

My brothers and sisters, don't forget to follow the instructions given to us by the holy spirit to "*make sure of the more important things.*" (Php 1:10)

That responsibility has been put upon your shoulders. You cannot push it off on someone else to decide for you. **You** must "prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Ro 12:2)

If you rely on others to decide for you, then you are a follower of men, not a follower of God and Christ. (Col 3:23)

At Mark 8:30 Jesus "*strictly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.*"

Why did he do that? The book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* answers that question:

[ct p. 151] Why would he say that? (Mr 8:30) Jesus was available in their midst, so he did not want people to reach conclusions based on mere hearsay. That is logical, is it not? (John 10:24-26) The point is, our Creator likewise wants us to find out about him through our own investigation of solid evidence. He expects us to have convictions based on facts.—Acts 17:27.

Yes, having convictions based on what others say means your beliefs are based on "*hearsay*", **even if what they say is true.** Your beliefs should be based on your own thorough

investigation of what the Bible says, not the words of others.
(Isa 2:22; Jn 4:42)

Does that thinking align with the instructions given to us by the governing body? Yes it does. Here are Watchtower quotes showing their instructions to "*make sure*" and to "*prove to ourselves.*"

[w14 12/15 p. 7 ¶4] ⁴ If we want to understand Jesus' illustrations, we need to follow the example of his faithful disciples. This also involves three steps. First, we need to be willing to take the time to study and meditate on what Jesus said, to do the necessary research, and to ask the appropriate questions. This leads to *knowledge*. (Prov. 2:4, 5) Next, we need to see how that knowledge fits in with what we already know, discerning its benefit to us personally. That results in *understanding*. (Prov. 2:2, 3) Finally, we should use what we have learned, putting it into action in our lives. This shows *wisdom* on our part.—Prov. 2:6, 7.

[w16.09 p. 25 ¶7] ⁷ Is it wrong to ask sincere questions about the Bible? By no means! Jehovah wants you to use "your power of reason" to prove the truth to yourself. He does not want you to believe just because others do. So use your thinking ability to gain accurate knowledge. That knowledge can then become the firm foundation for genuine faith. (Read Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Timothy 2:4.) One way to gain such

knowledge is through the study projects that you choose to pursue.

[w17.06 12 ¶14] We must develop good personal study habits and do careful research in God's Word and in our publications. This will help us to discover truths that may be "new" in the sense that we did not know them before. (Josh. 1:8, 9; Ps. 1:2, 3) The very first issue of this magazine, published in July 1879, stated: "Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and *almost* choked by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. If you would find it you must be ever on the lookout. . . . If you would possess it you must stoop to get it. Be not content with *one* flower of truth. . . . Gather ever, seek for more." Yes, we must be eager to enrich our own treasure store of divine truths.

[w18.06 p. 19 ¶14] ¹⁴ All Christians should want to move "beyond the primary doctrine about the Christ" and to "press on to maturity." (Heb. 6:1) This does not happen automatically. We need to "press on," or keep working at it. Growing to maturity involves advancing to an increased level of knowledge and insight. That is why we have repeatedly been encouraged to read a portion of the Bible daily. (Ps. 1:1-3) Have you made that a personal goal? Doing such reading can give you greater insight into Jehovah's laws and principles and a deeper understanding of God's Word.

[w19.06 p. 13] ¹⁷ We need to be convinced of our beliefs. If we leave challenging questions unanswered in our minds, they can become serious doubts. Those doubts could eventually distort our thinking and destroy our faith. What, then, do we need to do? God's Word tells us to transform our minds, so that we may **prove to ourselves** "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) By regular study, we can prove to ourselves the truths we have learned from the Bible. We can be fully convinced that Jehovah's standards are right. Then, like a tree with solid roots, we will be firmly rooted, "stabilized in the faith."—Read Colossians 2:6, 7.

[w02 12/1 p. 17] ¹⁸ Although the slave class is defined as "faithful and discreet," Jesus did not say that it would be infallible. This group of faithful anointed brothers still consists of imperfect Christians. Even with the best of intentions, they can be mistaken, as such men sometimes were in the first century. (Acts 10:9-15; Galatians 2:8, 11-14)

Who can uncover the deeper things of the Bible? Anyone can. Even the "*uneducated and ordinary.*" (Acts 4:13; Mt 11:25; 1Co 1:27)

[w16.01 p. 20 par. 15] "Jehovah's spirit works with equal force in those who have the hope of living forever on earth"

In recent Watchtower articles we are told things like what is found in the February 2022 Study article entitled "Do You Trust in Jehovah's Way of Doing Things?" Paragraph 15 says this:

[w22 p. 6 ¶15] (Jehovah) will likely provide direction through his appointed representatives. That will hardly be the time to second-guess the direction or to view it with skepticism, wondering, 'Is this really coming from Jehovah, or are the responsible brothers acting on their own?'

That categorically and unequivocally contradicts the directions given to us in the Bible, which tells us to "*make sure*" (Php 1:10) and to "*test the inspired statements to see whether they originate with God.*" (1Jo 4:1; 1Th 5:21)

Perhaps if that article was entitled 'Do You Trust in Jehovah's Directions in the Bible?' the advice in the article would not be to accept what you are told without question.

God has instructed **you** to use "***your power of reason***" (Ro 12:1) and not to rely on the reasonings of others.

(1 Timothy 4:15) Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, so that **your** advancement may be plainly seen by all people.

(1 Corinthians 2:15) the spiritual man examines all things,

Do not give in to Satan's pressures.

[w17 7/15 p. 28 ¶3, 4] Become “thoroughly able to comprehend” the full scope of the truth. (Ephesians 3:18) That will take real effort on your part. But remember this basic fact expressed by author Noam Chomsky: “Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It’s something you have to find out for yourself.” So “find out for yourself” by being diligent in “carefully examining the Scriptures daily.”—Acts 17:11.

Keep in mind that Satan does not want you to think clearly or reason things out well. Why? Because propaganda “is likely to be most effective,” says one source, “if people . . . are discouraged from thinking critically.” So never be content passively or blindly to accept what you hear. (Proverbs 14:15) Use your God-given thinking abilities and power of reason to make the truth your own.

(Isaiah 2:22) For your own sakes, quit trusting in mere man, Who is only the breath in his nostrils. Why should he be taken into account?

Most in Christendom wish to be told what to think so that they aren't bothered by having to think for themselves. They think that if what they were taught is wrong, then at Armageddon when they are confronted about it, they can just blame their preacher for having taught them incorrectly.

But we know that won't cut it because God requires **us** not to follow blindly. (Mt 15:14)

(Romans 13:11) And do this because you know the season, that it is already the hour for you to awake from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than at the time when we became believers.

(1 Thessalonians 5:6) So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.

(Ephesians 5:14) “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and the Christ will shine upon you.”

:^)

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Monday, May 16

Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, . . . only the Father.—Matthew 24:36.

In some countries, people respond eagerly when they hear the good news. It is just what they have been waiting for! In other lands, people show little interest in God or the Bible. What is the common response where you live? Whatever it is, Jehovah expects us to keep right on preaching until the work is completed to his satisfaction. At Jehovah's set time, the preaching work will reach its conclusion and "the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Jesus foretold events and conditions that would mark the last days and that could distract his followers from accomplishing the preaching work. He admonished his disciples to "keep on the watch." (Matthew 24:42) Today, we face distractions similar to those that prevented the people of Noah's day from paying attention to the warning proclaimed by Noah. (Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Peter 2:5) Therefore, we want to stay focused on the work Jehovah has given us to do. w20.09 8 paragraphs 1-2, 4

Tuesday, May 17

All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted.—2 Timothy 3:12.

Satan has “great anger,” and we would be fooling ourselves if we were to imagine that we could somehow avoid his wrath. (Revelation 12:12) In the near future, all of us will face tests of our integrity. Soon, the world will experience “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now.” (Matthew 24:21) During that time, family members may turn against us and our work may be banned. (Matthew 10:35, 36) Will we personally, like King Asa, trust in Jehovah for help and protection? (2 Chronicles 14:11) Jehovah has been preparing us spiritually for what lies ahead. He is guiding “the faithful and discreet slave” to provide nourishing spiritual “food at the proper time” to help us remain steadfast in our worship. (Matthew 24:45) But we must do our part and build unshakable faith in Jehovah.—Hebrews 10:38, 39. w20.09 18 paragraphs 16-18

Wednesday, May 18

A king's heart is like streams of water in Jehovah's hand. He directs it wherever He pleases.—Proverbs 21:1.

When it is in harmony with his purpose, Jehovah may use his powerful holy spirit to cause people in authority to do what he desires. Humans can dig a canal to divert the water of a stream in a direction that fits their plans. Similarly, Jehovah can use his spirit to divert the thoughts of rulers in a direction that is in harmony with his purpose. When that occurs, people in authority feel motivated to make decisions that benefit God's people. (Compare Ezra 7:21, 25, 26.)

What can we do? We can pray "concerning kings and all those who are in positions of authority" when these individuals are called on to make decisions that affect our Christian life and ministry. (1 Timothy 2:1, 2, footnote.; Nehemiah 1:11) As the first-century Christians did, we too pray intensely to God for our brothers and sisters who are in prison.—Acts 12:5; Hebrews 13:3. *w20.11* 15 paragraphs 13-14

Thursday, May 19

Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them.—Matthew 28:19.

If you are the one who studied with the new disciple, how thrilling for you to witness that one's baptism! (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20) Newly baptized disciples are fine "letters of recommendation," not just for those who studied with them but also for the whole congregation. (2 Corinthians 3:1-3) It is very good to see that in a four year period, on average, some 10,000,000 Bible studies have been reported every month worldwide. And during those same years, on average, over 280,000 got baptized each year as Jehovah's Witnesses and new disciples of Jesus Christ. How can we help more of those millions of Bible students to get baptized? As long as Jehovah is patiently allowing people the time and opportunity to become Christ's disciples, we want to do all we can to help them progress to baptism as quickly as possible. Time is fast running out!—1 Corinthians 7:29a; 1 Peter 4:7. w20.10 6 paragraphs 1-2

Friday, May 20

God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.—James 4:6.

King Saul did not obey Jehovah. And when the prophet Samuel confronted him about the matter, Saul did not acknowledge his mistake. Instead, he tried to justify his actions by minimizing the consequences of his disobedience and shifting the blame to others. (1 Samuel 15:13-24) Earlier, Saul had displayed a similar attitude. (1 Samuel 13:10-14) Sadly, he allowed his heart to become haughty. He did not correct his thinking, so Jehovah reproved him and rejected him. To learn from Saul's example, we do well to ask ourselves these questions: 'When I read counsel from God's Word, do I tend to justify my thinking? Do I minimize the consequences of disobedience? Do I shift the blame for my actions to someone else?' If our answer to any of those questions is yes, we must adjust our thinking and attitude. Otherwise, our heart can become so haughty that Jehovah will reject us as his friend. w20.11 20 paragraphs 4-5

Saturday, May 21

*Remember . . . your Grand Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of distress come and the years arrive when you will say: “I have no pleasure in them.”—
Ecclesiastes 12:1.*

Young ones, decide whom you will serve. You have to prove to yourself who Jehovah is, what his purpose involves, and how his will relates to your life. (Romans 12:2) Then you will be able to make the most important decision of your life, the decision to serve Jehovah. (Joshua 24:15) If you keep a regular schedule of Bible reading and study, your love for Jehovah will continue to grow and your faith in him will become stronger. Choose to put Jehovah’s will first in your life. Satan’s world promises that if you use your talents for your own benefit, you will be happy. In truth, those who focus on material goals stab themselves “all over with many pains.” (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) On the other hand, if you listen to Jehovah and choose to put his will first in your life, you will be successful and “you will act wisely.”—Joshua 1:8. *w20.10*
30-31 paragraphs 17-18

Sunday, May 22

I must . . . declare the good news of the Kingdom of God . . . , because for this I was sent.—Luke 4:43.

In the first century, the message that Jesus preached offered hope to all mankind. He commanded his followers to continue the work he started, to give a witness “to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Of course, they could not do this work in their own strength. They would need holy spirit—“the helper” that Jesus had promised them. (John 14:26; Zechariah 4:6) Jesus’ followers received the holy spirit at Pentecost 33 C.E. With the help of that spirit, they immediately began to preach, and in a short time, thousands accepted the good news. (Acts 2:41; 4:4) When opposition arose, the disciples did not give in to fear but turned to God for help. They prayed: “Grant to your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness.” They were then filled with holy spirit and kept “speaking the word of God with boldness.”—Acts 4:18-20, 29, 31. w20.10 21 paragraphs 4-5

**TREASURES
FROM GOD'S WORD**

“What Do We Learn From ‘The Bow’?”:
(10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

2Sa 1:26—Why could David call Jonathan “my brother”? (*it-1 369 ¶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 min.) 2Sa 3:1-16 (5)

**APPLY YOURSELF
TO THE FIELD MINISTRY**

Initial Call: (3 min.) Begin with the sample conversation. Overcome a common objection. (3)

Return Visit: (4 min.) Begin with the sample conversation. Explain our free Bible course, and give the person a jw.org contact card. (20)

Bible Study: (5 min.) *Iff* lesson 04 point 5 and Some People Say (19)

**LIVING
AS CHRISTIANS**

Song 107

“Love . . . Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness”: (7 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness*.

“Love . . . Hopes All Things”: (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Hopes All Things*.

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.)
Iff lesson 04

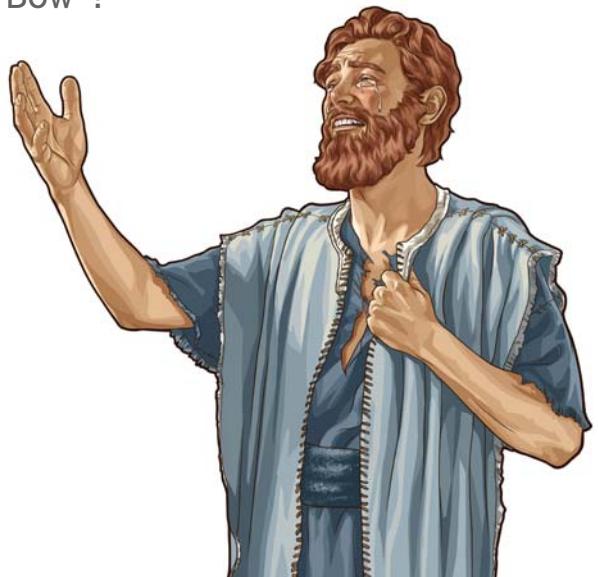
**What Do We Learn From “The Bow”?**

[Play the video *Introduction to 2 Samuel*.]

Show respect for those in authority (2Sa 1:17, 18, 23, 24; *w00 6/15 13 ¶9*)

Show loyalty to friends (2Sa 1:25, 26; *w12 4/15 10 ¶8*)

ASK YOURSELF: ‘How can I show respect for the congregation elders? How can I show loyalty to fellow Christians?’



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)

2 SAMUEL 1-3

¹ After Saul's death, when David had returned from defeating the A-mal'ek-ites, David stayed at Zik'lag for two days. ² On the third day, a man came from the camp of Saul with his garments ripped apart and dirt on his head. When he approached David, he fell down to the ground and prostrated himself.

³ David asked him: "Where are you coming from?" He replied: "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." ⁴ David asked him: "How did things turn out? Please tell me." To this he said: "The people have fled from the battle and many have fallen and died. Even Saul and his son Jon'a·than have died." ⁵ Then David asked the young man who brought him the news: "How do you know that Saul and his son Jon'a·than are dead?" ⁶ The young man replied: "By chance I was on Mount Gil-bo'a, and there was Saul supporting himself on his spear, and the chariots and horsemen had caught up with him. ⁷ When he turned around and saw me, he called me, and I said, 'Here I am!' ⁸ He asked me, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am an A-mal'ek-ite.' ⁹ Then he said, 'Please stand over me and put me to death, for I am in great agony, but I am still alive.' ¹⁰ So I stood over him and put him to death, for I knew that he could not survive after he had fallen down wounded. Then I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and I brought them here to my lord."

¹¹ At this David took hold of his garments and ripped them apart, and so did all the men who were with him. ¹² And they

wailed and wept and fasted until evening for Saul, for his son Jon'a-than, for the people of Jehovah, and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

¹³ David asked the young man who brought him the news: "Where are you from?" He said: "I am the son of a foreign resident, an A-mal'ek-ite." ¹⁴ Then David said to him: "Why did you not fear to lift your hand to do away with the anointed of Jehovah?" ¹⁵ With that David called one of the young men and said: "Step forward and strike him." So he struck him down, and he died. ¹⁶ David said to him: "Your blood is on your own head, because your own mouth testified against you by saying, 'I myself put the anointed of Jehovah to death.'"

¹⁷ Then David chanted this dirge over Saul and his son Jon'a-than ¹⁸ and said that the people of Judah should be taught the dirge called "The Bow," which is written in the book of Ja'shar:

¹⁹ "The beauty, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places.
How the mighty have fallen!

²⁰ Do not tell it in Gath;
Do not announce it in the streets of Ash'ke-lon,
Or the daughters of the Phi-lis'tines will rejoice,
Or the daughters of the uncircumcised men will exult.

²¹ You mountains of Gil-bo'a,
May there be no dew or rain upon you,
Nor fields producing holy contributions,
Because there the shield of mighty ones was defiled,

The shield of Saul is no longer anointed with oil.

²² From the blood of the slain, from the fat of mighty ones,
The bow of Jon'a·than did not turn back,
And the sword of Saul would not return without
success.

²³ Saul and Jon'a·than, beloved and cherished during their
life,
And in death they were not separated.
Swifter than the eagles they were,
Mightier than the lions.

²⁴ O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet and finery,
Who put gold ornaments upon your clothing.

²⁵ How the mighty have fallen in battle!
Jon'a·than lies slain upon your high places!

²⁶ I am distressed over you, my brother Jon'a·than;
You were very dear to me.
More wonderful was your love to me than the love of
women.

²⁷ How the mighty have fallen
And the weapons of war have perished!"

2 Afterward David inquired of Jehovah, saying: "Should I go up into one of the cities of Judah?" Jehovah said to him: "Go up." David then asked: "Where should I go?" He replied: "To Heb'ron." ² So David went up there with his two wives, A·hin'o·am of Jez're·el and Ab'i·gail the widow of Na'bal the Car'mel·ite. ³ David also brought the men who were with

him, each with his household, and they settled in the cities around Heb'ron. ⁴ Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David as king over the house of Judah.

They told David: "The men of Ja'bish-gil'e-ad were the ones who buried Saul." ⁵ So David sent messengers to the men of Ja'bish-gil'e-ad and said to them: "May you be blessed by Jehovah, because you showed loyal love to your lord Saul by burying him. ⁶ May Jehovah show loyal love and faithfulness to you. I will also show you kindness because you have done this. ⁷ Now let your hands be strong and be courageous men, for your lord Saul is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me as king over them."

⁸ But Ab'ner the son of Ner, the chief of Saul's army, had taken Saul's son Ish-bo'sheth and brought him across to Ma-ha-na'im ⁹ and made him king over Gil'e-ad, the Ash'ur-ites, Jez're-el, E'phra-im, Benjamin, and over all Israel. ¹⁰ Ish-bo'sheth, Saul's son, was 40 years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned for two years. The house of Judah, however, supported David. ¹¹ The time that David was king in Heb'ron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

¹² In time Ab'ner the son of Ner and the servants of Ish-bo'sheth, Saul's son, went out from Ma-ha-na'im to Gib'e-on. ¹³ Jo'ab the son of Ze-ru'iah and the servants of David also went out and encountered them at the pool of Gib'e-on; and one group sat on this side of the pool, and the other group on that side of the pool. ¹⁴ Finally Ab'ner said to Jo'ab: "Let the young men get up and engage in combat before us." To

this Jo'ab said: "Let them get up." ¹⁵ So they got up and crossed over by number, 12 for Benjamin and Saul's son Ish-bo'sheth and 12 from the servants of David. ¹⁶ They grabbed one another by the head and each of them thrust his sword into the side of his opponent, and they all fell down together. So that place, which is in Gib'e-on, was called Hel'kath-haz-zu'rim.

¹⁷ The fighting that ensued was extremely fierce that day, and Ab'ner and the men of Israel were finally defeated before the servants of David. ¹⁸ Now the three sons of Ze-ru'iah were there—Jo'ab, A-bish'ai, and As'a-hel; and As'a-hel was as swift on his feet as a gazelle in the open field. ¹⁹ As'a-hel chased after Ab'ner, and he would not veer to the right or to the left in his pursuit of Ab'ner. ²⁰ When Ab'ner looked behind, he asked, "Is that you, As'a-hel?" to which he replied, "Yes, it is." ²¹ Then Ab'ner said to him: "Veer to your right or to your left and capture one of the young men, and take whatever you strip off him for yourself." But As'a-hel did not want to stop chasing him. ²² So Ab'ner said to As'a-hel once again: "Stop chasing me. Why should I strike you down? How could I look your brother Jo'ab in the face?" ²³ But he kept refusing to stop, so Ab'ner struck him in the abdomen with the butt end of the spear, and the spear came out from his back; and he fell there and died on the spot. Everyone who came to the place where As'a-hel fell and died would stop and pause there.

²⁴ Then Jo'ab and A-bish'ai went in pursuit of Ab'ner. As the sun was setting, they came to the hill of Am'mah, which

faces Gi'ah on the way to the wilderness of Gib'e-on.

²⁵ There the Ben'ja-min-ites gathered together behind Ab'ner, and they formed one company and made a stand on the top of a certain hill. ²⁶ Then Ab'ner called out to Jo'ab: "Is the sword going to devour endlessly? Do you not know that the outcome will only be bitterness? How long, then, will it be before you tell the people to turn back from pursuing their brothers?" ²⁷ At that Jo'ab said: "As surely as the true God is living, if you had not spoken, then only by the morning would the people have stopped pursuing their brothers." ²⁸ Jo'ab now blew the horn, and his men stopped chasing after Israel, and the fighting ceased.

²⁹ Ab'ner and his men then marched through the Ar'a-bah all that night and crossed the Jordan and marched through the entire ravine and finally came to Ma-ha-na'im. ³⁰ After Jo'ab turned back from pursuing Ab'ner, he gathered all the people together. Of David's servants, 19 were missing, in addition to As'a-hel. ³¹ But the servants of David had defeated the Ben'ja-min-ites and the men of Ab'ner, and 360 of their men had died. ³² They took As'a-hel and buried him in his father's tomb, which is at Beth'le-hem. Then Jo'ab and his men marched all night long, and they reached Heb'ron at daybreak.

3 The war between the house of Saul and the house of David dragged on; and David kept getting stronger, and the house of Saul grew steadily weaker.

² Meanwhile, sons were born to David in Heb'ron. His firstborn was Am'non by A-hin'o-am of Jez're-el. ³ His

second was Chil'e-ab by Ab'i-gail, the widow of Na'bal the Car'mel-ite; and the third was Ab'sa-lom the son of Ma'a-cah, the daughter of Tal'mai the king of Gesh'ur. ⁴ The fourth was Ad-o-ni'jah the son of Hag'gith, and the fifth was Sheph-a-ti'ah the son of A-bi'tal. ⁵ The sixth was Ith're-am by David's wife Eg'lah. These were born to David in Heb'ron.

⁶ While the war between the house of Saul and the house of David continued, Ab'ner kept strengthening his position in the house of Saul. ⁷ Now Saul had had a concubine whose name was Riz'pah, the daughter of A'iah. Ish-bo'sheth later said to Ab'ner: "Why did you have relations with the concubine of my father?" ⁸ Ab'ner grew very angry over the words of Ish-bo'sheth and said: "Am I a dog's head from Judah? Until this very day, I have shown loyal love toward the house of your father Saul and to his brothers and his friends, and I have not betrayed you into the hand of David; yet today you call me to account for an error concerning a woman. ⁹ May God do so to Ab'ner and add to it if I do not do for David just as Jehovah swore to him: ¹⁰ to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Be'er-she'ba." ¹¹ He was not able to say one more word in reply to Ab'ner, for he was afraid of him.

¹² Ab'ner immediately sent messengers to David, saying: "To whom does the land belong?" He added: "Make a covenant with me, and I will do whatever I can to turn all Israel to your side." ¹³ To this he replied: "Good! I will make a covenant with you. The only thing I ask of you is that you do

not try to see my face unless first you bring Mi'chal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me." ¹⁴ Then David sent messengers to Ish-bo'sheth, Saul's son, saying: "Give me my wife Mi'chal, to whom I became engaged for 100 foreskins of the Phi-lis'tines." ¹⁵ So Ish-bo'sheth sent to take her from her husband, Pal'ti-el the son of La'ish. ¹⁶ But her husband kept walking with her, weeping as he followed her as far as Ba-hu'rim. Then Ab'ner said to him: "Go, return!" At that he returned.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Ab'ner sent word to the elders of Israel, saying: "For some time you wanted to have David as king over you. ¹⁸ Now act, for Jehovah said to David: 'By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Phi-lis'tines and from the hand of all their enemies.'" ¹⁹ Then Ab'ner spoke to the people of Benjamin. Ab'ner also went to speak privately to David at Heb'ron to tell him what Israel and the whole house of Benjamin had agreed upon.

²⁰ When Ab'ner came to David at Heb'ron with 20 men, David held a feast for Ab'ner and for the men with him.

²¹ Then Ab'ner said to David: "Let me go and gather all Israel together to my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and you will become king over all that you desire." So David sent Ab'ner off, and he went his way in peace.

²² Just then, David's servants and Jo'ab returned from a raid, bringing a great quantity of spoil back with them. Ab'ner was no longer with David in Heb'ron, for he had sent him on

his way in peace. ²³ When Jo'ab and all the army that was with him arrived, Jo'ab was told: "Ab'ner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him off, and he went his way in peace." ²⁴ So Jo'ab went in to the king and said: "What have you done? Here Ab'ner came to you. Why did you send him off so that he successfully got away? ²⁵ You know Ab'ner the son of Ner! He came here to fool you and to get to know your every move and to find out everything that you are doing."

²⁶ So Jo'ab left David and sent messengers after Ab'ner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Si'rah; but David did not know anything about it. ²⁷ When Ab'ner returned to Heb'ron, Jo'ab took him aside inside the gate to speak with him privately. However, there he stabbed him in the abdomen, and he died; this was for killing his brother As'a-hel. ²⁸ When David heard about it later, he said: "I and my kingdom are forever innocent before Jehovah of the bloodguilt for Ab'ner the son of Ner. ²⁹ May it turn back on the head of Jo'ab and on the entire house of his father. May Jo'ab's house never be without a man suffering from a discharge or a leper or a man working at the spindle or one falling by the sword or one in need of food!" ³⁰ So Jo'ab and his brother A-bish'ai killed Ab'ner because he had put As'a-hel their brother to death in the battle at Gib'e-on.

³¹ Then David said to Jo'ab and all the people with him: "Rip your garments apart and tie on sackcloth and wail over Ab'ner." King David himself was walking behind the funeral bier. ³² They buried Ab'ner in Heb'ron; and the king wept

loudly at Ab'ner's tomb, and all the people gave way to weeping. ³³ The king chanted over Ab'ner and said:

“Should Ab'ner die the death of a senseless person?

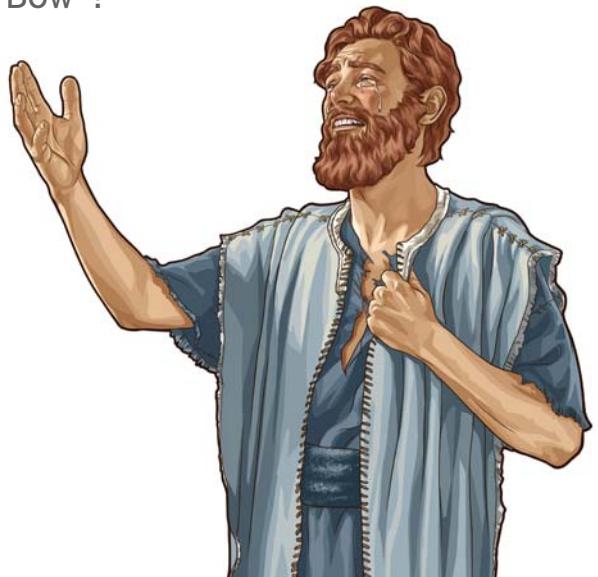
³⁴ Your hands had not been bound,
And your feet were not in fetters.
You fell like one falling before criminals.”

At that all the people wept over him again.

³⁵ Later all the people came to give David bread for consolation while it was still daytime, but David swore: “May God do so to me and add to it if before the sun sets I taste bread or anything at all!” ³⁶ All the people took notice, and it pleased them. Like everything that the king did, it pleased all the people. ³⁷ So all the people and all Israel knew on that day that the king was not responsible for having Ab'ner the son of Ner put to death. ³⁸ Then the king said to his servants: “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? ³⁹ Today I am weak, although anointed as king, and these men, the sons of Ze-ru'iah, are too brutal for me. May Jehovah repay the evildoer according to his own evil.”

Song 103 and Prayer

Opening Comments (1 min.)

**TREASURES
FROM GOD'S WORD****“What Do We Learn From ‘The Bow’?”:**
(10 min.)**Spiritual Gems:** (10 min.)2Sa 1:26—Why could David call Jonathan
“my brother”? (*it-1 369 ¶2*)What spiritual gems from this week’s
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Iff lesson 04**What Do We Learn From “The Bow”?**[Play the video *Introduction to 2 Samuel*.]Show respect for those in authority (2Sa 1:17,
18, 23, 24; *w00 6/15 13 ¶9*)Show loyalty to friends (2Sa 1:25, 26; *w12
4/15 10 ¶8*)**ASK YOURSELF:** ‘How can I show respect
for the congregation elders? How can I show
loyalty to fellow Christians?’

An introduction to the Book of 2 Samuel

An introduction to 2 Samuel. In the original Hebrew canon, 1 and 2 Samuel were one volume. The prophets Gad and Nathan, who completed the writing of 1 Samuel, wrote all of 2 Samuel. The narrative covers a period of some 37 years from 1077 to about 1040 B.C.E., when the writing was completed. Second Samuel begins shortly after the death of King Saul and concludes just before the death of King David. The book is an intimate and honest account of David's life, as he sought to follow Jehovah with all his heart.

In Chapter 1, David receives tragic news —Saul and his son Jonathan have died in battle. Deeply grieved, David composes a dirge and calls it “The Bow.” The rest of 2 Samuel can be divided into two sections.

Chapters 2 to 4 cover David's kingship over Judah; **chapters 5 to 24** cover his rule over all Israel.

In Chapter 2, David goes to Hebron, where he is made king over the tribe of Judah. Meanwhile, Saul's army chief, Abner, makes Saul's son Ish-bosheth king over the other tribes.

In Chapters 3 and 4, however, Abner and Ish-bosheth are put to death, and in the following chapter, the people make David king over all Israel. David then captures the Jebusite stronghold of Zion and moves his capital there from Hebron. Zion becomes known also as the City of David.

In Chapter 6, David has the ark of the covenant brought to Jerusalem.

In Chapter 7, David tells Nathan that he would like to build a house, or temple, for Jehovah. But God gives this privilege to a future son of the king. However, out of love for David, Jehovah makes a covenant with him for an everlasting kingdom.

Chapters 8 and 10 tell about David's victories over the Amalekites, Moabites, Philistines, and other enemies.

Chapter 11 brings us to one of the darkest periods in David's life. He commits adultery with Bath-sheba, she becomes pregnant, and David has her husband, Uriah, killed in battle.

In Chapter 12, Nathan, at Jehovah's direction, reproves David. He also says that calamity will befall David's house and that Bath-sheba's newborn son will die. Bath-sheba, who is now David's wife, becomes pregnant again and gives birth to Solomon.

In Chapters 13 to 18, the foretold calamities on David's house begin. David's son Absalom conspires to usurp the throne, and David is forced to flee Jerusalem.

In Chapter 18, David's men defeat Absalom's and Joab puts Absalom to death.

Did you know? Second Samuel powerfully illustrates the Bible's honesty. Even the failings of Israel's great leaders

are openly exposed. We also see that truly repentant sinners, while reaping what they have sown, can be forgiven.

In Chapter 23, David humbly acknowledges: “The spirit of Jehovah spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.”

In Chapter 24, David is incited to register the nation. This bad act angers Jehovah, who brings a scourge on the people. At the prophet Gad’s direction, David buys the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, builds an altar there, and offers up sacrifices to God. At Jehovah’s command, the scourge against Israel is halted.

As you read 2 Samuel, see how honestly God’s prophets recorded Israel’s history, observe how sin can have tragic consequences, and note God’s promise to give David a lasting kingdom —a promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ, “the Son of David” and King of God’s Kingdom.

May 16-22 / 2 Samuel 1-3

Song 103 and Prayer

Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

"What Do We Learn From 'The Bow'?": (10 minutes)

[Play the video *Introduction to 2 Samuel*.]

Show respect for those in authority

2 Samuel 1:17, 18: Then David chanted this dirge over Saul and his son Jonathan and said that the people of Judah should be taught the dirge called "The Bow," which is written in the book of Jashar:

2 Samuel 1:23, 24: Saul and Jonathan, beloved and cherished during their life, And in death they were not separated. Swifter than the eagles they were, Mightier than the lions. O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet and finery, Who put gold ornaments upon your clothing.

w00 6/15 13 paragraph 9

Was David distressed while he was being mistreated? “There are . . . tyrants that do seek my soul,” David cried out to Jehovah. (Psalm 54:3) He poured out his heart to Jehovah: “Deliver me from my enemies, O my God . . . Strong ones make an attack upon me, for no revolt on my part, nor any sin on my part, O Jehovah. Though there is no error, they run and get themselves ready. Do rouse yourself at my calling and see.” (Psalm 59:1-4) Have you ever felt the same way—that you had done no wrong to a person in authority, yet he kept giving you a hard time? David did not fail to show respect to Saul. Upon Saul’s death, instead of exulting in joy, David composed a dirge: “Saul and Jonathan, the lovable ones and the pleasant ones during their life . . . Swifter than the eagles they were, mightier than the lions they were. You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul.” (2 Samuel 1:23, 24) What a fine example of genuine respect for the anointed of Jehovah, even though David had been wronged by Saul!

Show loyalty to friends

2 Samuel 1:25, 26: How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain upon your high places! I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan; You were very dear to me. More wonderful was your love to me than the love of women.

w12 4/15 10 paragraph 8

The Bible also describes many loyal individuals. Let us consider two of these and see what we can learn from them, starting with a man who proved his loyalty to David. Jonathan, King Saul's eldest son, would likely have been the heir to the throne of Israel—except for one thing. Jehovah chose David to be Israel's next king. Jonathan respected God's decision. He did not jealously view David as a rival. Rather, Jonathan's "soul became bound up with the soul of David" as he pledged his loyalty to him. He even gave David his garments, sword, bow, and belt, thus bestowing royal honors on him. (1 Samuel 18:1-4) Jonathan did all he could to 'strengthen David's hand,' even to the point of risking his own life to stand up for David in front of Saul. Jonathan

loyally told David: "You yourself will be king over Israel, and I myself shall become second to you." (1 Samuel 20:30-34; 23:16, 17) It is no wonder that after Jonathan's death, David expressed his sorrow and his love for him in a mournful song.—2 Samuel 1:17, 26.

[Image:] David weeping and chanting a dirge. He is wearing a torn garment.

Ask Yourself: 'How can I show respect for the congregation elders? How can I show loyalty to fellow Christians?'

Spiritual Gems

2 Samuel 1:26—Why could David call Jonathan "my brother"?

2 Samuel 1:26: I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan; You were very dear to me. More wonderful was your love to me than the love of women.

***it-1* 369 paragraph 2**

"Brother" is also applied to those united in a general cause and having similar aims and purposes. For example, King Hiram of Tyre called King Solomon his brother, not simply

because he was an equal in rank and position but also perhaps because of mutual interests in supplying timbers and other things for the temple. (1 Kings 9:13; 5:1-12) "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" David wrote, implying that it is not blood relations alone that make for peace and unity between fleshly brothers. (Psalm 133:1) In fact, mutual affection and interest, not common parentage, prompted David to call Jonathan his brother. (2 Samuel 1:26) Companions having similar natures and dispositions, even when such are bad, are properly called brothers.—Proverbs 18:9.

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) 2 Samuel 3:1-16 (*th study 5*)

**TREASURES
FROM GOD'S WORD**

“What Do We Learn From ‘The Bow’?”:
(10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

2Sa 1:26—Why could David call Jonathan “my brother”? (*it-1 369 ¶2*)

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Bible Study: (5 min.) *Iff* lesson 04 point 5 and Some People Say (19)

**LIVING
AS CHRISTIANS****Song 107**

“Love . . . Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness”: (7 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness*.

“Love . . . Hopes All Things”: (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Hopes All Things*.

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.)
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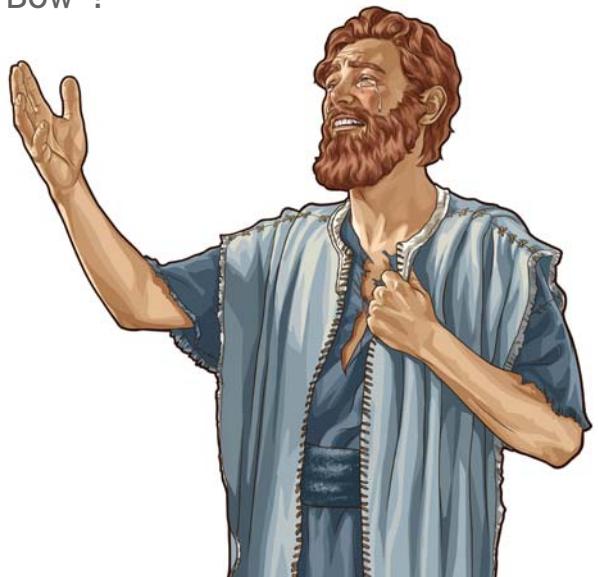
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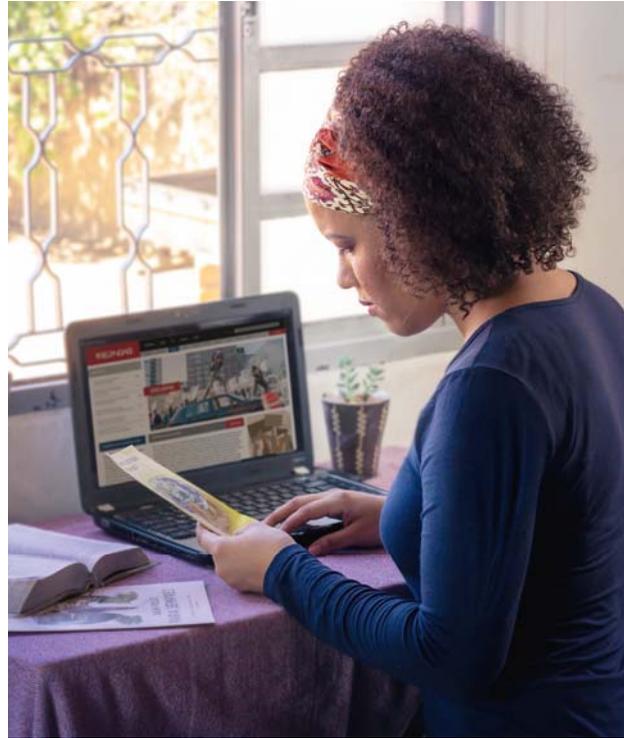




Use Current Events in Your Ministry

In his ministry, Jesus drew lessons from current events. (Lu 13:1-5) You too can use current events to stir people's interest in the Kingdom message. After mentioning the high cost of living, a natural disaster, civil unrest, drug addiction, or something similar, ask a thought-provoking question. You might ask: "Do you think we'll ever see an end to . . . ?" or "What do you think is the solution to . . . ?" Then, share a Bible verse related to the topic. If the person shows interest, direct his attention to a video or a publication in our Teaching Toolbox. As we strive to touch the hearts of people in our territory, may we "do all things for the sake of the good news." —1Co 9:22, 23.

What topics may appeal to people in *your* territory?



SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

Initial Call*

Question: How do we know that our suffering is not punishment from God?

Scripture: **Jas 1:13**

Link: Why do we suffer?

Return Visit*

Question: Why do we suffer?

Scripture: **1Jo 5:19**

Link: How does God feel about our suffering?

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





VIDEO: *Does God Have a Name?*—Excerpt (3:11)



4. Jehovah wants you to know and use his name

What shows that Jehovah wants you to know his name? **Play the VIDEO**, and then discuss the questions that follow.

- Do you think Jehovah wants his name to be known? Why?

Jehovah wants people to use his name. **Read Romans 10:13**, and then discuss these questions:

- How important is it to use God’s name, Jehovah?
- How do you feel when someone remembers your name and uses it?
- How do you think Jehovah feels when you use his name?

5. Jehovah wants you to get closer to him

A woman from Cambodia named Soten said that learning God’s name helped her to enjoy “the best feeling on earth.”

Play the VIDEO, and then discuss the question that follows.

- In the video, how did learning God’s name affect Soten?

Before you become someone’s friend, you usually learn his or her name. **Read James 4:8a**, and then discuss these questions:

- What does Jehovah invite you to do?
- How might knowing and using God’s name help you to feel closer to him?



VIDEO: *My Search for the True God* (8:18)



SOME PEOPLE SAY: “There’s only one God, so it doesn’t matter what you call him.”

- Do you believe that Jehovah is God’s name?
- How would you explain that God wants us to use his name?

107 *The Divine Pattern of Love*

(1 John 4:19)

1. The pattern of love, we learn from Jehovah
Shows the way, guides our way.
In all he has done, his dealings have shown us
How to display his loving way.
He gave us his Son, his dearest possession
To cover our sin, forgiving transgression.
What proof of his love—its greatest expression!
His way is love, Yes, God’s way is love.

2. When we walk his way, our love for each other
Will be true, warm and true,
Will move us to care for all of our brothers,
Old ones and new, not just a few.
True love for our God and love for our brother,
We can’t have the one and not have the other.
The faults of our friends, we readily cover,
Proving our love, Our brotherly love.

3. The pattern of love, the bond that unites us
Lets us be family.
Our Father above now warmly invites us:
“Come taste and see real unity.”
Come share in the love and joy that define us;
God’s spirit and Word, he gives to refine us.
Our brothers and friends are here to remind us,
God’s way is love. Jehovah is love.

(See also Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:7.)

**TREASURES
FROM GOD'S WORD**

“What Do We Learn From ‘The Bow’?”:
(10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

2Sa 1:26—Why could David call Jonathan “my brother”? (*it-1 369 ¶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 min.) 2Sa 3:1-16 (5)

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**LIVING
AS CHRISTIANS**

Song 107

“Love . . . Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness”: (7 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness*.

“Love . . . Hopes All Things”: (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Remember How Love Behaves—Hopes All Things*.

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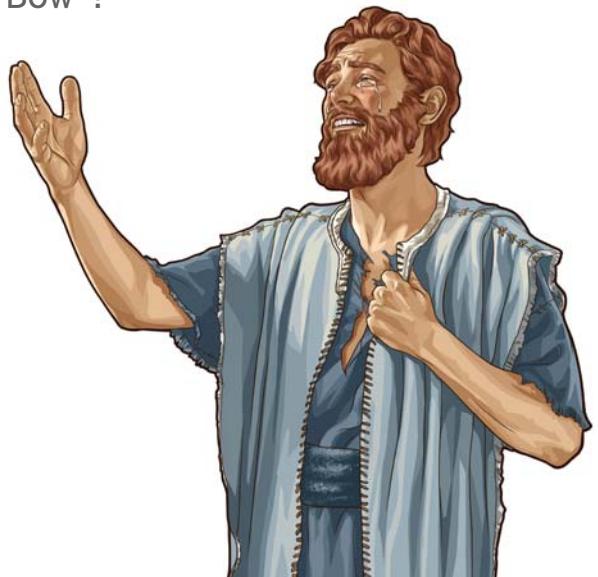
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[Play the video *Introduction to 2 Samuel*.]

Show respect for those in authority (2Sa 1:17, 18, 23, 24; *w00 6/15 13 ¶9*)

Show loyalty to friends (2Sa 1:25, 26; *w12 4/15 10 ¶8*)

ASK YOURSELF: ‘How can I show respect for the congregation elders? How can I show loyalty to fellow Christians?’





“Love . . . Does Not Rejoice Over Unrighteousness”

In all their activity, true Christians strive to be guided by love. Love “does not rejoice over unrighteousness.” (1Co 13:4, 6) Therefore, we shun entertainment that glorifies such things as

immorality and violence. Also, we do not rejoice when bad things happen to others, even to those who have hurt us.—Pr 17:5.

WATCH THE VIDEO REMEMBER HOW LOVE BEHAVES—DOES NOT REJOICE OVER UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- How did David react when he learned that Saul and Jonathan had died?

- What dirge did David compose for Saul and Jonathan?

- Why did David not rejoice over the death of Saul?



“Love . . . Hopes All Things”

Motivated by unselfish love, we hope the best for our brothers. (1Co 13:4, 7) For example, if a brother commits a sin and receives discipline, we hope that he will respond to efforts to readjust

him. We are patient with those who are weak in faith, and we try to help them. (Ro 15:1) If someone leaves the congregation, we do not give up hope that he will someday return.—Lu 15:17, 18.

WATCH THE VIDEO REMEMBER HOW LOVE BEHAVES—HOPES ALL THINGS, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- How did Abner’s loyalties change?

- How did David and Joab each respond to Abner’s request?

- Why should we hope the best for our brothers?

Remember How Love Behaves Hopes All Things

Abner had been chief of Saul's army. He pursued David in the wilderness and supported David's rival after David became king. So why was Abner coming to see David? My lord the king, make a covenant with us. We now support you as king because Jehovah has promised us salvation by means of your hand. I will make a covenant with you. David trusted Abner and hoped that he would now remain loyal. But Joab saw things differently. What have you done? You know Abner! He came here to fool you and to get to know your every move and find out everything that you're doing! Be careful. You know the law: 'You must not hold a grudge, and you must love your fellow man as yourself.' Joab's distrust grew into vengeance. He later killed Abner. Those who hate expect the worst, but those who love never lose hope.

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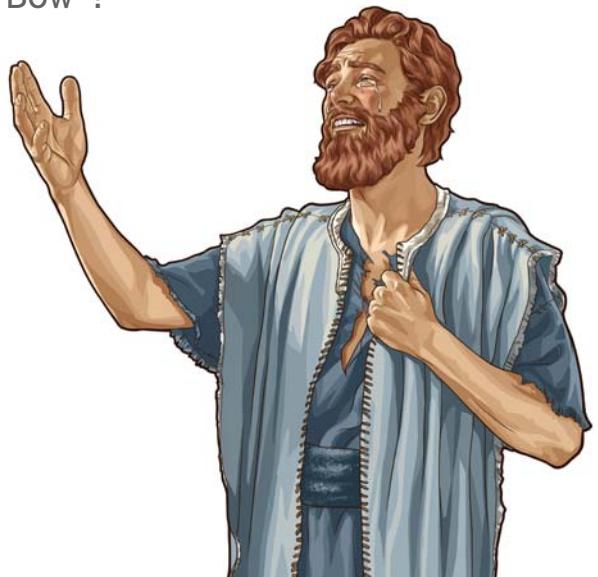
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Who Is God?

Nearly as long as humans have existed, they have worshipped many gods and goddesses. Yet, the Bible refers to one God who “is greater than all the other gods.” (2 Chronicles 2:5) Who is that? And what makes him greater than all the other gods that people worship? In this lesson, learn how this God introduces himself to you.

1. What is God’s name, and how can we be sure that he wants us to know it?

In the Bible, God introduces himself to us. He says: **“I am Jehovah. That is my name.”** (Read Isaiah 42:5, 8.) “Jehovah” is the translation of a Hebrew name that evidently means “He Causes to Become.” Jehovah wants us to know his name. (Exodus 3:15) How can we be sure of that? In the Bible he included his name over 7,000 times!* The name Jehovah belongs to “the true God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.”—Deuteronomy 4:39.

2. What does the Bible reveal about Jehovah?

The Bible says that among all the gods worshipped by humans, Jehovah is the only true God. Why? There are several reasons. Jehovah has supreme authority, and he alone is **“the Most High over all the earth.”** (Read Psalm 83:18.) He is “the Almighty,” which means he has the power to do whatever he chooses to do. He “created all things”—the universe and all life on earth. (Revelation 4:8, 11) Unlike anyone else, Jehovah has always existed, and he will exist forever.—Psalm 90:2.

* For more information about the meaning of God’s name and why some Bible translations have removed it, see Appendix A4 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

DIG DEEPER

Examine the difference between God's titles and his unique name. Then learn how and why he revealed his name to you.

JEHOVAH



VIDEO: *Many Titles, but One Name* (0:41)

3. God has many titles, but one name

To see the difference between a person's title and his name, **play the VIDEO**, and then discuss the question that follows.

- What is the difference between a title, such as "Lord," and a name?

The Bible acknowledges that people worship many gods and lords. **Read Psalm 136:1-3**, and then discuss this question:

- Who is "the God of gods" and "the Lord of lords"?



VIDEO: *Does God Have a Name?*—Excerpt (3:11)



4. Jehovah wants you to know and use his name

What shows that Jehovah wants you to know his name? **Play the VIDEO**, and then discuss the questions that follow.

- Do you think Jehovah wants his name to be known? Why?

Jehovah wants people to use his name. **Read Romans 10:13**, and then discuss these questions:

- How important is it to use God’s name, Jehovah?
- How do you feel when someone remembers your name and uses it?
- How do you think Jehovah feels when you use his name?

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- What does Jehovah invite you to do?
- How might knowing and using God’s name help you to feel closer to him?



VIDEO: *My Search for the True God* (8:18)



SOME PEOPLE SAY: “There’s only one God, so it doesn’t matter what you call him.”

- Do you believe that Jehovah is God’s name?
- How would you explain that God wants us to use his name?

SUMMARY

Jehovah is the name of the only true God. He wants us to know and use that name so that we can draw close to him.

Review

- How is Jehovah different from all the other gods that people worship?
- Why should we use God's name?
- What shows that Jehovah wants you to draw close to him?

Lesson completed on

Goal

- When talking about God, use his name, Jehovah.
- Other:

E X P L O R E



Examine five compelling lines of reasoning that give proof God exists.

“Does God Exist?” (Web article)



Consider why believing that God has always existed makes sense.

“Who Made God?”
(*The Watchtower*, August 1, 2014)



Learn why we should use God's name, even if its ancient pronunciation is unknown.

“Who Is Jehovah?”
(Web article)



Does it matter what we call God? See why we can say that he has just one personal name.

“How Many Names Does God Have?” (Web article)



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Jehovah Is Your Name

(Psalm 83:18)

1. The living and true God—
 The God of all creation
 In ev'ry generation—
 Jehovah is your name.
 We're honored and we're proud
 To be your congregation.
 In ev'ry tribe and nation,
 Your glory we proclaim.

(CHORUS)

*Jehovah, Jehovah,
 There is no God like you.
 There's no other in the heavens
 Or on the earth below.
 You alone are God Almighty,
 And this all men must know.
 Jehovah, Jehovah,
 We have no other God but you.*

2. You cause us to become
 Whatever you desire,
 To do as you require—
 Jehovah is your name.
 And Witnesses for you
 Is what you've kindly named us.
 We're honored you have claimed us—
 A people for your name.

(Chorus)

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THE  **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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MAY 2–JUNE 5, 2022

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COVER PICTURE:

Zechariah saw a vision of two olive trees supplying oil to a lampstand that had seven lamps (See study article 12, paragraph 6)

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Grant Us Boldness

(Acts 4:29)

1. As we tell about the Kingdom,
As we witness for your name,
There are many who oppose us
And who try to bring us shame.
But instead of fearing men,
It's really you we must obey.
So we beg you now for your spirit;
O Jehovah, hear what we pray.

(CHORUS)

*Grant us boldness as we witness;
Help us overcome our fear.
Give us confidence and courage
So that all the world may hear.
Armageddon draws ever near,
But until that great day is here,
Grant us boldness as we witness.
This is our prayer.*

2. Even though we may be fearful,
You remember we are dust.
Your assurance to support us
Is a promise we can trust.
Give attention to the threats
Of those who persecute and blame.
May you help us all to continue
As we boldly speak in your name.

(Chorus)

Do You See What Zechariah Saw?

“By my spirit,’ says Jehovah of armies.”—ZECH. 4:6.

SONG 73

Grant Us Boldness

PREVIEW

Jehovah gave the prophet Zechariah a series of thrilling visions. What Zechariah saw gave him and Jehovah’s people the strength to overcome the challenges they faced as they struggled to reestablish pure worship. Those visions can also help us to serve Jehovah faithfully despite our challenges. In this article, we will discuss valuable lessons that we can learn from one of Zechariah’s visions, which involved a lampstand and olive trees.

THERE was excitement in the air. Jehovah God had “stirred the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia” to release the Israelites, who had spent decades in Babylonian captivity. The king made a proclamation for the Jews to return to their homeland “and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel.” (Ezra 1:1, 3) What a thrilling decree that was! It meant that the worship of the true God was going to be restored in the land he had given to his people.

² In 537 B.C.E., the first of the exiles arrived in Jerusalem, which had been the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Those returning Jews soon got to work on the temple, and by 536 B.C.E., they had already laid its foundation!

³ Once they started to rebuild the temple, though, those former exiles began to face strong opposition. The surrounding peoples “were continually discouraging the people of Judah and disheartening them from building.” (Ezra 4:4) As bad as that was, the situation got worse. In 522 B.C.E., a new Persian king, Artaxerxes, came to power.* Opposers viewed this

* Years later, in the days of Governor Nehemiah, a different ruler named Artaxerxes was very favorable to the Jews.

1. What exciting prospect lay ahead for Jewish exiles?
2. What initial success did the returning exiles enjoy?
3. What opposition did the Jews face?

change in rulership as their chance to put a permanent stop to the building work by “framing trouble in the name of the law.” (Ps. 94:20) They told King Artaxerxes that, among other things, the Jews were planning to rebel against him. (Ezra 4:11-16) The king believed their lies and ordered a ban on the temple construction. (Ezra 4:17-23) With that, the work of the once joyful temple builders ground to a halt. —Ezra 4:24.

⁴ The pagan inhabitants of the land and some in the Persian government were determined to stop the rebuilding of the temple. But Jehovah was determined to keep the building program moving forward, and he always accomplishes his purpose. (Read Isaiah 55:11.) He raised up a fearless prophet named Zechariah and gave him a series of eight thrilling visions, which he was to share with the Jews for their encouragement. Those reassuring visions helped them to see that they had nothing to fear from their opposers and urged them to press ahead with Jehovah’s work. In the fifth of those visions, Zechariah saw a lampstand and two olive trees.

4. How did Jehovah deal with the opposition to the temple building? (Isaiah 55:11)

⁵ We all get discouraged at times. So we can benefit from considering the encouragement Jehovah gave the Israelites through Zechariah's fifth vision. Understanding this vision can help us to serve Jehovah faithfully when we are dealing with opposition, when we are coping with change, and when we receive direction that we do not understand.

DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

⁶ Read Zechariah 4:1-3. The vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees gave the Jews the courage to overcome opposition. How? Did you notice that the lampstand had a continuous source of fuel? Two olive trees supplied oil to a bowl-like reservoir that, in turn, furnished oil to each of the seven lamps on the lampstand. This oil kept the lamps burning without letup. Zechariah asked: "What do these things mean?" The angel answered with this message from Jehovah: "'Not by a military force, nor by power, but by my spirit,' says Jehovah of armies." (Zech. 4:4, 6) The oil from the trees represented Jehovah's powerful holy spirit, an inexhaustible supply of it.

5. What will we consider in this article?

6. How did the vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees, described at Zechariah 4:1-3, give the Jews courage? (See cover picture.)

All the military might of the Persian Empire was as nothing in comparison with the power behind God's spirit. With Jehovah on their side, the temple builders would be able to resist any opposition and complete their work. What an encouraging message! All that the Jews needed to do was to trust in Jehovah and get back to work. That is exactly what they did even though the ban was still in place.

⁷ A change brought a measure of relief to the temple builders. What change? In 520 B.C.E., a new king, Darius I, was ruling Persia. In the second year of his reign, he discovered that the ban on the temple construction was illegal. Darius then gave royal approval to complete the work. (Ezra 6:1-3) That news alone was enough to surprise everyone—but there was more. The king ordered the surrounding peoples to stop interfering in the rebuilding work and to provide funds and supplies to support it! (Ezra 6:7-12) As a result, the Jews finished building the temple a little over four years later, in 515 B.C.E. —Ezra 6:15.

⁸ Today, too, many of Jehovah's worshippers face opposition. For example, some live in lands where

7. What change brought a measure of relief to the temple builders?

8. Why can you be courageous when you face opposition?

Rely on Jehovah's
power when you
face opposition
(See paragraph 8)



our work is restricted. In such lands, brothers may be arrested and “brought before governors and kings” for a witness to them. (Matt. 10:17, 18) At times, a change in rulership may bring relief. Or a fair-minded judge may render a decision that is favorable to the work. Other Witnesses face opposition of a different sort. They live in a country where there is considerable freedom to worship Jehovah, but they still face opposition from family members who are determined to stop them from serving their God. (Matt. 10:32-36) In many cases, when opposers realize that their efforts to discourage their Witness relatives are in vain, they stop opposing them. And in some cases, those who were once violently opposed have later become zealous Witnesses. When you face opposition, do not give up! Be courageous. You have Jehovah and his powerful holy spirit on your side, so you have nothing to fear!

COPING WITH CHANGE

⁹ When the foundation of the new temple was laid, some of the older Jews wept. (Ezra 3:12) They had seen the glorious temple built by Solomon, and they felt that the newly built temple would be “nothing in comparison” with the previous one. (Hag. 2: 2, 3) The contrast between the old and the new was more than they could bear. Zechariah’s vision would help them to overcome their disappointment. How?

¹⁰ Read Zechariah 4:8-10. What did the angel mean when he said that the Jews would “rejoice and see the plumb line in the hand of [the Jewish governor] Zerubbabel”? A plumb line is a tool for determining whether something is perfectly vertical, or upright. The angel was thus assuring God’s people that, as modest as the temple may have appeared to some, it would be completed and would meet Jehovah’s standards. He would be pleased with it, so why should they not be pleased? What was important to Jehovah was that the worship carried out in the new temple be in harmony with his requirements. If

9. Why were some Jews disappointed when the foundation of the new temple was laid?

10. How did the angel’s words recorded at Zechariah 4:8-10 help the Jews to overcome their disappointment?

the Jews focused on worshipping Jehovah acceptably and on gaining his approval, their joy would return.

¹¹ Change is challenging for many of us. Some who served in a form of special full-time service for a long time have received a change of assignment. Others have had to relinquish a cherished privilege because of their age. It is normal to feel disappointed when such a change affects us. Initially, we may not fully understand the decision or agree with it. We may miss the way things used to be. And we may become discouraged, feeling that in our new circumstances, we are of little use to Jehovah. (Prov. 24:10) How can Zechariah's vision help us to keep giving our best to our God?

11. What challenges do some of Jehovah's worshippers face today?



Cultivate a
positive view of
new circumstances
(See paragraphs 11-12)

¹² We cope better with change when we look at things from Jehovah’s perspective. He is accomplishing great things today, and we have the unique privilege of being his fellow workers. (1 Cor. 3:9) Our responsibilities may change, but Jehovah’s love for us will not. Consequently, if a change in the organization affects you personally, avoid getting caught up in the whys and wherefores behind the change. Rather than long for “the former days,” prayerfully look for the good in the change. (Eccl. 7:10) Rather than think about the things you can no longer do, think about all the things you can do. From Zechariah’s vision, we learn the importance of keeping a positive attitude. Thus we will remain joyful and faithful even when our circumstances change.

WHEN IT IS CHALLENGING TO FOLLOW DIRECTION

¹³ The work to rebuild the temple was banned. Still, the men appointed to take the lead—High Priest Jeshua (Joshua) and Governor Zerubbabel—“started to rebuild the house of God.” (Ezra 5: 1, 2) That decision may have seemed ill-advised to

12. How can Zechariah’s vision help us to cope with disappointment resulting from a change in our circumstances?

13. Why might some Israelites have felt that the instruction to resume building the temple was ill-advised?

some Jews. The work of temple building could not be hidden from the enemy, who would use every means available to make trouble. The two responsible men, Joshua and Zerubbabel, needed reassurance that they had Jehovah's backing. They received it. How?

¹⁴ **Read Zechariah 4:12, 14.** In this part of Zechariah's vision, the angel reveals to God's faithful prophet that the two olive trees represent "the two anointed ones"—Joshua and Zerubbabel. Those two men were represented as figuratively "standing alongside the Lord of the whole earth," Jehovah. What a privileged position to be in! Jehovah had confidence in them. Accordingly, their fellow Israelites had every reason to have confidence in their decisions and in God's direction, no matter what form that direction might take.

¹⁵ One way that Jehovah continues to provide direction to his people today is by means of his Word, the Bible. In that sacred volume, he tells us how to worship him acceptably. How can we show that we respect the direction we receive from God's Word? By paying close attention to it and by taking the time to

14. According to Zechariah 4:12, 14, High Priest Joshua and Governor Zerubbabel received what reassurance?

15. How can we show that we respect Jehovah's direction as found in his Word?

Trust the direction
you receive from
“the faithful and
discreet slave”
(See paragraph 16)



understand it. Ask yourself: ‘When I read the Bible or one of our publications, do I stop and meditate? Do I search for the meaning of Bible truths that “are hard to understand”? Or do I simply skim over the material quickly?’ (2 Pet. 3:16) If we take the time to ponder over what Jehovah is teaching us, we will be able to follow his direction and accomplish our preaching work.—1 Tim. 4:15, 16.

¹⁶ Another way that Jehovah provides direction is by means of “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45) At times, this slave may give direction that we do not fully understand. For example, we may receive specific instructions designed to prepare us to survive a natural disaster that we think is unlikely to

16. When we do not fully understand the direction we receive from “the faithful and discreet slave,” what will help us to comply with it?

occur in our area. Or we may feel that the slave is being overly cautious during a pandemic. What should we do if we feel that the instructions given are not practical? We can think about how the Israelites benefited by heeding the counsel given through Joshua and Zerubbabel. We can also think about other Bible accounts that we have read. Sometimes God's people received direction that did not appear to be practical from a human standpoint but turned out to be life-saving.—Judg. 7:7; 8:10.

SEE WHAT ZECHARIAH SAW

¹⁷ The fifth vision Zechariah saw may have been brief, but it gave the Jews a fresh perspective on their work and their worship. And when they acted in accord with what Zechariah saw, they felt Jehovah's loving support and direction. By means of his powerful holy spirit, Jehovah helped them to continue their work and to regain their joy.—Ezra 6:16.

¹⁸ Zechariah's vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees can have a powerful effect on your life. As we have discussed, it can help you to find the *strength* you need to face opposers, the *joy* you need

17. What effect did the vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees have on the Jews?

18. How can Zechariah's vision affect you?

to cope with changes in your circumstances, and the *trust* you need to be obedient when you receive direction that you do not understand. What should you do when you experience challenges in your life? First, see what Zechariah saw—evidence that Jehovah is caring for His people. Then, act on what you see by trusting in Jehovah and continuing to worship him with your whole heart. (Matt. 22:37) If you do, Jehovah will help you to serve him with joy forever. —Col. 1:10, 11.

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Page 34: A brother sees the need to adapt to changing circumstances brought on by age and poor health.

Page 37: A sister reflects on the fact that Jehovah is backing “the faithful and discreet slave,” just as he did Joshua and Zerubbabel.

HOW DOES ZECHARIAH’S VISION HELP US . . .

- when dealing with opposition?
- when coping with change?
- when given direction?

7

Jehovah, Our Strength

(Isaiah 12:2)

1. Gracious Jehovah, our strength and our might,
You are our Savior, in you we delight.
We are your Witnesses bearing your news,
Whether men hear or they proudly refuse.

(CHORUS)

*Jehovah, our Rock, Our strength and our might,
Your name we make known Both day and night.
Glorious Jehovah, Almighty in pow'r,
You are our hiding place; You are our Tow'r.*

2. We who now serve you rejoice in your light;
Eyes that are opened now see truth and right.
Searching the Scriptures, we hear your command;
Making our choice, for your Kingdom we stand.

(Chorus)

3. Gladly, O God, we keep doing your will.
Though Satan mocks us, we're trusting you still.
Though he may slay us, oh, help us to be
Firm to the end for your grand Sov'reignty.

(Chorus)