generous and hospitable to all in the congregation, even to those who may have offended us. **(Read Colossians 3:12-14.)** Such a loving bond is truly the foremost identifying mark of true Christians.

"ONE FAITH"

¹⁵ We follow the pattern of worship set

13. What is the most important quality shown by true Christians, and how is it evident among Jehovah's Witnesses today?

14. According to Colossians 3:12-14, what is an important way we can show intense love for one another?

15. In what other ways do we follow the pattern of worship set by the first-century Christians?

by the first-century Christian congregation in other ways as well. For instance, our organizational structure—which includes traveling overseers, elders, and ministerial servants—mirrors the arrangement established by the apostles in the first century. (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5) Our view of sex and marriage, our respect for the sacredness of blood, and our desire to protect the congregation from unrepentant wrongdoers are all based on the pattern set in the first century.—Acts 15:28, 29; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9, 10; Heb. 13:4.

¹⁶ Jesus said that many would claim to be his disciples but that not all would be genuine. (Matt. 7:21-23) The Scriptures also forewarned that in the last days, many would have only “an appearance of godliness.” (2 Tim. 3:1, 5) Yet, the Bible plainly tells us that there is “one

16. What do we learn from the statement found at Ephesians 4:4-6?

faith” that has God’s approval.—**Read Ephesians 4:4-6.**

¹⁷ Who are practicing the one true faith today? We have examined the evidence. We have looked at the pattern of worship taught by Jesus and practiced by the first-century Christians. There is only one answer—Jehovah’s Witnesses. What a privilege we have to be one of Jehovah’s people and to know the truth about Jehovah and his purposes! May we continue to hold fast to the truth with strong conviction.

17. Who today are following Jesus and practicing the one true faith?

PICTURE DESCRIPTION Page 21: Jehovah’s organization has released the *New World Translation* in over 200 languages so that people can read in their own tongue a Bible that features God’s name.

AS JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES, HOW DO WE SHOW THAT WE . . .

- worship Jehovah exclusively and respect his name?
- love the truth?
- love one another intensely?

3 Our Strength, Our Hope, Our Confidence

(Proverbs 14:26)

C F G C G/B

O Je - ho - vah, you have giv - en us a
So Je - ho - vah, please in - still in us a

Am F Gsus4 G

hope that we hold dear. It's a
heart that won't for - get, For you've

C F G Am Am/G

hope we find so thrill - ing we
al - ways been our com - fort when

F Dm7 Gsus4 G

want the world to hear. But at
trou - bled times we've met. And these

Our Strength, Our Hope, Our Confidence

C F G C C/B

times thoughts this life's anx and i - e - ties are the
that lift and strength - en us can re -

Am F Gsus4 G G7/F

cause of fears with - in, And the
vive that dy - ing flame, For they

C/E F G Am

hope fill that burned our hearts so bright - ly has
our hearts with cour - age to

F Dm7 E7sus4 E7 Chorus

sud - den - ly grown dim. You're our
speak a - bout your name.

Our Strength, Our Hope, Our Confidence

Am Am/G G/F F C/E

strength, you're our hope, you're our con - fi - dence. What -

Detailed description: This system contains the first line of music. The treble staff has a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It features a melody of eighth and quarter notes with lyrics underneath. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment of quarter notes. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff: Am, Am/G, G/F, F, and C/E.

Dm7 Am/C Bb Fadd9 G7sus4 G7

ev - er we lack, you sup - ply. When we

Detailed description: This system contains the second line of music. The treble staff continues the melody with lyrics. The bass staff has a few rests in the first two measures. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff: Dm7, Am/C, Bb, Fadd9, G7sus4, and G7.

Am Am/G G/F F Dm7

preach, when we teach, we have con - fi - dence be -

Detailed description: This system contains the third line of music. The treble staff continues the melody with lyrics. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff: Am, Am/G, G/F, F, and Dm7.

C/E F6 F/G G13 C

cause it's on you we re - ly.

Detailed description: This system contains the fourth and final line of music. The treble staff continues the melody with lyrics. The bass staff continues the accompaniment. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff: C/E, F6, F/G, G13, and C. The final two measures of both staves feature a long, sustained chord.

(See also Ps. 72:13, 14; Prov. 3:5, 6, 26; Jer. 17:7.)