

***Examining
the Scriptures
Daily***

2013

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Name

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2013 Yeartext

**“Be courageous and strong. . . .
Jehovah your God is with you.”**

—Josh. 1:9.

There was a feeling of excitement in the air! Finally, after 40 years of wandering through a succession of wilderness areas, the Israelites were getting ready to enter the land that Jehovah had promised their forefather Abraham. It was Canaan, “a land good and spacious . . . a land flowing with milk and honey.” Once there, they would “lack nothing.”—Ex. 3:8; Deut. 8:7-9.

There must also have been some feeling of fear and anxiety. Why? Because 40 years earlier, when under the leadership of Moses, the previous generation of Israelites had been in the same situation and had refused to enter the Promised Land. Their spies had reported: “The people who dwell in the land are strong, and the fortified cities are very great. . . . All the people whom we saw in the midst of it are men of extraordinary size.” Next to them, they felt that they looked “like grasshoppers.” Filled with fear, they thought it would be “better” to return to the oppression of Egypt and were on the verge of pelting the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, with stones!—Num. 13:28, 31-33; 14:3, 4, 10.

Were the Israelites justified in their fear? From a human standpoint, it would seem so. The reports of strong and fortified cities and giantlike men had been verified. It is also quite possible that Israel’s journeying in the wilderness and their intent to invade the land were known by the nations that inhabited Canaan. And some of them vastly outnumbered the Israelites! (Num. 14:13-16; Deut. 7:1, 7) Not to be overlooked is the fact that the Israelites, as slaves in Egypt, had not been trained in warfare or in military strategy. Now they were to face superior forces of trained, battle-hardened warriors. Also, after so many years, the miraculous nature of their deliverance from Egypt was a faded

memory—events that the younger generation had not experienced.

Jehovah was aware of the situation. So he told Joshua: “Moses my servant is dead; and now get up, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. . . . Nobody will take a firm stand before you all the days of your life. . . . Be courageous and strong, for you are the one who will cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their forefathers to give to them.” Twice more God urged: “Be courageous and strong.” (Josh. 1: 2-7, 9) Acting on Jehovah’s instructions, Joshua told the Israelite warriors to prepare to cross the Jordan River in three days. How did they react? They affirmed their support of Joshua’s command and repeated to him the words: “Be courageous and strong.”—Josh. 1:10-18.

Do you see any parallels between the situation of the Israelites back then and that of Jehovah’s people today? We too are poised to enter a land that Jehovah has promised—a new world where “righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Pet. 3:13) We too face formidable foes—“the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places” and their earthly cohorts—all bent on stopping Jehovah’s people from attaining their goal. (Eph. 6:12) Still to come is a “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now” and the “great and very fear-inspiring” day of Jehovah. (Matt. 24:21; Joel 2:11, 31) Although we have not personally witnessed any of Jehovah’s miraculous “saving acts,” we have full faith in his ability to preserve his people and bring them into the promised new world of righteousness.—Ps. 68:20; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 7:14-17.

How appropriate, then, are the words of our yeartext for 2013: “Be courageous and strong. . . . Jehovah your God is with you.” (Josh. 1:9) May we keep these words in mind as we preach the “good news of the kingdom” and fulfill Jesus’ command to “make disciples of people of all the nations.” (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) Indeed, “if God is for us, who will be against us?”—Rom. 8:31; Heb. 13:6.

How to Use This Booklet

On the following pages, you will find a Scripture text for each day and comments on that text. Although the text and comments may be read at any time, many find it advantageous to consider them at the beginning of the day. Then they can reflect on such thoughts throughout the day. Discussing the text as a family is most beneficial. Bethel families around the world do so before having breakfast.

The comments are taken from the *Watchtower* (*w*) issues of April 2011 through March 2012. Figures following the date of the *Watchtower* issue refer to the number, in order, of each study article (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that appears in that issue. This is followed by the paragraphs where the material is found. (See illustration below.) Additional information on the subject matter can be found in the article itself. To find where each particular article starts, see the front cover of that issue of *The Watchtower*.

Tuesday, January 1

*Welcome one another, just as the
Christ also welcomed us.
—Rom. 15:7.*

Millions of people “out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues” have adjusted their thinking to conform to “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” . . .

Is there someone in your congregation whom you could get to know better? *w11 4/15 3:17, 18*

Paragraph number(s) where
text and comments are found

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Tuesday, January 1

Welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us.

—Rom. 15:7.

Millions of people “out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues” have adjusted their thinking to conform to “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rev. 7:9; Rom. 12:2) Many of these at one time were steeped in the hatreds, enmities, and divisiveness of Satan’s world. But through a study of God’s Word and with the help of holy spirit, they have learned to “pursue the things making for peace.” (Rom. 14:19) The resulting unity brings praise to God. How can each of us contribute to the peace and unity found among God’s people? Many congregations include those who have moved from a foreign land. Some may have different customs or may not speak our language well. Do we reach out to them? This is the course God’s Word recommends. Is there someone in your congregation whom you could get to know better? *w11 4/15 3:17, 18*

Wednesday, January 2

If the root is holy, the branches are also.—Rom. 11:16.

The apostle Paul compared those who become part of Abraham’s seed to branches on a symbolic olive tree. (Rom. 11:21) This cultivated olive tree represents the fulfillment of God’s purpose with regard to the Abrahamic covenant. The root of the tree is holy and represents Jehovah as the one who gives life to spiritual Israel. (Isa. 10:20) The trunk represents Jesus as the primary part of Abraham’s seed. The branches collectively represent “the full

number” of those included in the secondary part of Abraham’s seed. (Rom. 11:25) In the illustration of the olive tree, the natural Jews who rejected Jesus are likened to olive branches that were “broken off.” (Rom. 11:17) They thereby lost the opportunity to become part of Abraham’s seed. But John the Baptizer had already forewarned them that if Jehovah wished to do so, he could raise up children to Abraham from the very stones.—Luke 3:8. *w11 5/15 4:13, 14*

Thursday, January 3

The [Beroeans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, . . . carefully examining the Scriptures daily.

—Acts 17:11.

‘Did the Thessalonian Christians have appreciation for God’s Word?’ you may wonder. The comparison made above, however, was with the Thessalonian Jews in general, not with the Christians. Those who became believers ‘accepted God’s word, not as the word of men, but as the word of God.’ (1 Thess. 2:13) The older men must have worked hard to feed such ones spiritually. Today, the faithful and discreet slave class is providing God’s flock with “food at the proper time.” (Matt. 24:45) Under the slave’s direction, the local elders work hard to feed their brothers spiritually. To satisfy the congregation’s spiritual needs, the elders spend hours preparing meeting parts so that they can present the assigned information in a meaningful way. Have you thought about how much time the elders spend preparing their parts for meetings, assemblies, and conventions? *w11 6/15 4:4, 5*

Friday, January 4

From house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news.

—Acts 5:42.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, certain Bible Students felt that they fulfilled their ministry by giving talks. However, it later became evident that Jehovah desires his people to get busy in a variety of forms of preaching, including the house-to-house work. Some accomplished public speakers flatly refused to try anything new. Outwardly, they appeared to be spiritual men, fully devoted to the Lord. However, when faced with clear evidence of God's purpose regarding the preaching work, their real thoughts, intentions, and motives became manifest. How did Jehovah feel about them? He did not bless them. They left the organization. (Matt. 10:1-6; Acts 20:20) That is not to say that it was easy for all who remained loyal to the organization to preach publicly. Many found the work challenging, especially at first. But they were obedient, and Jehovah richly blessed them. *w11 7/15 4:10, 11*

Saturday, January 5

Let us not be judging one another any longer, but rather make this your decision, not to put before a brother a stumbling block or a cause for tripping.

—Rom. 14:13.

Some Christians in Rome were improperly judging others on purely personal matters. (Rom. 14:1-6) Paul counseled individuals on both sides of the dispute. (Rom. 14:10, 14, 15, 20, 21) He told 'everyone there among them not

to think more of himself than it was necessary to think.' (Rom. 12:3) After counseling them all, Paul wrote: "So, then, let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another." (Rom. 14:19) When differences among fellow Christians occur today, should we not likewise settle disputes graciously by humbly seeking and applying Scriptural counsel? As was the case with the Romans, today those on both sides of the controversy may need to make adjustments in order to "keep peace between one another." —Mark 9:50. *w11 8/15 4:8-10*

Sunday, January 6

Jehovah is aware of the days of the faultless ones, and their very inheritance will continue even to time indefinite.—Ps. 37:18.

It is beneficial to reflect on those whom Jehovah drew and knew favorably. Abraham and Moses were imperfect and had flaws, as we do. Yet, they were known by Jehovah as ones belonging to him. Korah's example, however, illustrates that it would be possible for us to draw away from Jehovah and thus no longer be known by him with approval. Each of us does well to ask himself: 'How does Jehovah see me? What can I learn from these Bible examples?' You can take great comfort in knowing that Jehovah views as belonging to him faithful ones whom he has drawn. Continue to develop faith, humility, and other qualities that further endear you to our God. Being known by Jehovah is undeniably a precious privilege that brings satisfaction to our life now, and it holds out wonderful blessings for the future. *w11 9/15 5:17, 18*

Monday, January 7

Beloved ones, let us continue loving one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born from God and gains the knowledge of God.

—1 John 4:7.

The apostle Paul noted one manifestation of God's love for people when he described Jehovah as "the God of all comfort." (2 Cor. 1:3) Jesus demonstrated such love when he did what was foretold in Isaiah's prophecy. (Isa. 61:1, 2) During his entire ministry, Jesus lovingly comforted mourning ones, bringing them encouragement and peace of mind. All followers of Jesus need to imitate him by comforting those who mourn. (1 Cor. 11:1) Paul said: "Keep comforting one another and building one another up." (1 Thess. 5:11) Especially do we need to comfort others, since mankind now faces "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Tim. 3:1) More and more, honesthearted people throughout the world are being confronted by some whose words and actions cause grief, heartache, and sadness. *w11 10/15 4:1, 2*

Tuesday, January 8

If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper.—Acts 15:29.

Not all who want to make decisions for us mean us harm. Well-intentioned friends might insist that we follow their advice. If we are living away from home, our relatives likely still have deep concern for our well-being and may feel compelled to continue to involve themselves in important decisions we face. For instance,

consider the matter of medical treatment. The Bible clearly condemns the misuse of blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) Other matters that have to do with health care, though, are not clear-cut and require that each of us make a personal decision as to what treatment we will accept or reject. Our loved ones may have strong opinions on these issues. However, when deciding about those matters, each dedicated baptized Christian needs to carry "his own load" of responsibility. (Gal. 6:4, 5) Our primary concern is to maintain a good conscience before God, not men.—1 Tim. 1:5. *w11 4/15 2:4*

Wednesday, January 9

Through one act of justification the result to men of all sorts is a declaring of them righteous for life.—Rom. 5:18.

Regarding this text, one Bible translator wrote: "The metaphor pictures God as the judge who has reached a decision in favor of the accused, who had been brought before God's court, so to speak, on a charge of unrighteousness. But God acquits the accused." On what basis could the righteous "Judge of all the earth" acquit an unrighteous person? (Gen. 18:25) Laying the groundwork, God lovingly sent his only-begotten Son to earth. Jesus did his Father's will perfectly, despite temptations, extreme ridicule, and abuse. He kept his integrity even to the extent of dying on a torture stake. (Heb. 2:10) In sacrificing his perfect human life, Jesus offered a ransom that might release, or redeem, Adam's offspring from sin and death.—Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:6-8. *w11 6/15 2:8-10*

Thursday, January 10

Do not become righteous overmuch.—Eccl. 7:16.

While we are determined to maintain a serious view of our life and worship, we can all strive to keep a balanced view of ourselves—not taking ourselves too seriously. Some levity can break tense moments, whether in the home, at work, or when dealing with our Christian brothers and sisters. Family members will want to be careful about being overly critical so that they do not erode the safe haven of peace that a home should be. In the congregation, all can learn to laugh with and enjoy one another, keeping conversations and our teaching manner upbuilding and positive. (2 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:29) Today, we live in a world that does not take Jehovah or his laws seriously. In contrast, Jehovah's people are very concerned about their obedience and loyalty to their God. What a pleasure it is to be part of such a large association of people who worship Jehovah! *w11 4/15 1:19, 20*

Friday, January 11

Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light.
—2 Cor. 11:14.

Satan has promoted many lies that could mislead us if we are not careful. Consider some examples. *Anything goes—right or wrong. It is determined by how you feel.* This idea is promoted in the media and in entertainment. Such a distorted view of God's standards exerts pressure on us to cast aside all moral restraint. The truth is that we have a desperate need for moral guidance

that only God can fill. (Jer. 10:23) *God will not intervene in earth's affairs.* Being influenced by such a live-for-today spirit could cause us to become "inactive or unfruitful." (2 Pet. 1:8) The truth is that Jehovah's day is fast approaching, and we must keep in expectation of it. (Matt. 24:44) *God does not care about you as an individual.* Believing this satanic lie could cause us to give up, feeling that we could never be worthy of God's love. The truth is that Jehovah loves and values his worshippers as individuals.—Matt. 10:29-31. *w11 7/15 2:11, 12*

Saturday, January 12

[Jehovah] is making . . . wine that makes the heart of mortal man rejoice.—Ps. 104:14, 15.

Throughout the Bible, we find statements indicating that Jehovah wants us not only to live but also to enjoy life. Indeed, Jehovah makes crops grow to yield grain, oil, and wine for our sustenance. But wine also 'makes the heart rejoice.' It goes beyond what is strictly necessary to maintain life and adds to our joy. (Eccl. 9:7; 10:19) Yes, Jehovah wants us to be joyful, our hearts filled with "good cheer." (Acts 14:16, 17) There is, therefore, no reason to feel guilty when we once in a while schedule some time to "observe intently the birds of heaven" and "the lilies of the field" or to enjoy some other activities that refresh us and enrich our life. (Matt. 6:26, 28; Ps. 8:3, 4) A wholesome life is a "gift of God." (Eccl. 3:12, 13) Viewing leisure time as part of that gift will move us to use it in a way that will bring pleasure to the Giver. *w11 10/15 1:1, 2*

Sunday, January 13

Put off . . . the sin that easily entangles us.—Heb. 12:1.

When a runner's legs get entangled with his garment, almost unavoidably he falls. The risk of entanglement is particularly great if the runner ignores the danger of wearing certain clothing while running. What might cause him to ignore the danger? Perhaps carelessness or overconfidence or some distraction. What lesson can we draw from Paul's counsel? We should bear in mind that loss of faith is the end result of what we might do over the course of time. Regarding "the sin that easily entangles us," a scholar notes that it is "the sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, our constitution, our company." The idea is that our environment, our personal weaknesses, and our associations can all exert a powerful influence on us. They can cause a weakening of our faith or even the loss of it.—Matt. 13:3-9. *w11 9/15 4:2, 10, 11*

Monday, January 14

Those who [marry] will have tribulation in their flesh.

—1 Cor. 7:28.

Many newlyweds are surprised, even disappointed, when their mates differ with them on important issues. The two may find themselves at odds on how they should spend money and leisure time, where they will live, and how often they should visit the in-laws. And each one has personality flaws that can irritate the other. During courtship, it is easy to make light of the importance of

such matters, but they can later put great strain on a marriage. A couple do well to resolve areas of concern before they marry. To be successful and happy, a couple must face their challenges unitedly. They should agree on how to discipline their children and how to care for aging parents. The pressure caused by family difficulties should not push the two apart. By applying Bible counsel, they will solve many problems, endure those that remain, and stay happy together.—1 Cor. 7:10, 11. *w11 10/15 2:14-16*

Tuesday, January 15

Whatever things are of serious concern, . . . continue considering these things.—Phil. 4:8.

We live in a world that is experiencing some of the most difficult and tragic times in human history. For people who do not have a sound spiritual foundation, coping with these "critical times hard to deal with" can be nearly impossible. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Only their own fortitude gets them through each day—with limited success. In an effort to avoid taking life too seriously, many turn to the constant flow of amusements of the entertainment world. Needless to say, this world places undue importance on 'love of pleasure.' (2 Tim. 3:4) Its emphasis on having a good time can be a threat to our spirituality. (Prov. 21:17) Thus, for good reason the apostle Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus also include counsel regarding the subject of seriousness. Applying that counsel will help us to counteract the world's frivolous view of life.—1 Tim. 2:1, 2; Titus 2:2-8. *w11 4/15 1:1, 3*

Wednesday, January 16

Let us stay awake and keep our senses.—1 Thess. 5:6.

Referring to “the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah,” the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica: “Brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves, for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We belong neither to night nor to darkness.” Paul added: “So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.” (Joel 2: 31; 1 Thess. 5:4-6) Paul’s counsel to the Thessalonians is especially fitting for Christians living in “the time of the end.” (Dan. 12:4) As the end of his wicked system of things nears, Satan is bent on turning as many true worshippers as he can away from serving God. We are therefore wise to take to heart Paul’s admonition to remain spiritually vigilant. If a Christian family is to succeed in staying awake, it is important that each member shoulder his or her Scriptural responsibility. *w11 5/15 1:1, 2*

Thursday, January 17

*The good news . . . is, in fact, God’s power for salvation.
—Rom. 1:16.*

‘I am happy to share the good news each day.’ Likely that sentiment has crossed your mind or lips. As a devoted Witness of Jehovah, you know how important it is to preach “this good news of the kingdom.” You may be able to recite from memory Jesus’ prophecy about our doing that. (Matt. 24:14) In preaching the “good news of the kingdom,”

you are continuing what Jesus started. (Luke 4:43) Doubtless, one point that you stress is that God will soon intervene in human affairs. With the “great tribulation,” he will end false religion and clear the earth of wickedness. (Matt. 24:21) You probably also highlight that God’s Kingdom will reestablish Paradise on earth so that peace and happiness can flourish. In fact, the “good news of the kingdom” is part of “the good news [declared] beforehand to Abraham, namely: ‘By means of you all the nations will be blessed.’”—Gal. 3:8. *w11 6/15 1:1, 2*

Friday, January 18

*Every false path I have hated.
—Ps. 119:128.*

Imagine this: You need to travel to a certain destination. For guidance, you turn to a trusted friend who knows the way. As he gives you thorough directions, he might say something like this: “Be careful about that next turn. The sign is misleading. A lot of people follow it and wind up getting lost.” Would you appreciate his concern and heed the warning? In some ways, Jehovah is like that friend. He gives us careful directions about how to reach our destination of everlasting life, but he also warns us about bad influences that could cause us to go the wrong way. (Deut. 5:32; Isa. 30:21) Let us keep in mind that Jehovah gives such warnings out of concern and love. He wants us to reach our destination. It pains him to see people giving in to bad influences and losing their way. (Ezek. 33:11) The psalmist said to Jehovah: “Every false path I have hated.” Do you feel the same way? *w11 7/15 1:1, 2*

Saturday, January 19

Draw close to God.

—Jas. 4:8.

The closer we draw to Jehovah, the greater our motivation is to love him 'with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, and our whole strength.' (Mark 12:30) Surely, we are eager to obey God and become imitators of him. (Eph. 5:1) Maintaining a regular Family Worship evening, then, is a key ingredient to help all the members of our family "keep ready" spiritually as we await the foretold "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:21; Luke 12:40) It is vital to survival. The Family Worship arrangement also has another objective—that of helping family members draw closer to one another. Spending time together discussing spiritual matters every week has a marked effect on how family members feel toward one another. What closeness marriage mates experience when they hear each other express joy over a spiritual gem they discover together! (Eccl. 4:12) Parents and children who worship together are likely to become united in love, the "perfect bond of union."—Col. 3:14. *w11 5/15 2:14, 15*

Sunday, January 20

[Marry] only in the Lord.

—1 Cor. 7:39.

Many have chosen to remain single rather than disregard this divine counsel. "I have never resolved to remain single," says a sister in the United States. "I am open to getting married when I meet the right person. My unbelieving mother tried to con-

vince me to marry just about anyone who came along. I asked her if she wanted to be responsible if my marriage turned out badly. In time, she saw that I had a stable job, was taking care of myself, and was happy. She stopped pressuring me." This sister at times feels some loneliness. "Then," she says, "I try to make Jehovah my confidence. He never forsakes me. Prayer helps me sense that God is real and that I am never alone." Confident that "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving," she says: "I try to give of myself to help others, not expecting anything in return. When I am thinking, 'What can I do to help this person?' I have inner joy."—Acts 20:35. *w11 9/15 2:16, 17*

Monday, January 21

[God] is guarding all the bones of that one; not one of them has been broken.—Ps. 34:20.

As prophesied, the Messiah would be pierced, but his bones would not be broken. Inhabitants of Jerusalem would "look to the One whom they pierced through," says Zechariah 12:10. Confirming these points, the apostle John wrote: "One of the soldiers jabbed his [Jesus'] side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he that has seen it [John] has borne witness, and his witness is true . . . These things took place in order for the scripture to be fulfilled: 'Not a bone of his will be crushed.' And, again, a different scripture says: 'They will look to the One whom they pierced.'"—John 19:33-37. *w11 8/15 2:17*

Tuesday, January 22

He is an indecisive man, unsteady in all his ways.—Jas. 1:8.

If we are indecisive when Bible standards are involved, our schoolmates or workmates may conclude that we are not really convinced of our beliefs and therefore are easily influenced. They may lie, cheat, or steal and then try to persuade us to “follow after the crowd” by joining them or at least by covering up for them. (Ex. 23:2) Indecision can place us in grave danger. Like a man in a rudderless boat on a stormy sea, he will be tossed about by shifting human opinion. How easy it would be for such a person to suffer shipwreck of his faith and then blame others for his sad situation! (1 Tim. 1:19) How can we avoid that outcome? We must become “stabilized in the faith.” (Col. 2:6, 7) To achieve stability, we need to learn to make decisions that reflect our faith in God’s inspired Word.—2 Tim. 3:14-17. *w11 4/15 2:3, 5*

Wednesday, January 23

[Buy] out the opportune time for yourselves.—Eph. 5:16.

Can your family set a goal of spending more time in the ministry? Could you work toward overcoming apprehension about witnessing over the telephone, on the street, or at places of business? What about working where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers? Could a family member learn a new language in order to share the good news with those of other nationalities? As a family head, identify areas in which your family could grow spiritually. Then

set specific goals to achieve that aim. The goals you set as a family should be realistic and within reach according to your circumstances and abilities. (Prov. 13:12) So buy out time spent watching television and use it for spiritual pursuits. Work hard to reach the goals you set for your family. (Gal. 6:9) A family that pursues spiritual goals will make its advancement “manifest to all persons.”—1 Tim. 4:15. *w11 5/15 2:11, 12*

Thursday, January 24

Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill.

—Luke 2:14.

Night has fallen. Shepherds are out-of-doors, keeping watch over their flocks. How startled they are when Jehovah’s angel stands nearby and God’s glory gleams around them! Listen! The angel makes this dramatic proclamation: “Have no fear, for, look! I am declaring to you good news of a great joy that all the people will have, because there was born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,” the one who would prove to be the Messiah. (Luke 2:8-14) The shepherds can find this infant lying in a manger in a nearby town. Suddenly, “a multitude of the heavenly army” begin praising Jehovah, saying the words of today’s text. But how can the shepherds learn more and convince others that the baby mentioned by the angel will be Jehovah’s appointed Messiah? By examining prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures and comparing these with the activities and life course of this child. *w11 8/15 1:1, 2*

Friday, January 25

They will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories.

—2 Tim. 4:4.

What are some false stories that could lead astray the unwary? In principle, the expression “false stories” can apply to any religious lie or myth that could turn us “away from the truth.” (2 Tim. 4:3) Satan, who pretends to be “an angel of light,” has made clever use of false religion in misleading people. (2 Cor. 11:14) Under the guise of Christianity, Christendom teaches doctrines—including the Trinity, hellfire, and immortality of the soul—that are awash in myths and falsehoods. Christendom also promotes holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, whose seemingly innocent customs are actually rooted in mythology and paganism. By heeding God’s warning to separate ourselves and “quit touching the unclean thing,” we will not be misled by false stories.—2 Cor. 6:14-17. *w11 7/15 2:11*

Saturday, January 26

As for all those seeing me, they hold me in derision; they keep opening their mouths wide, they keep wagging their head: “He committed himself to Jehovah. Let Him provide him with escape!”—Ps. 22:7, 8.

David had prophesied that the Messiah would be reviled. Jesus was reviled while suffering on the torture stake, for Matthew reports: “The passersby began speaking abusively of him, wagging their heads and saying: ‘O you would-be thrower-down of the temple and builder of it

in three days, save yourself! If you are a son of God, come down off the torture stake!’” Similarly, the chief priests, scribes, and older men made fun of him and said: “Others he saved; himself he cannot save! He is King of Israel; let him now come down off the torture stake and we will believe on him. He has put his trust in God; let Him now rescue him if He wants him, for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” (Matt. 27:39-43) Yet, Jesus bore all of this with dignity. What a fine example for us! *w11 8/15 2:13*

Sunday, January 27

I am your share and your inheritance in the midst of the sons of Israel.—Num. 18:20.

After the Israelites had conquered much of the Promised Land, Joshua turned his attention to apportioning the land by lot. In doing this, he worked along with High Priest Eleazar and heads of the tribes. (Num. 34:13-29) As for the Levites, they were not to have a land inheritance such as the other tribes received. (Josh. 14:1-5) Why did the Levites have no tribal territory, or share, of the Promised Land? Were they being left out? We find the answer in what Jehovah told the Levites. Underlining the fact that they were not being abandoned, Jehovah said to them the words of today’s text. What a profound assurance: “I am your share”! How would you feel if Jehovah said that to you? You might wonder, ‘Can Jehovah really be the share of any imperfect Christian today?’ Yes, he can. And more specifically, he can be *your* share, whether you hope to live in heaven or you look forward to life in an earthly paradise. *w11 9/15 1:1, 2*

Monday, January 28

She is free to be married to whom she wants, only in the Lord.

—1 Cor. 7:39.

If you hope to marry someone who shares your desire to serve Jehovah whole-souled, keep this matter before Him in prayer. (Phil. 4:6, 7) Regardless of how long you may need to wait, do not despair. Trust in our loving God as your Helper, and he will support you emotionally in harmony with your need. (Heb. 13:6) A single Christian desiring to get married may receive a proposal from someone of doubtful spirituality or even from an unbeliever. If that happens to you, remember that the heartache that results from making a bad choice in a marriage mate can cause greater pain by far than the longing that a person feels while single. And once married, for better or for worse, you are bound to your mate for life. (1 Cor. 7:27) Do not out of desperation make a decision to marry that you will later regret. *w11 10/15 2:10-12*

Tuesday, January 29

[Jesus] gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.

—1 Tim. 2:6.

Adam brought imperfection and death to billions, his descendants. It is true that Jesus, as a perfect man, could have been the source of billions of perfect descendants. Hence, it was understood that a combination of Jesus' life plus that of all his potential perfect descendants formed a sacrifice equivalent to that of Adam and his imperfect descendants. However, the Bible does not say that any potential off-

spring of Jesus formed part of the ransom. Romans 5:15-19 makes the point that the death of just "one man" provided the release. Yes, Jesus' perfect life corresponded to Adam's. The focus is, and should be, on Jesus Christ alone. It became possible for men of all sorts to receive the free gift and life because of Jesus' "one act of justification," his course of obedience and integrity even to death.—2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Pet. 3:18. *w11 6/15 2:11*

Wednesday, January 30

Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things.

—Matt. 6:32.

This implies that our heavenly Father, Jehovah, will do his part to take care of our needs. To be sure, "all these things" may be different from what we personally are inclined to like or want. Still, we are told not to be anxious about "the things the nations are eagerly pursuing." Why? Jesus later advised his listeners: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare." (Luke 21:34, 35) The finish line is just ahead. What a pity it would be if we allowed ourselves to be burdened down with unnecessary weights that could impede us when we are so close to the end! The apostle Paul's counsel, therefore, is truly wise: "It is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with self-sufficiency." (1 Tim. 6:6) Our taking Paul's words to heart will greatly enhance our prospects of attaining the prize. *w11 9/15 4:6-8*

Thursday, January 31

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves.

—John 6:53.

How do you react when Jehovah, the Source of spiritual enlightenment, sheds light on “the deep things of God” found in the Bible? (1 Cor. 2:10-13) We have an excellent example in the apostle Peter’s reaction when Jesus told His listeners the words of today’s text. Taking those words literally, many disciples said: “This

speech is shocking; who can listen to it?” They “went off to the things behind.” But Peter said: “Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.” (John 6:60, 66, 68) Peter relied on God for spiritual enlightenment. When spiritual light on some matter gets brighter, do you try to understand the underlying Scriptural reasons for the adjustment? (Prov. 4:18) Imitating the first-century Bereans will deepen your appreciation for your privilege to serve Jehovah. —Acts 17:11. *w11 9/15 2:14, 15*

Friday, February 1

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

—Heb. 12:1.

In the Bible, the Christian life course has been compared to a race. The apostle Paul called this point to the attention of his fellow Christians in ancient Corinth in his first letter to them. He wrote: “Do you not know that the runners in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may attain it.” (1 Cor. 9:24) Was Paul saying that only one of those Christians would gain the prize of life and all the rest would run in vain? Of course not! Runners in the competitions trained and exerted themselves rigorously with the goal of becoming the winner. Paul wanted his fellow Christians to exert themselves that way in their quest for everlasting life. Doing so, they could hope to gain the prize of life. Yes, in the Christian race, all who finish win that prize. And the prize—whether life in heaven or life in Paradise on earth—is beyond compare. *w11 9/15 3:2-4*

Saturday, February 2

Keep walking by spirit.

—Gal. 5:16.

Does holy spirit operate only on special occasions or under extraordinary circumstances? No. God’s Word speaks of Christians’ “walking by spirit,” “being led by spirit,” and “living by spirit.” (Gal. 5:18, 25) These expressions indicate that holy spirit can continually exercise an influence in our lives. On a daily basis, we should entreat Jehovah to guide our thinking, speech, and actions by means of his spirit. (Ps. 143:10) As we allow the spirit to operate freely in our lives, it will produce in us fruitage that is refreshing to others and that brings praise to God. Why is it vital that we be led by holy spirit? Because another force seeks to dominate us, a force that opposes the operation of holy spirit. That other force is what the Scriptures term “the flesh,” which refers to the sinful inclinations of our fallen flesh, the legacy of imperfection we have received as descendants of Adam.—Gal. 5:17. *w11 4/15 4:2, 3*

Sunday, February 3

*You were once not a people, but
are now God's people.*

—1 Pet. 2:10.

From a Jewish viewpoint, Gentiles were incapable of producing acceptable fruitage. However, Jehovah made these very ones part of "a nation" that produced Kingdom fruitage. (Matt. 21:43) Starting with the anointing of Cornelius—the first uncircumcised Gentile convert—in 36 C.E., the opportunity was opened up to uncircumcised non-Jews to be grafted onto this symbolic olive tree. (Acts 10:44-48) Does this mean that after 36 C.E., there was no longer any opportunity for natural Jews to become part of Abraham's seed? No. Paul explains: "They [natural Jews] also, if they do not remain in their lack of faith, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree that is wild by nature and were grafted contrary to nature into the garden olive tree, how much rather will these who are natural be grafted into their own olive tree!"—Rom. 11:23, 24. *w11 5/15 4:16-18*

Monday, February 4

*He that is showing insight in a
matter will find good.*

—Prov. 16:20.

By nature, some sheep may not be warm and companionable. Still, the elders try to show insight and "find good" in them. True, being imperfect, an elder may struggle to have a positive view of each one. Yet, as he tries his best to be gentle toward all, should he not be commended for his effort to be a good shepherd under Christ? We all have reason

to "be submissive" to the elders. As Paul wrote, 'they are keeping watch over our souls.' (Heb. 13:17) That expression reminds us of the literal shepherd who forgoes sleep in order to protect his flock. Likewise, the elders today may sacrifice some sleep while tending to the needs of those who have poor health or emotional or spiritual problems. For example, brothers on Hospital Liaison Committees have been awakened from sleep to respond to a medical crisis. Yet, when we face such a situation, how appreciative we are of their service! *w11 6/15 4:7, 8*

Tuesday, February 5

*From the going forth of the
word to restore and to rebuild Je-
rusalem until Messiah the Lead-
er, there will be seven weeks, also
sixty-two weeks.—Dan. 9:25.*

When John the Baptizer came on the scene, his words and deeds led some to wonder if the Messiah had arrived. (Luke 3:15) It is possible that some correctly understood the Messianic prophecy involving "seventy weeks." (Dan. 9:24) If so, they could have determined when the Messiah would appear. Various scholars agree that these are weeks of years. For instance, the *Revised Standard Version* says: "Seventy weeks of years are decreed." Today, Jehovah's servants are aware that the 69 weeks, or 483 years, of Daniel 9:25 began in 455 B.C.E. when Persian King Artaxerxes authorized Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. (Neh. 2:1-8) Those weeks ended 483 years later, in 29 C.E., when Jesus of Nazareth was baptized and anointed with holy spirit, thus becoming the Messiah.—Matt. 3:13-17. *w11 8/15 1:3, 4*

Wednesday, February 6

Let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another.

—Rom. 14:19.

What if a Christian wants to talk to an elder about a problem he or she is having with a relative or with a fellow believer? Proverbs 21:13 states: “Anyone stopping up his ear from the complaining cry of the lowly one, he himself also will call and not be answered.” An elder would certainly not ‘stop up his ear.’ However, another proverb warns: “The first to state his case seems right, until his opponent begins to cross-examine him.” (Prov. 18:17, *New English Translation*) An elder should listen kindly, but he needs to be careful not to take sides with the one reporting the offense. After listening to the matter, he would likely ask whether the offended party has spoken to the one who caused the upset. The elder may also review Scriptural steps that the offended one can take to pursue peace. *w11 8/15 4:9, 11*

Thursday, February 7

Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world.

—1 John 2:15.

Over the years, the faithful and discreet slave class has been reminding us to be careful about what we watch and listen to, that is to say, what we set our hearts and minds on. We have been warned about the danger of getting entangled in the pursuit of money and possessions. We might be sidetracked by the glitter and glamour of the entertainment world or by the endless parade of new gadgets. It would be a serious mistake to feel

that such counsel is overly restrictive or that it applies only to others, while we personally are somehow immune to the dangers. Subtle and deceptive are the entanglements that Satan’s world puts in our way. Carelessness, overconfidence, and distractions have been the undoing of some, and such things could affect our hope of attaining the prize of life. (1 John 2:16, 17) We must constantly be on guard so as to make sure that we do not fail to finish the race for life.—Heb. 12:1. *w11 9/15 4:12, 13*

Friday, February 8

Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator.—1 Cor. 5:11.

Suppose that the only son of an exemplary Christian couple leaves the truth and is disfellowshipped. The parents are devastated! Yet, they realize that the word “anyone” in the verse above includes family members not living under their roof. But they love their son so much! Strong emotions might cause them to reason: ‘How can we help our boy return to Jehovah if we severely limit our association with him? Would we not accomplish more by maintaining regular contact with him?’ What will those dear parents do? Will they obey Jehovah’s clear direction? Or will they rationalize that they can have regular association with their disfellowshipped son and call it “necessary family business”? In making their decision, they must not fail to consider how Jehovah feels about what they are doing. His purpose is to keep the organization clean and, if possible, to incite wrongdoers to come to their senses. *w11 7/15 4:12, 13, 15*

Saturday, February 9

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.—Rom. 3:23.

Fear may paralyze us—fear of making the wrong decision, fear of failure, or fear of appearing foolish to others. Even so, love of God and his Word can help us shrink our fears. In what ways? Love of God will motivate us always to consult his Word and Bible-based publications *before* we make important decisions. We will thus minimize the number of mistakes we make. Why? Because the Bible can “give to the inexperienced ones shrewdness, to a young man knowledge and thinking ability.” (Prov. 1:4) Will we always make the right decision? No. All of us make mistakes. King David, for example, was a wise and faithful man. Yet, he at times made poor decisions that caused suffering to himself and others. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Nevertheless, David did not let his mistakes undermine his ability to make decisions that had God’s favor.—1 Ki. 15:4, 5. *w11 4/15 2:6, 7*

Sunday, February 10

A little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more.

—Ps. 37:10.

The deteriorating world conditions that mark our day leave no doubt that since 1914, Satan’s wicked world has entered its last days. The storm clouds of Armageddon cannot be far-off. Soon it will be time for the Son of man to come to execute Jehovah’s judgment on the ungodly. (Prov. 2:21, 22) Should not that awareness affect you and your family? Are you heeding Jesus’ advice to keep your eye “simple”? (Matt. 6:22) While the people of this world

may reach out for riches, fame, or power, is your family pursuing spiritual goals? Is the arrangement for a Family Worship evening or a time for personal study working for you? Are you achieving the intended objectives? Are you shouldering your Scriptural responsibility as a husband, a wife, or a child, thus helping the entire family to “stay awake”? (1 Thess. 5:6) If so, you will “keep ready” for the coming of the Son of man.—Luke 12:40. *w11 5/15 2:18, 19*

Monday, February 11

Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse.

—2 Tim. 3:13.

The critical times described at 2 Timothy 3:1-4 are now worse than ever, for ‘wicked men and impostors have advanced from bad to worse.’ This should not surprise us, since God’s Word makes it clear that “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) “The whole world” includes political, religious, and commercial elements, as well as propaganda channels. Without question, Satan the Devil is properly called “the ruler of the world” and “the god of this system of things.” (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4) Conditions throughout the earth continue to deteriorate because Satan now has great anger, knowing he has only a short period of time left before Jehovah takes him out of the way. (Rev. 12:12) How comforting it is to know that God’s toleration of Satan and his evil system will soon end, and the issue Satan raised regarding Jehovah’s sovereignty will be settled!—Gen., chap. 3; Job, chap. 2. *w11 10/15 4:3, 4*

Tuesday, February 12

Some have been turned aside to follow Satan.—1 Tim. 5:15.

Satan's aim is to get us to stop preaching the good news. (Rev. 12:17) To that end, he tries to get us to pursue activities that waste time or that cause division among us. Notice how Paul identifies Satan's tactics at 1 Timothy 5:11-14. "*Unoccupied, gadding about.*" In this age of technology, it is easy to waste our time and that of others by, for example, forwarding nonessential or even fallacious e-mails. "*Gossipers.*" Harmful gossip may lead to slander, which often causes contention. (Prov. 26:20) Whether they realize it or not, malicious slanderers imitate Satan the Devil. "*Meddlers in other people's affairs.*" It is not our right to tell others how to run their personal affairs. All such idle and troublesome behavior can distract us from the God-assigned work of Kingdom preaching. If we stop actively supporting Jehovah's work, then we start following Satan. There is no middle ground.—Matt. 12:30. *w11 7/15 2:14, 15*

Wednesday, February 13

He is divided.
—1 Cor. 7:34.

As a husband, a brother finds that he must use some of his time and energy to care for his wife and thus gain her approval. The same is true of the wife toward her husband. (1 Cor. 7:32-34) In his wisdom, Jehovah recognizes this need. He knows that a successful marriage often demands some of the time and energy that the husband and wife

formerly used in His service when they were single. But the lesson goes further. If a couple must divert some time and energy from God's service to care for each other, should they not do likewise with resources formerly used for socializing as single people? What would be the effect on a wife if a husband remained deeply involved in sports with his friends? Or how might a husband feel if a wife kept devoting much time to hobbies with her friends? The neglected mate might soon feel lonely, unhappy, and unloved. This can be avoided if those marrying do all they can to strengthen their bond as husband and wife.—Eph. 5:31. *w11 10/15 2:17, 18*

Thursday, February 14

You [Jehovah] will not leave my soul in Sheol.—Ps. 16:10.

Yes, the Messiah would be resurrected. Imagine the surprise of the women who came to the tomb where Jesus' body had been laid. There they encountered a materialized angel, who told them: "Stop being stunned. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was impaled. He was raised up, he is not here. See! The place where they laid him." (Mark 16:6) To the crowd present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter declared: "[David] saw beforehand and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he forsaken in Hades nor did his flesh see corruption." (Acts 2:29-31) God did not allow the physical body of his beloved Son to decay. Moreover, Jesus was miraculously raised to life in the spirit! —1 Pet. 3:18. *w11 8/15 2:19*

Friday, February 15

*Let the one eating not look down
on the one not eating.*

—Rom. 14:3.

In such matters as food and recreation, there is room for diversity and personal preference. (Rom. 14:2, 4) However, we also realize that allowing for diversity in recreation is not a license to indulge oneself. To illustrate, consider the example of food. Though we may be willing to eat a variety of foods, we would not deliberately consume food that is rotten. Eating such food would go against common sense and could endanger our health. Similarly, though we may be open to a variety of forms of wholesome entertainment, we would not pursue leisure activities that are life-threatening, violent, or morally rotten. Engaging in such activities would go against Bible principles and would endanger our physical or spiritual health. To make sure that we stay within reasonable limits, we do well to determine in advance whether some recreation that appeals to us is beneficial or not.—Eph. 5:10. *w11* 10/15 1:3, 4

Saturday, February 16

*The heart of the stupid ones is in
the house of rejoicing.*

—Eccl. 7:4.

Wise King Solomon wrote about the value of forgoing pleasures at times in order to take life seriously. (Eccl. 3:4; 7:2, 3) Indeed, because of the shortness of life, we need to 'exert ourselves vigorously' to attain salvation. (Luke 13:24) To that end, we need to keep considering all the things that are

of "serious concern." (Phil. 4:8, 9) That means giving careful attention to every facet of Christian life. For example, in imitation of Jehovah and Jesus, Christians take seriously their responsibility to work hard. (John 5:17) As a result, they are often praised for their good work ethic and dependability. Especially are family heads concerned about working hard to support their families. After all, not providing materially for one's household is tantamount to having "disowned Jehovah"!—1 Tim. 5:8, *ftn. w11* 4/15 1:4, 5

Sunday, February 17

*The path of the righteous ones is
like the bright light that is getting
lighter and lighter until
the day is firmly established.*

—Prov. 4:18.

The words of today's text mean that our conduct and our understanding of God's purposes will improve over time. After Jesus' death it was difficult for many Jewish Christians to break free from the Mosaic Law. (Acts 21:20) Although Paul skillfully argued that Christians were no longer under the Law, some rejected his inspired reasoning. (Col. 2:13-15) Perhaps they felt that if they continued to observe at least portions of the Law, they would avoid persecution. In any case, Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians and plainly told them that they could not enter into God's rest as long as they refused to work in harmony with His unfolding purpose. (Heb. 4:1, 2, 6, 11) To gain Jehovah's approval, they would have to face the fact that he was leading his people in a different direction. *w11* 7/15 4:7, 8

Monday, February 18

From Jerusalem and in a circuit as far as Illyricum I have thoroughly preached the good news about the Christ.—Rom. 15:19.

All people need to know about Jesus and put faith in him. In the book of Romans, Paul addressed this need. Early on, he wrote of “God, to whom I render sacred service with my spirit in connection with *the good news about his Son*.” He added: “I am not ashamed of the good news; it is, in fact, God’s power for salvation to everyone having faith.” Later he referred to the time “when God through Christ Jesus judges the secret things of mankind, according to the good news I declare.” (Rom. 1:9, 16; 2:16) Why, do you think, did Paul stress Jesus Christ to the Romans? Every Christian in Rome faced a predicament that also confronts each one of us. Paul put it this way: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) Clearly, all to whom Paul wrote needed to recognize that they were sinners and had to put faith in God’s means to meet that need. *w11 6/15 1:5, 8*

Tuesday, February 19

You must not follow after the crowd for evil ends.—Ex. 23:2.

In taking a long journey, what would you do if you felt unsure about which way to go? You might feel tempted to follow other travelers—especially if you saw a great many making the same choice. Such a course is risky. After all, those travelers may not be heading toward your destination, or they too may be lost. In this connection, consider a principle

that underlies one of the laws given to ancient Israel. Those who served as judges or as witnesses in judicial matters were warned of the danger of ‘following after the crowd.’ Without doubt, it is all too easy for imperfect humans to bow to peer pressure, perverting justice. However, is the principle about not following the crowd restricted to judicial matters? Not at all. In truth, the pressure to “follow after the crowd” can affect us at almost any time. It may arise suddenly, and it can be very difficult to resist. *w11 7/15 1:3, 4*

Wednesday, February 20

*The head of a woman is the man.
—1 Cor. 11:3.*

What does a man’s responsibility as the head of a household involve? Outlining one aspect of headship, the Scriptures say: “If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.” (1 Tim. 5:8) Indeed, a man should provide materially for his family. If he is to help his family to stay awake spiritually, though, he must prove to be more than just a breadwinner. He needs to build up his household spiritually, helping all in the family to strengthen their relationship with God. (Prov. 24:3, 4) How can he do so? Since “a husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation,” a married man should examine and imitate the type of headship that Jesus provides for the congregation. (Eph. 5:23) He should study what Jesus said and did and “follow his steps closely.” —1 Pet. 2:21. *w11 5/15 1:3, 4*

Thursday, February 21

I do take the Levites from among the sons of Israel in place of all the firstborn.—Num. 3:12.

What did that selection mean for the Levites? Rather than receiving a land inheritance, they were entrusted with a priceless privilege of service. Being “the priesthood of Jehovah” was their inheritance. (Josh. 18:7) The context of Numbers 18:20 shows that this did not leave them impoverished materially. (Num. 18:19, 21, 24) The Levites were to be given “every tenth part in Israel as an inheritance in return for their service.” They would receive 10 percent of Israel’s produce and of the increase of the domestic animals. In turn, the Levites were to contribute a tenth part of what they received, “of the very best of it,” for the support of the priesthood. (Num. 18:25-29) The priests were also given “all the holy contributions” that the sons of Israel brought to God at his place of worship. Members of the priesthood thus had good reason for believing that Jehovah would provide for them. *w11 9/15 1:3, 4*

Friday, February 22

Jehovah will not desert his people.—1 Sam. 12:22.

God is unfailingly giving his people needed help and comfort in these critical last days. For over a century, thousands of our fellow believers throughout the world have been persecuted and imprisoned just because they served Jehovah. Their experiences prove that in times of trial, Jehovah does indeed comfort his servants. For example, one of our brothers in the former Soviet Union was sentenced to

23 years in prison because of his faith. Even so, a way was found to get spiritual food to him so that he could be strengthened and comforted. He stated: “During all those years, I learned to trust in Jehovah and received strength from him.” (1 Pet. 5:6, 7) Regardless of what we may yet face, we will do well to bear in mind the psalmist’s comforting words: “Jehovah will not forsake his people.” (Ps. 94:14) Although we personally need to be comforted, we also have the grand privilege of bringing comfort to others. *w11 10/15 3:18-20*

Saturday, February 23

For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.—Acts 10:34, 35.

Just imagine the awkwardness Peter must have felt as he entered the home of Cornelius. Could a man who had previously held negative views of Gentiles ever become “harmoniously joined together” with them in “the uniting bond of peace”? (Eph. 4:3, 16) Yes, for just days earlier, God’s spirit had opened Peter’s heart, enabling him to begin to adjust his attitude and overcome his prejudice. Through a vision, Jehovah made it clear to him that God’s view of people is not determined by race or nationality. (Acts 10:10-15) Peter changed, and he became truly united with “the whole association of brothers.” (1 Pet. 2:17) Peter’s experience helps us to appreciate the remarkable transformation that is taking place among God’s people today.—Isa. 2:3, 4. *w11 4/15 3:16, 17*

Sunday, February 24

The ones chosen obtained it.

—Rom. 11:7.

When the selection of those who would form the heavenly “kingdom of priests” started at Pentecost 33 C.E., there were some rightharted Jews who accepted the invitation. (Ex. 19:6) Numbering a few thousand, these were just like “a remnant” in comparison with the whole Jewish nation. How, though, would Jehovah complete “the full number” of those who were to become Abraham’s seed? (Rom. 11:5, 12, 25) Notice the answer given by the apostle Paul: “It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who spring from [natural] Israel are really ‘Israel.’ Neither because they are Abraham’s seed [offspring] are they all children [part of the Abrahamic seed] . . . That is, the children in the flesh are not really the children of God, but the children by the promise are counted as the seed.” (Rom. 9:6-8) So physical descent from Abraham was not a rigid requirement for the fulfillment of Jehovah’s purpose regarding the seed. *w11 5/15 4:11, 12*

Monday, February 25

Have regard for those who are . . . presiding over you in the Lord.—1 Thess. 5:12.

Imagine yourself as a member of the first-century Thessalonian congregation, one of the earliest to be established in Europe. The apostle Paul had spent considerable time building up the brothers there. He may have appointed older men to take the lead, as was the case in other congregations. (Acts 14:23) But after the congregation was formed,

the Jews organized a mob to rid the city of Paul and Silas. The Christians who remained might have felt deserted, perhaps even fearful. Understandably, after leaving Thessalonica, Paul was concerned about the fledgling congregation. He tried to return, but “Satan cut across” his path. So he sent Timothy to encourage the congregation. (1 Thess. 2:18; 3:2) When Timothy brought back a good report, Paul was moved to write the Thessalonians a letter. Among other things, Paul encouraged them to ‘have regard for those who were presiding over them.’ *w11 6/15 4:1, 2*

Tuesday, February 26

By this undeserved kindness, indeed, you have been saved through faith; and this not owing to you, it is God’s gift.—Eph. 2:8.

Jehovah God accepted the ransom sacrifice that his Son offered. (Heb. 9:24; 10:10, 12) Still, Jesus’ disciples on earth, including his faithful apostles, remained imperfect. Though they strove to avoid doing wrong, they did not always succeed. Why? Because they had inherited sin. (Rom. 7:18-20) But God could and did do something about that. He accepted the “corresponding ransom” and was willing to apply it in behalf of his human servants. (1 Tim. 2:6) It is not that God owed it to the apostles and others to apply the ransom because they had performed certain good works. Instead, God applied the ransom in their behalf out of his mercy and great love. He chose to acquit the apostles and others of the judgment against them, viewing them as absolved of inherited guilt. *w11 6/15 2:12, 13*

Wednesday, February 27

Be about settling matters quickly with the one complaining against you at law.—Matt. 5:25.

If we have been offended, what should we do to resolve the matter peacefully? Matthew 18:15 states: "If your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." While Matthew 18:15-17 applies to sin of a serious nature, in the spirit of the principle stated in verse 15, we should kindly approach the offender privately and try to restore a peaceful relationship with him. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil." (Eph. 4:26, 27) Pursuing peace, then, calls for settling difficulties quickly. Why? Because doing so prevents differences from festering like an untreated, infected wound. Let us not allow pride, envy, or the attaching of too much importance to material things prevent us from resolving disputes soon after they arise. —Jas. 4:1-6. *w11 8/15 4:6, 7*

Friday, March 1

Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.—Isa. 2:3.

Are you not convinced that you can benefit from what is written in the Bible? Therein you find examples of faithful men and women whose life course and qualities you would like to imitate. (Heb. 11:32-34) However, you have like-

Thursday, February 28

Jehovah will make known who belongs to him.—Num. 16:5.

Korah lost sight of the fact that Jehovah was directing the nation of Israel and consequently failed to show loyalty to those whom God was using. How much wiser it would have been for Korah to wait on Jehovah for a clearer understanding or for adjustments if those were really needed. So in the end, Korah destroyed his record of faithful service by his prideful actions! (Num. 16:1-34) That account provides a serious warning for elders and others in the congregation today. Waiting on Jehovah and following directions from those appointed to take the lead requires humility. Do we show that we are as humble and mild-tempered as Moses was? Can we acknowledge the position of those taking the lead among us and submit to directions we receive? Are we able to rise above our personal feelings when faced with disappointments? If so, we too will be known favorably by Jehovah. Our humility and submission will endear us to him. *w11 9/15 5:12, 15, 16*

ly noted warning examples also —men and women whose deeds or attitudes you do well to avoid. Actually, some individuals mentioned in the Bible stand out both as good examples of the course to follow and as warnings of what to shun. Think of David, a humble shepherd and then a powerful king. You find in him a good example of one who loved truth and trusted in Jehovah. Yet, David was guilty of serious wrongs, such as those involving Bath-sheba, Uriah, and an ill-advised census. *w11 12/15 1:1, 2*

Saturday, March 2

The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes.

—Gen. 49:10.

Starting with the rule of Judean King David, the scepter (royal sovereignty) and the commander's staff (power to command) resided with the tribe of Judah. "Shiloh" signifies "He Whose It Is; He to Whom It Belongs." The regal line of Judah would end in "Shiloh" as the permanent king—Heir, for God told Zedekiah, the last Judean king, that rulership would be given to one having the legal right to it. (Ezek. 21:26, 27) After Zedekiah, Jesus was the only descendant of David to whom kingship was promised. Before Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel told Mary: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom." (Luke 1:32, 33) Shiloh must be Jesus Christ, who was a descendant of Judah and David.—Matt. 1:1-3, 6; Luke 3:23, 31-34. *w11* 8/15 1:6

Sunday, March 3

Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding.—Prov. 3:5.

Trusting in Jehovah with a complete heart involves doing things his way, according to his will. Central to doing so is our continually approaching him in prayer and making heartfelt requests for his guidance. However, leaning completely upon Jehovah presents a challenge for many. For example, a Christian sister named Lynn admits, "Learning

to put my complete confidence in Jehovah has been an ongoing struggle for me." Why? "I have no relationship with my father," she says, "and I have a mother who did not care for me emotionally or physically. So I very quickly learned to look after myself." Lynn's background made it difficult for her to trust anyone fully. Personal ability and success can also cause a person to be self-reliant. Relying on his experience, an elder may begin to care for matters involving the congregation without first approaching God in prayer. *w11* 11/15 1:3

Monday, March 4

I do not make my soul of any account as dear to me, if only I may finish my course.

—Acts 20:24.

Paul was willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, in order to finish the Christian race. For Paul, all his efforts and hard work in connection with the good news would amount to nothing if he should somehow fail to finish the course. Yet, he was not self-assured, feeling that he would without fail win the race. (Phil. 3:12, 13) Only toward the end of his life did he say with a measure of confidence: "I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7) In addition, Paul had an intense desire to see his fellow Christians finish the course and not drop out along the way. For example, he urged Christians in Philippi to keep "a tight grip on the word of life." He continued: "That I may have cause for exultation in Christ's day, that I did not run in vain or work hard in vain."—Phil. 2:16. *w11* 9/15 4:14, 15

Tuesday, March 5

I know my sheep and my sheep know me.—John 10:14.

Nothing about his sheep escapes the notice of our Exemplar. (1 Pet. 2:21) And the sheep fully know the shepherd and trust his leadership. To exercise his headship in imitation of Christ, a husband must learn to think of himself as a shepherd and of those under his care as sheep. He should strive to have an intimate knowledge of his family. Can a husband really have such knowledge? Yes, if he communicates well with all members of his family, listens to their concerns, takes the lead in family activities, and is conscientious about making good decisions involving such matters as family worship, meeting attendance, field service, recreation, and entertainment. When a Christian husband takes the lead with knowledge not only of God's Word but also of those entrusted to him, it is more likely that his family members will have confidence in his headship and that he will have the satisfaction of seeing them remain united in true worship. *w11 5/15 1:4-6*

Wednesday, March 6

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.—Rom. 3:23.

Before a person can develop lifesaving faith, he must acknowledge that he is a sinner. The idea of being such would not be strange for those who grow up believing in God and having some familiarity with the Bible. (Eccl. 7:20) In some lands, however, the average person is not raised thinking that he (or she) was born a sinner, that he inher-

ited sin. Granted, he probably realizes that he makes mistakes, has undesirable traits, and may have done some bad things. And he observes that others are in a similar situation. Still, given his background, he does not really understand why he and others are like that. In fact, in some languages, if you say that a person is a sinner, others may think that you are saying that he is a criminal or at least a person who broke some rules. Obviously, a person growing up in such an environment may not readily think of himself as a sinner in the sense that Paul meant. *w11 6/15 1:10, 11*

Thursday, March 7

Guard what is laid up in trust with you.—1 Tim. 6:20.

Jehovah has never taken true worship lightly. As an example, under the Mosaic Law, the Israelites experienced severe consequences when they veered from their worship of Jehovah. (Josh. 23:12, 13) In the first century C.E., Christ's followers needed to put up a vigorous fight to keep true worship free of corrupt teachings and attitudes. (2 John 7-11; Rev. 2:14-16) Today, true Christians continue to take their worship seriously. Being serious does not mean that we cannot have a relaxing and enjoyable time with people. Jesus set the perfect example of taking time not only to teach but also to relax and develop meaningful relationships with others. (Luke 5:27-29; John 12:1, 2) Being serious also does not mean that we should always have an appearance of severity. Had Jesus had a stern, overly serious nature, people certainly would not have been drawn to him. *w11 4/15 1:6, 9*

Friday, March 8

Do not be depriving each other of it.—1 Cor. 7:5.

Marriage does not furnish automatic protection against sexual uncleanness. Married people find protection from immorality only if they stay within the sexual bounds that the Originator of marriage has established for them. (1 Cor. 7:2-4) Sexual relations with her husband become the exclusive privilege of the wife; he likewise has the same privilege with her alone. Each is expected to provide the other with the marital "due," or sexual relations that a married person has the right to receive. However, some husbands and wives spend long periods of time apart—taking separate vacations or being away from each other because of secular work, thus depriving each other of the "due." Imagine the tragedy if because of the "lack of self-regulation," a person yields to satanic pressure and commits adultery. Jehovah blesses family heads who provide for their families without risking their marriages.—Ps. 37:25. *w11 10/15 2:19, 20*

Saturday, March 9

The Levite . . . has no share or inheritance with you.

—Deut. 14:29.

You might wonder, 'If the Levites had no land assigned to them, where would they reside?' God provided for them. He gave them 48 cities along with the surrounding pasture grounds. These included the six cities of refuge. (Num. 35:6-8) Thus, the Levites had a place to live when they were not serving at the sanctuary

of God. Jehovah provided abundantly for those who gave themselves to his service. The Law did not include any penalty for an Israelite who failed to tithe. When the people became negligent as to tithing, the priests and Levites were affected. That happened in the days of Nehemiah. As a result, the Levites had to work in their fields, neglecting their ministry. (Neh. 13:10) Clearly, the sustenance of the Levitical tribe hinged on the spirituality of the nation. Furthermore, the priests and Levites themselves needed faith in Jehovah and in his means of providing for them. *w11 9/15 1:5-7*

Sunday, March 10

All those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, upon them be peace and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.

—Gal. 6:16.

Jehovah's purpose with regard to "the Israel of God" is being fulfilled in a marvelous way. As Paul said, "all Israel will be saved." (Rom. 11:26) In Jehovah's due time, "all Israel"—that is, the complete number of spiritual Israelites—will serve as kings and priests in heaven. Nothing can cause Jehovah's purpose to fail! As foretold, Abraham's seed—Jesus Christ along with the 144,000—will bring blessings to "people of the nations." (Rom. 11:12; Gen. 22:18) In this way, all of God's people benefit from this arrangement. Truly, as we contemplate the outworking of Jehovah's eternal purpose, we cannot help but be amazed at "the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge."—Rom. 11:33. *w11 5/15 4:19, 20*

Monday, March 11

Let my steps take hold on your tracks, in which my footsteps will certainly not be made to totter.—Ps. 17:5.

If we are humble and willing to depend on Jehovah, he will impart to us his holy spirit as a sure guide for our steps. How will that active force help us? Jesus explained to his disciples: “The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you.” (John 14:26) As we regularly and prayerfully study God’s Word, including all the sayings of Christ, holy spirit will increase our comprehension of Jehovah’s deep wisdom, so that we can follow his will closely. (1 Cor. 2:10) Additionally, at any unexpected turn in the road to life, the spirit will show us the way to go. It will bring to mind Bible principles that we have already learned and help us to grasp how they apply in directing our next step. *w11 12/15 2:8, 9*

Tuesday, March 12

*Wisdom is with the modest ones.
—Prov. 11:2.*

Before choosing a course of action, we need to ask ourselves, ‘Is this my decision to make?’ Parents may grant their children the opportunity to make some decisions, but children should not just assume such authority. (Col. 3:20) Wives and mothers have a measure of authority within the family but do well to recognize the headship of their husbands. (Prov. 1:8; 31:10-18; Eph. 5:23) Likewise, husbands need to recognize that their authority is

limited and that they are subject to Christ. (1 Cor. 11:3) Elders make decisions that affect the congregation. However, they make sure that they “do not go beyond the things that are written” in God’s Word. (1 Cor. 4:6) They also follow closely the direction they receive from the faithful slave. (Matt. 24:45-47) We can save ourselves and others much anxiety and grief if we modestly make decisions only when we have been granted the authority to do so. *w11 4/15 2:10, 11*

Wednesday, March 13

*Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.
—Rom. 10:13.*

Perhaps the first time you saw Jehovah’s name was when it was shown to you at Psalm 83:18. You may have been surprised to read those words: “That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.” Since then, you no doubt have used this same scripture to help others come to know our loving God, Jehovah. Although it is important for people to know Jehovah’s name, such knowledge in itself is not enough. Notice how the psalmist highlights yet another truth essential to our salvation when he says: “You alone are the Most High over all the earth.” Yes, Jehovah is the most important Person in the whole universe. As the Creator of all things, he has the right to expect full submission from all his creatures. (Rev. 4:11) For good reason, then, we need to ask ourselves, ‘Who is the most important person in *my* life?’ It is vital that we carefully analyze our answer to that question! *w11 5/15 3:1, 2*

Thursday, March 14

There occurred a sharp burst of anger.—Acts 15:39.

In the congregation, mildness and long-suffering work hand in hand to promote peace. Both of these aspects of the spirit's fruitage help us to deal graciously with others, to remain calm under provocation, and to avoid retaliating when others say or do unkind things. If we have a difference with a fellow Christian, long-suffering, or patience, will help us not to give up on our brother or sister but to do what we can to heal the breach. (Col. 3:12, 13) Are mildness and long-suffering really needed in the congregation? Yes, because all of us are imperfect. Consider what took place between Paul and Barnabas. They had worked side by side for years. Each had commendable qualities. Yet, on one occasion, there occurred between them "a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other." (Acts 15:36-39) This incident underscores that even among devoted servants of God, disagreements will at times arise. *w11 4/15 4:4, 5*

Friday, March 15

Some have been turned aside to follow Satan.—1 Tim. 5:15.

Heeding the Bible's advice can help us to avoid being "turned aside to follow Satan." Consider some of Paul's wise counsel. *Have "plenty to do in the work of the Lord."* (1 Cor. 15:58) Keeping busy in Kingdom activities will protect us from the dangers of idleness and time-wasting pursuits. (Matt. 6:33) *Speak what is "good for building up."* (Eph. 4:29) Be determined not to listen to

harmful gossip and not to spread it. Cultivate trust in and respect for fellow believers. We will thus be inclined to speak words that build up rather than tear down. *"Make it your aim . . . to mind your own business."* (1 Thess. 4:11) Show personal interest in others, but do so in ways that respect their privacy and that do not take away their dignity. Remember, too, that we should not impose our own views on others regarding matters that they need to decide for themselves.—Gal. 5:5. *w11 7/15 2:14, 16*

Saturday, March 16

Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin.—Rom. 5:12.

As descendants of Adam, all of us are subject to the law of sin and of death. Our sinful flesh constantly urges us to do things that are displeasing to God, with only death in view. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul called such acts and traits "the works of the flesh." Then he added: "Those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom." (Gal. 5:19-21) People of this kind are the same as those who walk in accord with the flesh. (Rom. 8:4) Their inward principle of action and their standard for life are totally fleshly. But are those who commit fornication, engage in idolatry, practice spiritism, or get involved in other gross sins the only ones who walk in accord with the flesh? No, for the works of the flesh also include what some might consider mere personality flaws, such as jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, and envies. Who can say that he has totally freed himself from walking in accord with the flesh? *w11 11/15 2:9, 10*

Sunday, March 17

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

—Heb. 12:1.

Paul was making reference to features of athletic games or races. He not only called attention to the reason for engaging in the race but also pointed out what one must do to win. The first-century Christians, especially those living in Jerusalem and Judea, were facing many trials and hardships. They were under great pressure from the Jewish religious leaders, who still wielded powerful influence over the people. Earlier, these leaders had succeeded in having Jesus Christ condemned as a seditionist and killed as a criminal. And they were not about to stop their opposition. In the book of Acts, we read one account after another of their threats and attacks against Christians, starting almost immediately after the miraculous events at Pentecost 33 C.E. This certainly made life difficult for the faithful ones.—Acts 4:1-3; 5:17, 18; 6:8-12; 7:59; 8:1, 3. *w11* 9/15 3:5, 6

Monday, March 18

Esau went running to meet him, and he began to embrace him and fall upon his neck and kiss him.—Gen. 33:4.

Jacob had already taken the most important measure he could take to soften the heart of his brother. He had prayed to Jehovah for deliverance from Esau's hand. Did Jehovah answer this prayer? Yes. (Gen. 32:11-20; 33:1-3) The account of Jacob and Esau shows that we should make earnest and practical efforts to

settle matters when problems arise that may threaten the peace we enjoy within the Christian congregation. Jacob sought to make peace with Esau, but not because Jacob had erred against his brother and owed him an apology. No, Esau had despised his birthright and had sold it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. (Gen. 25:31-34; Heb. 12:16) However, the way Jacob approached Esau illustrates the extent to which we should be willing to go to preserve the peace with our Christian brothers. It also shows that the true God blesses our prayerful efforts to make peace. *w11* 8/15 3:2, 3

Tuesday, March 19

The judgment resulted from one trespass in condemnation, but the gift resulted from many trespasses in a declaration of righteousness.—Rom. 5:16.

Think what a gift it is for the Almighty to forgive the sin a person inherited as well as the wrongs he committed! The apostles and others receiving this loving gift (being declared righteous) would have to continue to worship the true God in faith. With what future reward? "Those who receive the abundance of the undeserved kindness and of the free gift of righteousness [will] rule as kings in life through the one person, Jesus Christ." The gift has life as its outcome. (Rom. 5:17; Luke 22:28-30) Those receiving that gift, being declared righteous, become God's spiritual sons. As joint heirs with Christ, they have the prospect of being resurrected to heaven as actual spirit sons to "rule as kings" with Jesus Christ.—Rom. 8:15-17, 23. *w11* 6/15 2:14, 15

Wednesday, March 20

Have regard for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you.

—1 Thess. 5:12.

In order to preside well over the flock, the elders discuss among themselves how to address the needs of the congregation. It might be more efficient if one elder made all the decisions. Yet, following the example of the first-century governing body, modern-day bodies of elders discuss matters freely, seeking guidance from the Scriptures. Their goal is to apply Scriptural principles to the needs of the local congregation. This is most effective when each elder prepares for the elders' meetings, considering the Scriptures and the guidelines from the faithful and discreet slave class. Of course, this takes time. When there is a difference of opinion, as occurred when the first-century governing body considered the matter of circumcision, extra time and research might be needed to reach a consensus based on the Scriptures.—Acts 15:2, 6, 7, 12-14, 28. *w11 6/15 4:11, 13*

Thursday, March 21

A fire came out from before Jehovah and consumed them.

—Lev. 10:2.

Today, Jehovah does not immediately execute those who violate his laws. He lovingly gives them an opportunity to repent from their unrighteous works. How would Jehovah feel, though, if the parents of an unrepentant wrongdoer kept putting Him to the test

by having unnecessary association with their disfellowshipped son or daughter? Many who were once disfellowshipped now freely admit that the firm stand taken by their friends and family members helped them come to their senses. One young woman who cleaned up her life said that her fleshly brother's "faithful adherence to Scriptural guidelines" helped her to want to return. What conclusion should we draw? That we need to fight against the tendency of our imperfect hearts to rebel against Scriptural counsel. We must be absolutely convinced that God's way of dealing with our problems is always best. *w11 7/15 4:16-19*

Friday, March 22

God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.—John 3:16.

By accepting God's love and by exercising faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can be freed from the condemnation resulting from our inherited sin. We may, therefore, be inclined to exclaim, as did Paul: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25) Though exercising faith in the ransom can free us from the law of sin and of death, we are still imperfect and sinful. More is involved in attaining good spiritual health and enjoying God's favor and blessing. Yet, how happy we can be that Jehovah has made it possible for us to overcome the law of sin and of death! *w11 11/15 2:11, 12*

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 9)
Luke 19:29-44

Saturday, March 23

By means of [Jesus] we have the release by ransom through the blood of that one.—Eph. 1:7.

The most outstanding example of a peacemaker is Jehovah—"the God who gives peace." (Rom. 15:33) Out of his great love, Jehovah arranged for our salvation by sending his beloved Son from heaven to be born as a perfect human. And the Son willingly complied. He allowed himself to be put to death by God's enemies. (John 10:17, 18) How does the provision of the ransom sacrifice of God's Son affect the damaged relationship between God and sinful mankind? "The chastisement meant for our peace was upon him," states Isaiah 53:5, "and because of his wounds there has been a healing for us." Instead of being viewed as God's enemies, obedient humans can now enjoy a peaceful relationship with him. *w11 8/15 3:4, 5*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 10)

Luke 19:45-48; Matthew 21:18, 19; 21:12, 13

Sunday, March 24

As you go, preach.

—Matt. 10:7.

After zealously engaging in his ministry for about two years, Jesus expanded the preaching activity by sending out his 12 apostles to preach. First, though, he gave them instructions. (Matt. 10:5-14) When about to feed a crowd of thousands miraculously, Jesus told his disciples how he wanted them to organize the people and distribute the food. (Luke 9:12-

17) Clearly, then, Jesus trained his disciples by giving them clear and specific direction. This pattern of training, coupled with the powerful influence of holy spirit, later equipped the apostles to organize the extensive preaching work that took place in 33 C.E. and thereafter. *w11 11/15 5:9*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 11)

Luke 20:1-47

Monday, March 25

Jesus . . . loved them to the end.

—John 13:1.

Jesus trained his disciples by providing personal counsel tailored to their needs. For example, he rebuked James and John for wanting to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritans who had not received him. (Luke 9:52-55) When the mother of James and John approached Jesus on their behalf to ask that they be granted favored positions in the Kingdom, Jesus addressed the brothers directly, saying: "This sitting down at my right hand and at my left is not mine to give, but it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." (Matt. 20:20-23) At all times, Jesus gave counsel that was clear, practical, and solidly based on godly principles. He taught his disciples to reason on such principles. (Matt. 17:24-27) Jesus also recognized the limitations of his followers and did not expect perfection from them. His counsel was motivated by genuine love. *w11 11/15 5:12*

Memorial Bible reading:

(Daytime events: Nisan 12)

Luke 22:1-6; Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11

**Memorial Date
After Sundown
Tuesday, March 26**

*My back I gave to the strikers . . .
My face I did not conceal from
humiliating things and spit.
—Isa. 50:6.*

As shown above, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be smitten. Micah foretold: "With the rod they will strike upon the cheek the judge of Israel." (Mic. 5:1) Confirming the fulfillment of these prophecies, the Gospel writer Mark said: "Some started to spit on [Jesus] and to cover his whole face and hit him with their fists and say to him: 'Prophecy!' And, slapping him in the face, the court attendants took him." Mark states that soldiers "would hit him on the head with a reed and spit upon him and, bending their knees [in mockery], they would do obeisance to him." (Mark 14:65; 15:19) Of course, Jesus did nothing to provoke such abuse. *w11 8/15 2:11*

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 13)
Luke 22:7-13; Mark 14:12-16
(Events after sunset: Nisan 14)
Luke 22:14-65

Wednesday, March 27

There are, in fact, many other things also which Jesus did, which, if ever they were written in full detail, I suppose, the world itself could not contain the scrolls written.—John 21:25.

Among all the things that Jesus accomplished during his short but dynamic ministry was the locating, training, and organizing of men who would take the lead after his earthly sojourn. When

he returned to heaven in 33 C.E., Jesus left behind the foundation of a remarkable congregation that would quickly number into the thousands. (Acts 2:41, 42; 4:4; 6:7) Today, there continues to be a need for men to take the lead in spiritual matters. Those who reach out for this privilege of service are to be commended, for they are "desirous of a fine work." (1 Tim. 3:1) To serve properly in such a capacity, a man must qualify spiritually. More than abilities or accomplishments, he must have spiritual qualities. *w11 11/15 5:1-3*

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 14)
Luke 22:66-71

Thursday, March 28

*Christ . . . [left] you a model for you to follow his steps closely.
—1 Pet. 2:21.*

Jesus kept his life simple so that he could freely minister to others. (Luke 9:58) He was modest and always based his teaching on the Scriptures. (John 5:19; 17:14, 17) He was approachable and kind. Love was the motivation for everything he did. (Matt. 19:13-15; John 15:12) Jesus' example had a positive influence on his apostles. For instance, James did not cower in the face of death but until he was executed, loyally served God. (Acts 12:1, 2) John faithfully followed in Jesus' footsteps for more than 60 years. (Rev. 1:1, 2, 9) Elders who are self-sacrificing, humble, and loving provide the kind of example that younger men need.—1 Pet. 5:2, 3. *w11 11/15 5:7, 8*

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 15)
Matthew 27:62-66

Friday, March 29

They did not yet discern the scripture that he must rise from the dead.—John 20:9.

The concept of humans becoming spirit creatures and ruling in a heavenly Kingdom was foreign to Jesus' disciples prior to Pentecost. (Acts 1:6) Once they were baptized with holy spirit and given the heavenly hope, they could grasp the meaning of what Jesus meant. Insight previously unattainable to Jesus' disciples became available after the outpouring of holy spirit. By inspiration, the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures set out—for our benefit—amazing facets of Jehovah's purpose. (Eph. 3:8-11, 18) Today, both spirit-anointed ones and those of the "other sheep" feed together spiritually, assimilating these same truths. (John 10:16) Do you cherish the knowledge and understanding of God's Word that holy spirit thus makes available to you? *w11 12/15 4:7, 8*

Memorial Bible reading:
(Daytime events: Nisan 16)
Luke 24:1-12

Saturday, March 30

Keep these things without pre-judgment, doing nothing according to a biased leaning.
—1 Tim. 5:21.

Three Biblical examples underscore the danger of acting hastily after hearing only one side of a controversy. Potiphar believed his wife's story that Joseph had tried to rape her. With unjustified anger, Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison. (Gen. 39:19, 20) King David believed Ziba, who said that his master, Mephibosheth, had sided with David's enemies. "Look! Yours is

everything that belongs to Mephibosheth" was David's hasty response. (2 Sam. 16:4; 19:25-27) King Artaxerxes was told that the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem's walls and were about to rebel against the Persian Empire. The king believed the false report and ordered that all rebuilding in Jerusalem cease. As a result, the Jews stopped work on God's temple. (Ezra 4:11-13, 23, 24) Christian elders wisely follow Paul's counsel to Timothy to avoid making premature judgments. *w11 8/15 4:12*

Sunday, March 31

There we saw the Nephilim.
—Num. 13:33.

Joshua and Caleb were part of a group of 12 men who went into the Promised Land to spy it out. Upon their return, ten of those men gave a very negative and discouraging report. They even claimed that some of the land's inhabitants were giants descended from the Nephilim, the offspring of rebel angels and women. (Gen. 6:4) Now, that claim was absurd. Those wicked hybrids had been wiped out in the Deluge many centuries earlier. But even the most baseless ideas can exert power over those weak in faith. The negative reports from those ten spies quickly spread fear and panic among the people. Before long, most were sure that it would be a mistake to enter the Promised Land as Jehovah had directed. In that volatile situation, what did Joshua and Caleb do? (Num. 13:25-32) Although the crowd hated to hear it, those two men told the truth and stuck to it—even when threatened with death by stoning!—Num. 14:10. *w11 7/15 1:4, 5*

Monday, April 1

Abhor what is wicked, cling to what is good.—Rom. 12:9.

In this wicked world, much entertainment is characterized by activities that flagrantly violate Bible principles or break God's laws. (1 John 5:19) True Christians say a resolute no to all such entertainment. This includes entertainment that features sadism, demonism, homosexuality, pornography, or violence or that glorifies other vile, immoral practices. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Rev. 21:8) No matter where we may be, we prove to Jehovah that we "abhor what is wicked" by refusing to get close to such entertainment. (1 John 1:5, 6) Not all forms of entertainment center on practices that are expressly condemned in God's Word. In such cases, before choosing the entertainment, we should carefully compare the activity with Jehovah's view of what is wholesome, as expressed in Bible principles. (Prov. 4:10, 11) Then we need to make a personal decision that leaves us with a good conscience. —Gal. 6:5; 1 Tim. 1:19. *w11* 10/15 1:6, 7

Tuesday, April 2

I surrender my soul in behalf of the sheep.—John 10:15.

Husbands should imitate Jesus in showing affection for those under their care. Rather than harshly dominating his wife, a husband who desires God's approval continues loving her "just as the Christ also loved the congregation." (Eph. 5:25) His words should be kind and considerate, for she is worthy of honor. (1 Pet. 3:7) In training young ones, the family head should firmly up-

hold godly principles. However, he must not fail to show affection for his children. Needed discipline should be administered lovingly. Some young ones may take longer than others to get the sense of what is expected of them. In that case, a father should show them greater patience. When men consistently follow the example of Jesus, they create a home environment that is safe and secure. Their families enjoy the type of spiritual security that the psalmist sang about. —Ps. 23:1-6. *w11* 5/15 1:4, 7, 8

Wednesday, April 3

You had no hope and were without God in the world.

—Eph. 2:12.

Today, many do not believe in the concept of being sinners. Why not? Even if they go to church on occasion, they consider the Bible account of Adam and Eve to be merely a fable or a myth. Others grow up in an anti-God climate. They doubt that God exists and therefore do not understand that a Supreme Being set moral standards for humans and that failure to uphold those standards amounts to sin. In the letter to the Romans, Paul presented a reason why such a background cannot be an excuse—not then, not today. It is that creation itself bears witness to the existence of a Creator. (Rom. 1:19, 20) This accords with an observation Paul made when writing from Rome to the Hebrews: "Every house is constructed by someone, but he that constructed all things is God." (Heb. 3:4) That line of reasoning points to there being a Creator who constructed, or brought into existence, the entire universe. *w11* 6/15 1:12, 13

Thursday, April 4

You must not follow after the crowd for evil ends.—Ex. 23:2.

When you choose entertainment and recreation for yourself or your family, do you allow the lax consciences of others to influence your decisions and to mold your conscience? Would that not, in effect, amount to following after the crowd? Jehovah has given us a precious gift to help us make decisions—our “perceptive powers.” However, these powers need to be trained “through use.” (Heb. 5:14) Following the crowd would not train our perceptive powers; nor, on the other hand, would a host of rigid rules in matters of conscience. That is why, for example, Jehovah’s people are not given a list of films, books, and Internet sites to avoid. Because this world changes so fast, such a list would be outdated soon after it was made. (1 Cor. 7:31) Worse, it would deprive us of the vital work of weighing Bible principles carefully and prayerfully and then making decisions on the basis of those principles.—Eph. 5:10. *w11 7/15 1:3, 6, 7*

Friday, April 5

You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, . . . from you there will come out to me the one who is to become ruler in Israel.—Mic. 5:2.

The Messiah was to be born in the Judean town of Bethlehem, evidently once named Ephrathah. Although Jesus’ mother, Mary, and his adoptive father, Joseph, lived in Nazareth, a Roman registration decree had taken them to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born in 2 B.C.E. (Matt. 2:1, 5, 6) Another prophecy ful-

filled in Jesus foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. (Isa. 7:14) Under inspiration, Matthew used the Greek word for “virgin” (*par-the’nos*) when showing that Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in connection with the birth of Jesus. The Gospel writers Matthew and Luke state that Mary was a virgin who became pregnant through the operation of God’s spirit. (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35) What a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy! *w11 8/15 1:7, 8*

Saturday, April 6

Jehovah’s spirit enveloped Gideon.—Judg. 6:34.

The book of Judges is replete with accounts of humans who “from a weak state were made powerful.” (Heb. 11:34) By means of holy spirit, God impelled Gideon to fight in behalf of His people. The army Gideon assembled, however, was outnumbered by the Midianite menace 4 to 1. Yet, Jehovah twice decreed that Gideon scale back the army until the enemy outnumbered Israelite fighters 450 to 1. (Judg. 7:2-8; 8:10) If a stunning victory was to take place, who could brag that it was wrought by human effort or wisdom? Jehovah’s power to save is infinite. He can deliver his people from any predicament, even doing so by using those who appear weak or helpless. Sometimes we may feel outnumbered or in desperate straits. However, we can draw abundant guidance and reassurance from God’s Word and through his spirit-directed congregation. (Rom. 8:31, 32) Jehovah’s loving promises fortify our faith and convince us that he really is our Helper! *w11 12/15 3:12, 14*

Sunday, April 7

Go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is.—Eph. 5:17.

Before eating a new dish, we would first want to find out what its main ingredients are. Similarly, before engaging in a form of recreation, we need to investigate what its main features are. For instance, sports can be fun and exciting. What, though, if you are attracted to certain sports because of their aggressive competitiveness, excessive risk taking, high rates of injury, riotous celebrations, nationalistic fervor, or similar “ingredients”? After examining what is involved, you would likely decide that it would be hard to harmonize your thinking with Jehovah’s way of thinking and with the message of peace and love that we preach to others. (Isa. 61:1; Gal. 5:19-21) On the other hand, if a certain leisure activity is made up of “ingredients” that are wholesome in Jehovah’s eyes, then such recreation may well be beneficial and refreshing to you.—Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 4:8. *w11 10/15 1:7, 8*

Monday, April 8

I exhort you as aliens and temporary residents to keep abstaining from fleshly desires.

—1 Pet. 2:11.

The Israelites were told that if they obeyed Jehovah, they would become his “special property out of all other peoples.” (Ex. 19:5) When faithful, Israel differed from all other nations in worship and way of life. Similarly today, Jehovah has separated for himself a people who are markedly different from Satan’s world. We are told: “Repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and . . . live

with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion . . . while we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of the Savior of us, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us that he might deliver us from every sort of lawlessness and cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works.” (Titus 2:11-14) This “people” is made up of anointed Christians and millions of Jesus’ “other sheep,” who aid and support them.—John 10:16. *w11 11/15 3:15, 16*

Tuesday, April 9

Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.—Matt. 6:33.

Whether we have the heavenly hope or an earthly one, we must ‘disown ourselves and pick up our torture stake and continually follow Christ.’ (Matt. 16:24) Millions who look forward to life in Paradise on earth are worshipping God and following Christ in that way. They are not content to do just a little when they sense that they can do more. Many have been impelled to simplify their life and have become pioneers. Others manage to pioneer some months each year. Still others, while unable to pioneer, exert themselves in the ministry. Such ones are like devoted Mary, who poured perfumed oil on Jesus. He said: “She did a fine deed toward me. . . . *She did what she could.*” (Mark 14:6-8) Our doing all we can may not be easy, for we live in a world dominated by Satan. Yet, we exert ourselves vigorously and put our trust in Jehovah. *w11 9/15 2:5*

Wednesday, April 10

I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others.

—1 Cor. 9:23.

How serious was Paul about his ministry? He was willing to “slave” both for Jehovah and for those who would listen to the message of truth. (Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 9:19) When we take on the responsibility to teach people God’s Word—either during a home Bible study, a Christian meeting, or a Family Worship session—do we sense our responsibility toward those we are teaching? Perhaps we feel that conducting a regular Bible study is too much of a burden for us to take on. Granted, it usually calls for taking time from our personal pursuits and devoting that time to helping others. But is that not in the spirit of Jesus’ words that “there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving”? (Acts 20:35) Personally teaching others the way to salvation will bring us happiness that cannot be compared with any other activity. w11 4/15 1:7, 8

Thursday, April 11

You are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad.

—Gen. 3:5.

Although speaking only to Eve, Satan used the plural form of the pronoun “you.” In so doing, he may have tried to appeal to her pride, endeavoring to make her feel important—as if she were the spokesperson for herself and her husband. The result? Eve evidently took it upon herself to speak for both of them by saying to the serpent: “Of the fruit of the

trees of the garden *we* may eat.” Satan also distorted the facts. He implied that God was unfair in demanding that Adam and Eve “must not eat from *every* tree of the garden.” Next, Satan got Eve to think about herself and how she could supposedly improve her lot in life, becoming “like God.” Eventually, he got her to focus on the tree and its fruit rather than on her relationship with the One who had given her everything. (Gen. 3:1-6) Sadly, by eating of the fruit, Eve showed that Jehovah was not the most important Person in her life. w11 5/15 3:4, 5

Friday, April 12

It was not through law that Abraham or his seed had the promise that he should be heir of a world, but it was through the righteousness by faith.

—Rom. 4:13.

God counted faithful Abraham as righteous. (Rom. 4:20-22; Jas. 2:23, 24) That cannot mean that Abraham was sinless while serving Jehovah over the decades. No, he was not righteous in that sense. (Rom. 3:10, 23) However, in his limitless wisdom, Jehovah took into account Abraham’s exceptional faith and his works resulting therefrom. In particular, Abraham exercised faith in the promised “seed” to come in his line. That Seed proved to be the Messiah, or Christ. (Gen. 15:6; 22:15-18) Accordingly, on the basis of “the ransom paid by Christ Jesus,” the divine Judge is able to forgive sins that occurred in the past. Thus, Abraham and other men of faith in pre-Christian times are in line for a resurrection.—Rom. 3:24, 25; Ps. 32:1, 2. w11 6/15 2:17, 18

Saturday, April 13

Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.—Jas. 1:19.

If a Christian senses that he is becoming angry when discussing a matter with a fellow believer, he is wise to heed this counsel. What are the benefits of following it? By taking time to calm down, pray about the matter, and consider how best to reply, a Christian allows himself to be led by God's spirit. (Prov. 15: 1, 28) Under the influence of the spirit, he can manifest mildness and long-suffering. He is thereby equipped to heed the counsel found at Ephesians 4:26, 29: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin . . . Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers." Indeed, when we clothe ourselves with mildness and long-suffering, we contribute to the peace and unity of the congregation. *w11 4/15 4:6, 7*

Sunday, April 14

Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself.—Ps. 73:13.

Like Asaph, perhaps at one point you lost sight of your spiritual privileges to some extent and began to focus on what you were lacking in a material way. But by studying God's Word and by going to Christian meetings, you came to see things Jehovah's way. Asaph perceived what would eventually happen to the wicked. He thought about his lot

and realized that Jehovah would take hold of his right hand and lead him. Asaph could thus say to Jehovah: "Besides you I do have no other delight on the earth." (Ps. 73:23, 25) The psalmist was confident that Jehovah would remember him as a friend. His faithful service would not be forgotten. (Eccl. 7:1) How reassuring that must have been for Asaph! He sang: "As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge."—Ps. 73: 28. *w11 9/15 1:8, 9*

Monday, April 15

The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help.
—Ps. 34:15.

We often feel the need to be comforted. Especially is this the case when we are experiencing difficult situations. Family members and friends can usually give us a degree of comfort. At times, however, conditions that cause us distress are beyond human remedies. Only God can give us comfort regardless of how distressing our situation may be. His Word assures us: "Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him, . . . and their cry for help he will hear." (Ps. 145:18, 19) But if we are to receive God's support and comfort, we must place our trust in him. The psalmist David made that clear when he sang: "Jehovah will become a secure height for anyone crushed, a secure height in times of distress. And those knowing your name will trust in you, for you will certainly not leave those looking for you, O Jehovah."—Ps. 9:9, 10. *w11 10/15 3:1, 2*

Tuesday, April 16

In Jehovah the God of Israel he trusted.—2 Ki. 18:5.

King Sennacherib of Assyria sent his representatives—including Rabshakeh—to Jerusalem along with a heavy military force. King Hezekiah of Judah went to the house of Jehovah and began praying: “O Jehovah our God, save us, please, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Jehovah, are God alone.” (2 Ki. 19:14-19) Hezekiah acted in harmony with his prayer. Even before going up to the temple to pray, he instructed the people not to respond to Rabshakeh’s taunts. Hezekiah also sent a delegation to Isaiah the prophet, seeking his advice. (2 Ki. 18:36; 19:1, 2) Hezekiah took steps that he could rightly take. He did not try to seek support from Egypt or from neighboring nations. Rather than lean upon his own understanding, Hezekiah trusted in Jehovah. After Jehovah’s angel struck down 185,000 of Sennacherib’s men, Sennacherib “pulled away” and returned to Nineveh. —2 Ki. 19:35, 36. *w11 11/15 1:5, 6*

Wednesday, April 17

Pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment.

—Prov. 2:2.

At the start of Solomon’s kingdom, God appeared to him in a dream and invited him to make a request. Aware of his limited experience, Solomon requested wisdom. (1 Ki. 3:5-9) Pleased that the king asked for wisdom rather than for riches and glory, God gave Solomon “a wise and understanding heart”—as well as

prosperity. (1 Ki. 3:10-14) We personally do not expect to receive wisdom miraculously. Solomon said that “Jehovah himself gives wisdom,” but he wrote that we should strive to gain that godly quality. He used expressions such as “call out for,” “keep seeking for,” and “keep searching for” wisdom. (Prov. 2:1-6) Clearly, we *can* gain wisdom. It would be good to ask: ‘Am I taking to heart Solomon’s example of treasuring divine wisdom? Do the choices I make indicate that I am treasuring and seeking divine wisdom?’ *w11 12/15 1:4-6*

Thursday, April 18

Who of you that wants to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the expense, to see if he has enough to complete it?

—Luke 14:28.

“The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage,” wrote Solomon, “but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want.” (Prov. 21:5) For example, are you considering a business proposal? Do not let emotion rule. Gather all the relevant facts, seek the counsel of those familiar with such things, and determine what Bible principles have a bearing on the matter. (Prov. 20:18) To organize your research, prepare two lists—one detailing the benefits, the other the liabilities. Before you make a decision, “calculate the expense.” Consider the potential impact that your decision will have not only on your financial health but also on your spiritual well-being. It takes time and effort to do research. But by doing so, you may avoid making hasty decisions that lead to unnecessary anxiety. *w11 4/15 2:12*

Friday, April 19

You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise.

—Heb. 10:36.

At the time Paul wrote his letter to the Hebrews, some Christians had succumbed to the pressures and distractions of daily life and failed to make the spiritual advancement that would have fortified them. (Heb. 5:11-14) Others apparently felt that life would be so much easier if they just went along with the majority of Jews around them. Those Jews, after all, had not completely abandoned God; they were still following his Law to some extent. Other Christians were persuaded or intimidated by individuals in the congregation who clamored for sticking to the Mosaic Law and tradition. Paul sought to strengthen the Hebrew Christians. In chapter 10 of his letter, Paul pointed out that the Law was but “a shadow of the good things to come” and clearly demonstrated the value of the ransom sacrifice of Christ. *w11 9/15 3:8, 9*

Saturday, April 20

[The congregation] walked in the fear of Jehovah and in the comfort of the holy spirit it kept on multiplying.—Acts 9:31.

In this world full of wickedness and suffering, we are sure to encounter some situations that cause distress. We cannot expect God to remove all sources of unhappiness or grief until he destroys this system of things. Meanwhile, as we face foretold persecution, our integrity to Jehovah is at stake as supporters of his universal sovereignty.

(2 Tim. 3:12) Helped and comforted by our heavenly Father, however, we can be like anointed Christians of ancient Thessalonica, who bore persecutions and tribulations with endurance and faith. (2 Thess. 1:3-5) That Jehovah comforts his people can also be seen in the experience of the entire first-century Christian congregation. For instance, we read of a period when “the congregation throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria entered into a period of peace, being built up.” How grateful we are that we too have “the comfort of the holy spirit”! *w11 10/15 4:7, 8*

Sunday, April 21

Upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down, . . . the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.—Isa. 11:2.

One reason why we should want to be guided by holy spirit is that God led his own Son by it. Just imagine how eager Jesus was to receive the help of God’s spirit while residing in the environment that he faced here on earth! Jehovah’s words mentioned in today’s text came true. The Gospel record states what happened immediately after Jesus’ baptism: “Now Jesus, full of holy spirit, turned away from the Jordan, and he was led about by the spirit in the wilderness.” (Luke 4:1) There, while Jesus was fasting, praying, and meditating, Jehovah likely instructed and enlightened his Son about what lay ahead for him. God’s active force was at work on Jesus’ mind and heart, guiding his thinking and decisions. As a result, Jesus knew what to do in each situation, and he did exactly what his Father wanted him to do. *w11 12/15 2:10, 11*

Monday, April 22

Jehovah himself will hear when I call to him.—Ps. 4:3.

King David has ruled Israel for some time, but he now faces a perilous situation. His scheming son Absalom has had himself declared king, and David has been forced to leave Jerusalem. He has also been betrayed by a confidant, and now, accompanied by a few loyal ones, he walks weeping and barefoot over the Mount of Olives. Moreover, Shimei, who belongs to a family in King Saul's house, is throwing stones and dust at David while cursing him. (2 Sam. 15:30, 31; 16:5-14) Will this ordeal bring David down to Sheol in grief and disgrace? No, for he trusts in Jehovah. This is evident in the 3rd Psalm, composed by David regarding his flight. He also wrote the 4th Psalm. Both of these compositions express the conviction that God hears and answers prayers. (Ps. 3:4; 4:3) These psalms assure us that Jehovah is with his faithful servants day and night, blessing them with his support as well as peace and a sense of security.—Ps. 3:5; 4:8. *w11 5/15 5:1, 2*

Tuesday, April 23

I am writing these things, not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

—1 Cor. 4:14.

The motive behind Paul's admonition to the Corinthians was loving concern for others. Congregation elders too must bear in mind the importance of the manner in which they admonish others. They strive to imitate Paul by being kind, loving, and helpful. (1 Thess. 2:11, 12) Of course, the elders 'hold firmly to the faithful

word so that they may be able to exhort by teaching that is healthful.' (Titus 1:5-9) Elders are imperfect and may say things that they later regret. (1 Ki. 8:46; Jas. 3:8) Also, elders know that for spiritual brothers and sisters, receiving counsel is normally not 'joyous but grievous.' (Heb. 12:11) So when an elder approaches someone with words of admonition, he likely does so after giving the matter much consideration and praying over it. If you have been admonished, do you appreciate that elder's loving concern? *w11 6/15 4:15-17*

Wednesday, April 24

The word of God is alive and exerts power.—Heb. 4:12.

When Paul wrote the above, he was not referring specifically to God's written Word, the Bible. The context shows that he was referring to God's word of promise. Paul's point was that God does not make a promise and then forget about it. Jehovah established this through the prophet Isaiah: "My word . . . will not return to me without results, but it will . . . have certain success in that for which I have sent it." (Isa. 55:11) Thus, there is no need for us to become impatient when things do not move ahead as quickly as we might wish. Jehovah 'keeps working' with a view to bringing his purpose to a successful conclusion. (John 5:17) Many faithful servants of God never expected to grow old in this system of things. Still, they have not given in to discouragement. (Ps. 92:14) They realize that God's word of promise is not a dead issue—it is alive, and Jehovah is working toward its fulfillment. *w11 7/15 4:20, 21*

Thursday, April 25

If anyone thinks he has acquired knowledge of something, he does not yet know it just as he ought to know it.—1 Cor. 8:2.

Do we really know all the details that led up to a dispute? Can we fully understand the backgrounds of the individuals involved? When called upon to judge, how vital it is that elders not let themselves be deceived by falsehood, clever tactics, or rumors! God's appointed Judge, Jesus Christ, judges righteously. He does not "judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears." (Isa. 11:3, 4) Rather, Jesus is guided by Jehovah's spirit. Christian elders likewise have the benefit of being guided by God's holy spirit. Before they make judgments respecting fellow believers, elders need to pray for the help of Jehovah's spirit and depend on its guidance by consulting God's Word and the publications of the faithful and discreet slave class.—Matt. 24:45. *w11 8/15 4:13, 14*

Friday, April 26

Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.—Heb. 11:1.

Abraham and Sarah were willing to leave a comfortable way of life behind and live as "strangers and temporary residents in the land." What helped them? "They saw [the fulfillment of God's promises] afar off." Moses rejected "the temporary enjoyment of sin" and "the treasures of Egypt." How did he have the faith and strength to do so? He "looked in-

tently toward the payment of the reward." (Heb. 11:8-13, 24-26) Understandably, Paul prefaced his description of each of these people with the expression "by faith." Faith enabled them to look beyond the trials and hardships of the present and see what God was doing in their behalf and would yet do. By meditating on the men and women of faith mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 and imitating their example, we can cultivate faith and put off "the sin that easily entangles us."—Heb. 12:1. *w11 9/15 4:17, 18*

Saturday, April 27

This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth.—Matt. 24:14.

This earth-wide witness work regarding God's Kingdom is being done on an ever-increasing scale. Today, over 7,500,000 Witnesses of Jehovah, associated with more than 107,000 congregations throughout the earth, are preaching about God's Kingdom, even as Jesus made it the theme of his preaching and teaching. (Matt. 4:17) As a result of our present-day preaching work, great comfort is being given to mourning ones. Why, in two recent years, a total of 570,601 individuals were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses! The great scope of this preaching work can best be appreciated by noting that Jehovah's Witnesses now translate and distribute Bible literature in over 500 languages. Nothing like this has ever been seen in all human history! The existence, work, and growth of the earthly part of Jehovah's organization are truly extraordinary. *w11 10/15 4:5, 6*

Sunday, April 28

From now on you will be catching [people] alive.—Luke 5:10.

During a preaching tour throughout Galilee, Jesus and his disciples boarded a boat to withdraw into a lonely place. But crowds followed them on foot. Those who came that day numbered “about five thousand men, besides women and young children.” (Matt. 14:21) On another occasion, a crowd approached Jesus, desiring to be healed and to hear him speak. Included were “four thousand men, besides women and young children.” (Matt. 15:38) Evidently, many men were among the people who came to Jesus and showed interest in his teaching. In fact, he expected many others to respond, for after providing a miraculous catch of fish, Jesus told Simon Peter the words of today’s text. (Luke 5:10) His disciples were to lower their nets into the sea of mankind and could expect that their ‘catch’ would include many men. Today, men likewise show interest in the Scriptural message we preach and respond to it. —Matt. 5:3. *w11 11/15 4:1, 2*

Monday, April 29

Do to me according to what has gone forth from your mouth. —Judg. 11:36.

Jephthah vowed that if God gave Ammon into his hand, the first one to come out of the door when he returned home would be Jehovah’s. As Jephthah returned from subduing Ammon, his daughter came running to meet him. (Judg. 11:29-31, 34) Being a loyal worshipper of Jehovah, Jephthah’s daughter was

convinced that her father’s vow should be carried out. How had Jephthah’s daughter developed such a spirit of self-sacrifice? No doubt her faith was built up as she observed her father’s zeal and godly devotion. Parents, your example does not go unnoticed by your children. Your decisions communicate that you believe what you say. Your children observe how your fervent prayers and effective teaching combine with your example of what it means to serve Jehovah with a complete heart. As your children do so, they will likely develop a strong desire to make themselves available to Jehovah for his service. *w11 12/15 3:15, 16*

Tuesday, April 30

My Father has kept working until now, and I keep working. —John 5:17.

Jesus said these words to opposers who criticized him for healing on the Sabbath, which they construed as a form of work. What was the point? Jesus was being accused of working on the Sabbath. His reply: “My Father has kept working” answered that charge. In effect, Jesus was saying to his critics: ‘My Father and I are engaged in the same type of work. Since my Father has kept working during his millenniums-long Sabbath, it is quite permissible for me to keep working, even on the Sabbath.’ Thus, Jesus implied that as regards the earth, God’s great Sabbath day of rest, the seventh day, had not ended in his day. This leads us to the conclusion that the seventh day was still under way in the first century C.E.—Gen. 2:3. *w11 7/15 3:1, 3*

Wednesday, May 1

*All that your hand finds to do,
do with your very power.*

—Eccl. 9:10.

The effort we expend to make a good decision can be wasted if we do not follow through and vigorously implement it. To succeed, we must be willing to allocate the resources needed to implement our decisions. For example, a congregation publisher might decide to pioneer. Will he succeed? He likely will if he does not allow excessive secular work and recreation to sap his strength and rob him of the time he needs for his ministry. The best decisions are seldom the easiest to implement. Why? Because “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) We must wrestle against “the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) Both the apostle Paul and the disciple Jude indicated that those who decide to honor God will have a fight on their hands.—1 Tim. 6:12; Jude 3.
w11 4/15 2:15, 16

Thursday, May 2

*Is it for nothing that Job has
feared God?—Job 1:9.*

When Jehovah confronted Satan with Job's record of integrity, Satan said the above. Satan did not deny that Job was obedient to God. Instead, he questioned Job's motives. He slyly accused Job of serving Jehovah, not out of love, but out of selfish interest. Only Job could answer that charge, and he was given the opportunity to do so. Jehovah allowed Satan to bring a series of disasters upon Job, one after the other. (Job 1:12-19) How

did Job react to this reversal of circumstances? We are told that he “did not sin or ascribe anything improper to God.” (Job 1:22) Next, Job was disfigured by a disgusting disease and then pressured by his wife to curse God and die. Later, three false comforters accused him of misconduct. (Job 2:11-13; 8:2-6; 22:2, 3) However, through all this suffering, Job refused to give up his integrity. (Job 2:9, 10) He showed by his faithful endurance that Jehovah was the most important Person in his life.
w11 5/15 3:6-8

Friday, May 3

*“Abraham put faith in Jehovah,
and it was counted to him as
righteousness,” and he came to
be called “Jehovah's friend.”*
—Jas. 2:23.

Abraham came to be “Jehovah's friend”—and that before the ransom sacrifice was offered. (Isa. 41:8) What, then, about true Christians who hope to live in the restored earthly Paradise? These have not received “the free gift of righteousness” with heavenly life in view “through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:24; 5:15, 17) Nevertheless, they exercise deep faith in God and his provisions, and they manifest their faith by good works. One such work is that of “preaching the kingdom of God . . . and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 28:31) Thus, Jehovah can view these as righteous in the sense that he did Abraham. The gift such ones receive—friendship with God—differs from “the free gift” the anointed receive. Yet, it certainly is a gift that they accept with deep gratitude.
w11 6/15 2:19, 20

Saturday, May 4

You must not go about following your hearts and your eyes.

—Num. 15:39.

Jehovah has profound insight into human nature. He well knows how easily our heart, or inner self, is seduced by what we take in through our eyes. The Bible thus warns us: "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9) In our day, it is even easier for our treacherous heart to be seduced by our physical senses. We live in a world that is geared toward appealing to fleshly inclinations. So how can we apply the principle behind today's text? Consider: If those around you at school, at the workplace, or in your community are dressing more and more provocatively, might you be affected? Might you be tempted to 'follow your heart and eyes' and be seduced by what you see? Then might you be tempted to lower your own standards by dressing in a similar manner?—Rom. 12:1, 2. *w11 7/15 1:10, 11*

Sunday, May 5

I am sending to you people Elijah the prophet.—Mal. 4:5.

Jesus himself identified this "Elijah" as John the Baptizer. (Matt. 11:12-14) And Mark pointed out that the ministry of John fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaiah. (Isa. 40:3; Mark 1:1-4) Jesus did not arrange for John to do an Elijahlike work as His forerunner. The activity of this foretold "Elijah" was done in harmony with God's will as a means of identifying the Messiah. Additionally, in the synagogue at Nazareth, the town where he had

been reared, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah and applied to himself the words: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor, he sent me forth to preach a release to the captives and a recovery of sight to the blind, to send the crushed ones away with a release, to preach Jehovah's acceptable year." Because he truly was the Messiah, Jesus could rightly say: "Today this scripture that you just heard is fulfilled."—Luke 4:16-21. *w11 8/15 1:11, 12*

Monday, May 6

Why is it that the way of wicked ones is what has succeeded?
—Jer. 12:1.

After observing what was taking place in Jerusalem and Judah, Jeremiah felt compelled to 'complain' about what he saw. Jeremiah knew that Jehovah is righteous. What Jehovah thereafter inspired Jeremiah to prophesy and how He fulfilled those prophetic words gave a solid answer to the prophet's question. In harmony with divine prophecies, those who obeyed Jehovah's direction 'received their souls as spoil,' whereas the prosperous wicked ones ignored the warning and perished. (Jer. 21:9) Jeremiah had told the wayward nation to return to their heavenly Father, but their badness had reached the point where God had to let Jerusalem and Judah be destroyed. That caused Jeremiah pain, though he was not at fault. Amid his afflictions, the prophet remembered God's mercies. "We have not come to our finish," he said. Indeed, Jehovah's mercies are new each morning!—Lam. 3:22-24. *w11 9/15 1:11, 12*

Tuesday, May 7

Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.

—Matt. 6:33.

Note that only one pursuit comes first—Kingdom interests. (1 Cor. 7:29-31) That fundamental truth should move us to pursue our secondary activities, including recreation, in such a way that they enable us to carry out our primary activity—caring for Kingdom interests. If we do that, limited recreation can be beneficial. So we need to determine how much of our time a certain leisure activity will *cost*. Next, we must decide how much of our time it is *worth*. If pursuing a form of recreation will mean neglecting such important activities as personal Bible study, family worship, attending Christian meetings, or sharing in Kingdom preaching, it is not worth the price. (Mark 8:36) But if an occasional leisure activity energizes us to keep on pursuing Kingdom interests, we may well decide that the time we spend on that type of recreation is worthwhile. *w11 10/15 1:10-12*

Wednesday, May 8

To God I shall call out; and Jehovah himself will save me.

—Ps. 55:16.

How comforting it is to know that no matter how dire our situation is, we can call out to Jehovah with a “request for favor”! (Ps. 55:1) However, when we pray for deliverance from a troublesome situation, it is wise to examine our motives. Are we concerned exclusively with getting relief from the problem, or do we keep Jehovah and his purpose in

mind? Personal suffering can easily cause us to get so caught up in our own situation that concern over spiritual matters fades into the background. When praying to God for help, let us keep our mind focused on Jehovah, the sanctification of his name, and the vindication of his sovereignty. Doing so can help us to maintain a positive outlook even if the solution that we hope for fails to materialize. The answer to our prayers may be that we need to endure the situation with God’s help.—Isa. 40:29; Phil. 4:13. *w11 11/15 1:7, 9*

Thursday, May 9

[May your] eyes . . . prove to be opened toward this house night and day, toward the place of which you said, “My name will prove to be there,” to listen to the prayer with which your servant prays toward this place.

—1 Ki. 8:29.

When the temple was finished and the ark of the covenant was placed in it, Solomon offered a public prayer in which he spoke the words of today’s text. Israelites and foreigners could pray toward this structure on which God’s name was called. (1 Ki. 8:30, 41-43, 60) After celebrating the temple’s inauguration, the people were “rejoicing and feeling merry of heart over all the goodness that Jehovah had performed for David his servant and for Israel.” (1 Ki. 8:65, 66) In fact, remarkable peace and prosperity marked Solomon’s 40-year reign. (1 Ki. 4:20, 21, 25) Psalm 72 reflects that and gives us insight into the blessings we will enjoy under the rule of the Greater Solomon, Jesus Christ.—Ps. 72:6-8, 16. *w11 12/15 1:8, 9*

Friday, May 10

Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones.—Ps. 1:1.

Think about the first time you had a meaningful discussion with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. What do you remember about it? Many would reply, 'I was impressed by the fact that the Witness used the Bible to answer all my questions.' How delighted we were to discover God's purpose for the earth, what happens when we die, and what the future holds for our dead loved ones! As we studied further, however, we realized that the Bible does much more than answer our questions about life, death, and the future. We came to appreciate that the Bible is the most practical book in the world. Its counsel is timeless, and those who carefully follow it will lead successful and happy lives. (Ps. 1:1-3) Genuine Christians have always accepted the Bible, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God."—1 Thess. 2:13. *w12 1/15 1:1, 2*

Saturday, May 11

God saw good for all fullness to dwell in [Christ].—Col. 1:19.

Christ is the key figure in the fulfilling of God's purpose. And what is Jehovah's purpose? It is "to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the [shed] blood" of Jesus Christ. (Col. 1:20) Expressing his heartfelt gratitude for Jehovah's provision, Paul wrote to the anointed Christians in Ephesus: "God, who is rich in mercy, . . . made us alive together with the Christ, even when we were dead in trespasses—by undeserved kindness you have

been saved." (Eph. 2:4, 5) Whether we have a heavenly hope or an earthly hope, we are deeply indebted to God for his mercy and undeserved kindness. Our hearts are filled with gratitude as we consider the extent to which Jehovah went to make it possible for mankind to enjoy peace with him. When we are confronted with situations that threaten the peaceful unity of the congregation, should not our appreciatively reflecting on God's example move us to be peacemakers? *w11 8/15 3:6, 8*

Sunday, May 12

Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, . . . let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.—Heb. 12:1.

The 'great cloud of witnesses' were no mere spectators or bystanders, as it were, who were there only to watch the race. Rather, they were participants, like runners in a race. And they had successfully run the race and finished it. Though now deceased, they could be thought of as seasoned runners who could encourage newer runners in the race. Imagine how a contestant would feel if he knew that surrounding, or watching, him were some of the most accomplished runners. Would he not be moved to do his best or even to outdo himself? Those witnesses of old could testify that such a figurative race, no matter how strenuous, can be won. Thus, by keeping closely in mind the example of the "cloud of witnesses," the first-century Hebrew Christians could draw courage and 'run the race with endurance'—as can we today. *w11 9/15 3:10, 11*

Monday, May 13

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.—1 Cor. 10:13.

Jehovah's worshippers are precious to him. Jesus made this clear when he said: "Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your heads are all numbered. Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6, 7) Trusting in Jehovah and in the fulfillment of his promises can bring us comfort in times of distress. Our heavenly Father is not limited by anything or anyone and therefore has at his disposal whatever means are needed to provide comfort for those who love him. In turn, we are able to comfort fellow believers "in any sort of tribulation." We can do so "through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God." (2 Cor. 1:3, 4) How well this expresses Jehovah's unmatched ability to comfort despairing ones! *w11 10/15 3:3-5*

Tuesday, May 14

Those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those in accord with the spirit on the things of the spirit.—Rom. 8:5.

Here the flesh is not necessarily the physical body. In the Bible, the word "flesh" is sometimes used to denote the sinful and imperfect nature of the fallen flesh. This nature is what causes the conflict between the flesh and the mind that Paul mentioned earlier. (Rom. 7:21-23) Unlike him,

however, those who "are in accord with the flesh" do not even put up a fight. Instead of considering what God requires of them and accepting the help he has provided, they are inclined to "set their minds on the things of the flesh." They often focus on the satisfying of their bodily comforts and physical desires. In contrast, the inclination of those who are "in accord with the spirit" is to set their minds on "the things of the spirit"—spiritual provisions and activity. *w11 11/15 2:14*

Wednesday, May 15

Go on acquiring power in the Lord and in the mightiness of his strength . . . that you may be able to resist in the wicked day.
—Eph. 6:10, 13.

Jehovah has equipped us to resist the spirit of the world. By means of his spirit, Jehovah fortifies us to withstand Satan's efforts to mislead us. (Rev. 12:9) The spirit of the world is strong, and we cannot avoid it altogether. However, we do not have to be corrupted by it. Holy spirit is even stronger, and it will help us! Of those who forsook Christianity in the first century, the apostle Peter said: "Abandoning the straight path, they have been misled." (2 Pet. 2:15) How very thankful we can be that we have received, "not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God"! (1 Cor. 2:12) With the help of its influence and by taking full advantage of all of Jehovah's provisions to keep us on the right path spiritually, we can succeed in resisting the satanic spirit of this wicked world.—Gal. 5:16. *w11 12/15 2:14, 15*

Thursday, May 16

Be vigilant with a view to prayers.—1 Pet. 4:7.

Persevering in prayer is essential to keeping on the watch. Recall that in the garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest, Jesus told three of his apostles: "Keep on the watch *and pray continually*." (Matt. 26:41) Peter, who was present on that occasion, later experienced firsthand the power of fervent prayers. (Acts 12:1-6) After being arrested by Herod, Peter was chained between 2 guards, with 16 guards working in shifts day and night to make sure that this apostle did not escape. Herod's intention was to present Peter to the people after the Passover, his death sentence a gift to delight the crowds. Verse 5 reads: "Consequently Peter was being kept in the prison; but prayer to God for him was being carried on intensely by the congregation." How did things turn out for Peter? During his final night in the prison while he was fast asleep between his two guards, an angel set Peter free.—Acts 12:7-11. *w12 1/15 2: 10-13, 15*

Friday, May 17

Become kind to one another.
—Eph. 4:32.

Like a gentle breeze and a cool drink on a hot day, kindness and goodness are refreshing. Within the family circle, they contribute to a pleasant atmosphere. Kindness is an endearing quality that stems from genuine interest in others, an interest that is manifested in helpful acts and considerate words. Goodness, like kindness, is a positive quality that is

expressed in actions that benefit others. It is marked by a spirit of generosity. (Acts 9:36, 39; 16:14, 15) But goodness involves something more. Goodness is moral excellence. It involves not just what we do but, more important, what we are. Picture a woman preparing fruit for her family, examining each piece as she slices it to make sure that it is sweet and ripe all the way through, without defect inside or out. Similarly, the goodness produced by holy spirit permeates a Christian's entire way of life.—Eph. 5: 8, 9. *w11 4/15 4:8, 9*

Saturday, May 18

O Jehovah, why have my adversaries become many?—Ps. 3:1.

"The heart of the men of Israel has come to be behind Absalom," says a messenger. (2 Sam. 15: 13) Wondering how Absalom has been able to marshal such support, David asks the above question. Many Israelites think that Jehovah will not deliver David from calamity at the hands of Absalom and his cohorts. But David is confident because he has implicit trust in God. He sings: "Yet you, O Jehovah, are a shield about me, my glory and the One lifting up my head." (Ps. 3:3) David is sure that Jehovah will protect him just as a shield protects a soldier. Yes, the aging king is fleeing, his head covered and bent down in humiliation. But the Most High will change David's condition to one of glory. Jehovah will enable him to stand erect, to raise his head and hold it high once again. David calls out with confidence that God will answer him. Do you display such trust in Jehovah? *w11 5/15 5:3, 4*

Sunday, May 19

Teacher, I will follow you wherever you are about to go.

—Matt. 8:19.

A scribe said the above to Jesus. However, when Jesus told him that “the Son of man has nowhere to lay down his head,” the scribe had second thoughts. The uncertainty of where his next meal would come from or where he would live apparently did not sit well with the scribe, for there is no indication that he became a follower of Christ. (Matt. 8:20) Men often put material security ahead of spiritual pursuits. Getting higher education and securing a well-paying job are priorities for many of them. According to their way of thinking, the reward of making money is more urgent and practical than any benefits that might come from studying the Scriptures and seeking a close relationship with God. What the Bible teaches may appeal to them, but “the anxieties of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches” choke whatever interest they may have. —Mark 4:18, 19. *w11 11/15 4:3, 4*

Monday, May 20

Anything in which there is a defect you must not present.

—Lev. 22:20.

A fundamental standard concerning any animal that was to be sacrificed to Jehovah was that it be “sound” in all respects—not blind, injured, deformed, or sick. (Lev. 22:21, 22) When the Israelites offered fruits or grains to Jehovah, they needed to be “the very best” of their harvests. (Num. 18:12, 29) A second-rate offering was not acceptable to Jehovah. The important require-

ment regarding animal sacrifices pictured that Jesus’ sacrifice would be spotless and unblemished and that Jehovah would sacrifice what was best and dearest to him in order to redeem mankind. (1 Pet. 1:18, 19) The person making a sacrifice knew that God would not be pleased with a defective offering because that would indicate that the man considered the sacrifice a mere formality, even a burden. (Mal. 1:6-8, 13) This should make us reflect on our service to God: ‘Might it be appropriate for me to review the quality of my service and my motives for serving him?’ *w12 1/15 3:6, 7*

Tuesday, May 21

He gave gifts in men.—Eph. 4:8.

What would you do if you received a gift especially made for you? Would you show your appreciation by using it? The “gifts in men” are what Jehovah through Jesus Christ has provided for you. One way you can show your gratitude for these gifts is by listening intently to talks given by the elders and by trying to apply the points they bring out. You can also show your appreciation by making meaningful comments at meetings. Support the work in which the elders are taking the lead, such as the field ministry. If you have benefited from counsel you received from a certain elder, why not tell him so? In addition, why not show your appreciation for the elders’ families? Remember, for an elder to work hard in the congregation, his family is sacrificing time spent with him. Yes, we have ample reason to show gratitude for the elders, who are working hard among us. *w11 6/15 4:3, 19, 20*

Wednesday, May 22

The wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable.

—Jas. 3:17.

Being peaceable is secondary to chasteness, that is, upholding God's clean moral standards and meeting his righteous requirements. One account involving Jehu shows that God's righteousness takes priority over peaceableness. God sent Jehu to execute His judgment on the house of King Ahab. Wicked King Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, rode in his chariot to meet Jehu and said: "Is there peace, Jehu?" Jehu replied: "What peace could there be as long as there are the fornications of Jezebel your mother and her many sorceries?" (2 Ki. 9:22) With that, Jehu drew his bow and shot Jehoram through the heart. Just as Jehu took action, elders must not compromise with willful, unrepentant practicers of sin for the sake of keeping peace. They expel unrepentant sinners so that the congregation can continue to enjoy peace with God.—1 Cor. 5: 1, 2, 11-13. *w11 8/15 4:15, 16*

Thursday, May 23

We who have exercised faith do enter into the rest.—Heb. 4:3.

When quoting Genesis 2:2 concerning God's rest, Paul wrote under inspiration the words of today's text. (Heb. 4:4, 6, 9) So the seventh day was ongoing in Paul's day. How much longer was that day of rest to continue? In order to answer that question, we must remember the purpose of the seventh day. Genesis 2:3 explains what it is: "God proceeded to bless the seventh day and *make it sacred.*" That day was

'made sacred'—sanctified, or set apart, by Jehovah—in order to bring his purpose to completion. That purpose is for the earth to be inhabited by *obedient* men and women who will take care of it and all life upon it. (Gen. 1:28) It is toward the realization of that purpose that both Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, the "Lord of the sabbath," have "kept working until now." (Matt. 12:8; John 5:17) God's rest day will continue until his purpose in connection with it has been fully realized at the end of Christ's Thousand Year Reign. *w11 7/15 3:4, 5*

Friday, May 24

Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

—Heb. 13:16.

When you dedicated yourself to Jehovah, you made that decision without reservation, did you not? In effect, you said that in every aspect of your life, you would put Jehovah first. (Heb. 10:7) Doubtless you have seen that when you seek Jehovah's will in a matter and strive to work in harmony with it, the results are excellent. (Isa. 48:17, 18) It is important that we avoid any associations or involvements that would defile us from God's point of view. (Isa. 2:4; Rev. 18:4) We also cannot allow our eyes to keep looking at that which is unclean or immoral or let our minds fantasize about such things. (Col. 3:5, 6) Being good and doing good to others as a matter of course is something that Jehovah views as an acceptable sacrifice to him. It is a distinguishing mark of true Christians.—John 13:34, 35; Col. 1:10. *w12 1/15 4:7-9*

Saturday, May 25

Jehovah knows those who belong to him.—2 Tim. 2:19.

One day a Pharisee approached Jesus and asked: "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus responded: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matt. 22:35-37) Jesus had great love for his heavenly Father and truly lived by those words. Jesus was also concerned about his standing with Jehovah, demonstrating this by his faithful life course. Therefore, shortly before his death, he could state that God knew him as one who faithfully obeyed His commandments. Jesus thus remained in Jehovah's love. (John 15:10) Many today claim to love God. We no doubt include ourselves in that number. However, serious aspects to consider are: 'Am I known by God? How does Jehovah view me? Am I known as belonging to him?' What a privilege it is to contemplate such a close relationship with the Sovereign of the universe! *w11 9/15 5:1, 2*

Sunday, May 26

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls.—Matt. 11:29.

As Christians, we have been comforted by learning about Jesus Christ and by walking in his footsteps. Learning about Jesus' upbuilding way of treating people and then following his positive example is in itself a great help in relieving the stress that we may experience. We can also be com-

forted by fellow Christians. For example, consider how the elders in the congregation help those facing distressing situations. The disciple James wrote: "Is there anyone [spiritually] sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him." With what result? "The prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him." (Jas. 5:14, 15) Other members of the congregation can provide comfort as well. *w11 10/15 4:9, 10*

Monday, May 27

The one listening to counsel is wise.—Prov. 12:15.

If elders observe that some questionable conduct is retarding a man's spiritual progress, they take the initiative to readjust him in a spirit of mildness. (Gal. 6:1) At times, counsel is needed because of some personality trait. If a brother seems somewhat self-sparing, for example, an elder may find it helpful to point out that Jesus was a zealous Kingdom proclaimer who commissioned his followers to make disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 8:1) If a brother appears ambitious, an elder might show him how Jesus helped His disciples to see the dangers of seeking prominence. (Luke 22:24-27) What if a brother has a tendency to be unforgiving? The illustration of the slave who refused to forgive a small debt even though he himself had been forgiven much more would make a powerful point. (Matt. 18:21-35) When counsel is needed, it is good for the elders to provide it at the earliest opportunity.—Prov. 27:9. *w11 11/15 5:13, 14*

Tuesday, May 28

He ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness.—Acts 10:42.

This assignment calls for skills that may not come naturally. How grateful we are that Jehovah uses his spirit to enable us to accomplish the wide variety of tasks that we are entrusted with! Thus, as we carry out our commission, we can say as did the prophet Isaiah: “The Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has sent me, even his spirit.” (Isa. 48:16) We set our hearts to the work with the assurance that Jehovah will enhance our qualifications as he did for Moses, Bezalel, and Joshua. We take up “the sword of the spirit, that is, God’s word,” confident that he will empower us as he empowered Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. (Eph. 6:17, 18) By leaning on Jehovah for his help in overcoming obstacles, we can be as mighty spiritually as Samson was physically. Clearly, Jehovah blesses those who take a bold stand for true worship. *w11 12/15 3:18, 19*

Wednesday, May 29

Every high priest . . . is appointed in behalf of men over the things pertaining to God.
—Heb. 5:1.

A priest appointed by Jehovah represents sinful people before God by means of prescribed offerings, pleading with Him on their behalf. Conversely, a priest also represents Jehovah before people, instructing them in divine law. (Lev. 10:8-11; Mal. 2:7) In these ways, a divinely appointed priest works to reconcile people to God. The Law covenant thus offered to Israel the oppor-

tunity to produce a royal priesthood that would benefit “all other peoples.” (Ex. 19:5) This awesome prospect came with a condition, though: “If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant.” Could the Israelites ‘strictly obey Jehovah’s voice’? Yes, to a certain degree. Could they do so perfectly? No. (Rom. 3:19, 20) For that reason, Jehovah established in the meantime a priesthood *within* Israel, separate from any kingship, to offer animal sacrifices for sins that the Israelites would inevitably commit.—Lev. 4:1-6:7. *w12 1/15 5:8, 9*

Thursday, May 30

Everyone that is perfectly instructed will be like his teacher.
—Luke 6:40.

Parents can do much to help their children learn how to make decisions that honor God. A fine example is one of the best teachers. When appropriate, parents can explain to their children which steps they themselves took to make a certain decision. They may also want to allow their children to make some decisions for themselves and then commend them when the decision works out well. What, though, if a child makes a poor decision? A parent’s first inclination may be to shield the child from the consequences, but doing so may not always be in the child’s best interests. For example, the parent may allow the child to obtain a driver’s license. Suppose the child were to break a traffic law and receive a fine. The parent could pay the fine. However, if the child is required to work to pay off the fine, he is more likely to learn to be responsible for his actions.—Rom. 13:4. *w11 4/15 2:18*

Friday, May 31

Make sure of the more important things.—Phil. 1:10.

Setting realistic goals can yield rich dividends. Take, for example, the goal of discussing the day's text every day. The comments given by family members can help the head of the household to discern the degree of their spirituality. The goal of regularly reading the Bible together as a family provides an excellent opportunity for children to improve their reading skills as

well as their comprehension of the Bible's message. (Ps. 1:1, 2) And should we not want to make it our goal to improve the quality of our prayers? Cultivating aspects of the fruitage of the spirit to a greater degree can also be an excellent goal to pursue. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Or what about looking for ways to show fellow feeling for people we meet in the ministry? Striving to do that as a family can help children learn to be compassionate, and they will be more likely to develop a desire to serve as regular pioneers or missionaries. *w11 5/15 2:9, 10*

Saturday, June 1

If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a fine work.—1 Tim. 3:1.

When Paul encouraged the men in the congregation to strive to qualify for greater responsibility, his intention was not to encourage anyone to satisfy personal ambition. "Reaching out" requires of Christian men that they develop a strong desire to work hard at acquiring needed spiritual qualities in order to serve their brothers. If a brother has been baptized at least one year and to a reasonable degree meets the Scriptural qualifications for ministerial servants outlined at 1 Timothy 3:8-13, he can be recommended for appointment. Note that verse 8 specifically states: "Ministerial servants should likewise *be serious*." Are you a serious baptized brother in your late teens? There are several ways that you can reach out. One is by improving your personal share in the field ministry. *w11 4/15 1:11, 12*

Sunday, June 2

Happy are those whose lawless deeds have been pardoned and whose sins have been covered.—Rom. 4:7.

God has arranged a legally proper means for pardoning sins. That good news centers on Jesus' role in the outworking of God's purpose. Paul could look forward to "the day when God through Christ Jesus judges the secret things of mankind, according to the good news." (Rom. 2:16) In stating that, he was not minimizing "the kingdom of the Christ and of God" or what God will do by means of the Kingdom. (Eph. 5:5) But he showed that for us to live and enjoy the blessings to prevail under God's Kingdom, we must recognize (1) our situation as sinners in God's sight and (2) why we need to exercise faith in Jesus Christ to have our sins forgiven. When a person comes to understand and accept those parts of God's purpose and sees the future that this opens to him, he can rightly exclaim, "Yes, that truly is good news!" *w11 6/15 1:17, 19*

Monday, June 3

I am going to make a helper for him.—Gen. 2:18.

Actively supporting her husband with words and actions will surely involve sacrifices on a wife's part. But she is aware that her husband's involvement in theocratic activities helps the entire family to keep awake spiritually. Being exemplary in a supportive role may be a challenge for a wife when her husband makes a decision she disagrees with. Even then, she manifests a "quiet and mild spirit" and cooperates with him to make his decision work. (1 Pet. 3:4) A good wife tries to follow the fine examples of godly women of former times, such as Sarah, Ruth, Abigail, and Jesus' mother, Mary. (1 Pet. 3:5, 6) She also imitates present-day older women who are "reverent in behavior." (Titus 2:3, 4) By showing love and respect for her husband, an exemplary wife contributes much to the well-being of the entire family. Her home is a place of comfort and safety. To a spiritual man, a supportive wife is priceless!—Prov. 18:22. *w11 5/15 1:10, 13, 14*

Tuesday, June 4

I shall not set in front of my eyes any good-for-nothing thing.—Ps. 101:3.

Whatever might damage our clean conscience and our relationship with Jehovah is for us a "good-for-nothing thing." Also, we certainly would never want to become, in a sense, a "good-for-nothing thing" to others by tempting them to contemplate wrongdoing. We therefore take seriously the Bible's

inspired counsel to wear well-arranged and modest clothing. (1 Tim. 2:9) Modesty is not something we can simply define in a way that suits us. We need to take into account the consciences and sensitivities of those around us, putting their peace of mind and welfare ahead of our own preferences. (Rom. 15:1, 2) The Christian congregation is blessed with many thousands of young people who set sterling examples in this regard. How proud they make us as they refuse to 'follow their hearts and their eyes,' choosing instead to please Jehovah in all that they do—even in the way they dress!—Num. 15:39. *w11 7/15 1:12, 13*

Wednesday, June 5

The people that were walking in the darkness have seen a great light. As for those dwelling in the land of deep shadow, light itself has shone upon them.—Isa. 9:2.

Thus the Messiah's public ministry in Galilee was foretold. Jesus began his ministry while residing at Capernaum, where many residents of Zebulun and Naphtali enjoyed the benefits of the spiritual light he brought them. (Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:12-16) In Galilee, Jesus gave his thought-provoking Sermon on the Mount, chose his apostles, performed his first miracle, and likely appeared to some 500 disciples after his resurrection. (Matt. 5:1-7:27; 28:16-20; Mark 3:13, 14; John 2:8-11; 1 Cor. 15:6) He thus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy by preaching in "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali." Of course, Jesus went on to preach the Kingdom message elsewhere in Israel. *w11 8/15 1:13*

Thursday, June 6

You are my refuge, my share in the land of the living ones.

—Ps. 142:5.

At the time that David composed this psalm, he was not in a palace or even in a house. He was in a cave, hiding from his enemies. King Saul was the one hounding David, seeking to take his life. David fled to a cave that was hard to approach. (1 Sam. 22:1, 4) In this remote region, it might have seemed to David that no friend was at his side to give him protective support. (Ps. 142:4) That was when David called out to God. By the time David composed Psalm 142, he may have learned what had befallen High Priest Ahimelech, who had unwittingly given him assistance when he was fleeing from Saul. Jealous King Saul had Ahimelech and his household killed. (1 Sam. 22:11, 18, 19) David felt responsible for their deaths. It was as if he had killed the priest who had helped him. If you had been in David's position, would you have felt responsible? *w11 9/15 1:14-16*

Friday, June 7

You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you.

—John 15:14.

While Jesus was friendly toward people in general, he was a close friend only to those who met specific requirements, such as his 11 faithful apostles. (John 13:27, 30) The only individuals whom Jesus embraced as friends were those who followed him and served Jehovah. Hence, when you consider whether you should choose a certain individual as a close friend or not, it would be wise to keep Je-

sus' statement in mind. Ask yourself such questions as: 'Does this individual demonstrate in words and deeds that he is obeying the commands of Jehovah and Jesus? Does he have the same Bible-based values and morals that I have? Will being in his company encourage me to put the Kingdom first in my life and to be a loyal servant of Jehovah?' If you are sure that the answers to those questions are yes, you have found a good companion with whom to enjoy your leisure activities.—Ps. 119:63; 2 Cor. 6:14; 2 Tim. 2:22. *w11 10/15 1:14, 15*

Saturday, June 8

Our eyes are toward you.

—2 Chron. 20:12.

How do you make weighty decisions in life? Do you perhaps decide first and then pray to Jehovah to bless the decision you have made? Consider what Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, did when the combined forces of the Moabites and the Ammonites came up against him to wage war. "Jehoshaphat became afraid and set his face to search for Jehovah," says the Bible. He declared a fast for all Judah and collected the people together "to inquire of Jehovah." Then he stood up in the congregation of Judah and of Jerusalem and prayed. In part, he pleaded: "O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For in us there is no power before this large crowd that is coming against us." The true God heard Jehoshaphat's prayer and provided a miraculous deliverance. (2 Chron. 20:3-12, 17) When making decisions, should we not rely on Jehovah rather than lean upon our own understanding? *w11 11/15 1:10, 11*

Sunday, June 9

It is necessary to circumcise them and charge them to observe the law of Moses.

—Acts 15:5.

In 49 C.E., the apostles and older men in Jerusalem, themselves circumcised Jews, “gathered together to see about this affair.” (Acts 15:6) What followed was, not a mind-numbing theological debate over dry technicalities, but a lively doctrinal discussion. Strong opinions were expressed on both sides of the issue. The passage that helped settle the matter was Amos 9:11, 12. Thus, when the Scriptures foretold that those remaining of the house of Israel (Jews and circumcised Jewish proselytes) *together with* “people of all the nations” (*uncircumcised* Gentiles) would become one people for God’s name, the message was clear. (Acts 15:17) Circumcision was not required of Gentiles who wanted to become Christians. God’s Word and his spirit led those sincere Christians to “a unanimous accord.”—Acts 15:25. *w12* 1/15 1: 4, 6-8

Monday, June 10

His wives . . . inclined his heart to follow other gods.—1 Ki. 11:4.

Things took a bad turn after Solomon became king. Solomon formed “a marriage alliance with Pharaoh the king of Egypt and [took] Pharaoh’s daughter and [brought] her to the City of David.” (1 Ki. 3:1) In time, Solomon built a house for her (and perhaps her Egyptian maids) outside the City of David. Why? The Scriptures say that he did so because it was not fitting for a false worshipper to dwell near the ark

of the covenant. (2 Chron. 8:11) Solomon may have seen political advantages in marrying an Egyptian princess, yet could he justify it? Long before, God had forbidden the marrying of pagan Canaanites, even listing certain peoples. (Ex. 34:11-16) Did Solomon reason that Egypt was not one of those listed nations? Even if he reasoned that way, would such rationalizing be valid? Actually, his course ignored the clear risk that Jehovah had mentioned—that of turning an Israelite from true worship to false.—Deut. 7:1-4. *w11* 12/15 1:10, 12, 13

Tuesday, June 11

Go away, Satan!—Matt. 4:10.

Shortly after Jesus’ baptism, Satan tried to entice Jesus to pursue selfish desires rather than to keep Jehovah as the most important Person in his life. The Devil presented Jesus with three temptations. First, he tried to appeal to fleshly desire, tempting Jesus to turn stones into bread. (Matt. 4:2, 3) Jesus had just fasted for 40 days and was very hungry. So the Devil urged him to misuse his miraculous powers to satisfy his hunger. How did Jesus react? Unlike Eve, Jesus focused on Jehovah’s Word and immediately rejected the temptation. (Matt. 4:4) In his last desperate attempt, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. (Matt. 4:8, 9) Jesus immediately refused the offer. He realized that accepting it would be tantamount to rejecting Jehovah’s sovereignty—God’s very right to be the Most High. In each case, Jesus answered Satan by quoting scriptures that contained Jehovah’s personal name. *w11* 5/15 3:9, 11

Wednesday, June 12

“Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness,” and he came to be called “Jehovah’s friend.”

—Jas. 2:23.

Abraham’s faith was made evident by his peace-loving ways. For example, as Abraham’s flocks and herds increased, tension developed between his herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot. (Gen. 12:5; 13:7) The obvious solution was that Abraham and Lot separate. Instead of using his age and status with God to tell his nephew what to do, Abraham proved himself to be a true peacemaker. “Please, do not let any quarreling continue between me and you and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen,” Abraham told his nephew, “for we men are brothers.” The patriarch continued: “Is not the whole land available to you? Please, separate from me. If you go to the left, then I will go to the right; but if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.” Lot chose the most fertile part of the land, but Abraham held no grudge against him. —Gen. 13:8-11. *w11* 8/15 3:9, 10

Thursday, June 13

Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight . . . , and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

—Heb. 12:1.

Many of the faithful ones whom Paul mentioned in chapter 11 of Hebrews had circumstances similar to ours. For example, Noah was living when the pre-Flood world was ending. We are living near the end of the present

system of things. Abraham and Sarah were called upon to leave behind their homeland to pursue true worship and await the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise. We are urged to disown ourselves and gain Jehovah’s approval and the blessings he holds out for us. Moses journeyed through a fearsome wilderness, heading for the Promised Land. We are on a course through this dying system of things, heading toward the promised new world. What these men went through, their successes and failures, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, is truly worthy of our consideration.—Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11. *w11* 9/15 3:12

Friday, June 14

[Jehovah] is healing the broken-hearted ones, and is binding up their painful spots.—Ps. 147:3.

We need comfort in many areas of life. One of the greatest causes of grief is the loss of a loved one in death, especially a beloved marriage mate or a child. Comfort may also be needed because a person is a victim of discrimination or prejudice. Poor health, advanced age, poverty, marital problems, or distressing world conditions can give rise to a personal need for comfort. In times of distress, we may need comfort that soothes our heart, our mind, our emotions, and both our physical and spiritual health. For example, consider the heart. God’s Word acknowledges that our heart can be “broken and crushed.” (Ps. 51:17) Even in severe situations, God can bring relief to a stricken heart if we pray to him in full faith and observe his commandments.—1 John 3:19-22; 5:14, 15. *w11* 10/15 3:6, 7

Saturday, June 15

The minding of the flesh means death, but the minding of the spirit means life and peace.

—Rom. 8:6.

How can we pursue “the minding of the spirit”? By regularly setting our minds on the things of the spirit and allowing a spiritual inclination and attitude to develop in us. As we do this, we have a mind-set that is “under subjection to the law of God” and is “in harmony with” his thoughts. (Rom. 8:7, 8) When we are faced with a temptation, we will be moved to make the correct choice—one that is in accord with the spirit. Therefore, it is vital to set our minds on the things of the spirit. We do this by ‘bracing up our minds for activity,’ building our life around a spiritual routine that includes regular prayer, Bible reading and study, meeting attendance, and the Christian ministry. (1 Pet. 1:13) Rather than allowing the things of the flesh to distract us, let us set our minds on the things of the spirit. Doing so will bring us blessings, for the minding of the spirit means life and peace.—Gal. 6:7, 8. *w11 11/15 2:17, 18*

Sunday, June 16

The fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

We are wise to take stock of ourselves to be sure that our words and actions give evidence that we are directed by holy spirit and are producing its fruitage. (2 Cor. 13:5a; Gal. 5:25) If we see that we need to cultivate some aspects

of the fruitage of the spirit, we can cooperate with holy spirit to a greater degree in producing such qualities. We do this by studying each aspect as it is revealed through the pages of the Bible and discussed in our Christian publications. Thus we can discern how the spirit’s fruitage should be manifested in our everyday life and then work to cultivate it to a greater extent. As we observe the results of the operation of God’s spirit in our own life as well as in the lives of our fellow Christians, we clearly see why we must be guided by it. *w11 12/15 2:16, 17*

Monday, June 17

Peter was being kept in the prison; but prayer to God for him was being carried on intensely by the congregation.—Acts 12:5.

Their prayers in behalf of their beloved brother were intense, heartfelt pleas. So the death of James had not plunged them into despair; nor had it caused them to view prayer as ineffective. On the contrary, they knew that the prayers of faithful worshippers mean a great deal to Jehovah. If such prayers are in harmony with his will, he answers them. (Heb. 13:18, 19; Jas. 5:16) What can we learn from the response of Peter’s fellow Christians? Keeping on the watch involves praying not just for ourselves but for our brothers and sisters as well. (Eph. 6:18) Do you know of fellow believers who are beset by trials? Some may be enduring persecution, governmental bans, natural disasters, or less noticeable hardships. Why not make them the subject of your heartfelt prayers? *w12 1/15 2:13, 14*

Tuesday, June 18

With my voice I shall call to Jehovah himself, and he will answer me from his holy mountain.

—Ps. 3:4.

Trusting in Jehovah and filled with confidence, David wrote the above. In keeping with David's orders, the ark of the covenant, symbolizing God's presence, has been taken to Mount Zion. (2 Sam. 15:23-25) Fittingly, then, David refers to having his prayer answered from Jehovah's holy mountain. Certain that prayer to God will not be in vain, David experiences no dread. Instead, he sings: "As for me, I will lie down that I may sleep; I shall certainly awake, for Jehovah himself keeps supporting me." (Ps. 3:5) Even at night, when the danger of surprise attack is the greatest, David is not afraid to go to sleep. He is sure that he will awake, for his past experiences have made him absolutely confident that he can trust in God's unfailing support. So can we if we adhere to "the ways of Jehovah" and never depart from him.—2 Sam. 22:21, 22. *w11 5/15 5:6, 7*

Wednesday, June 19

Do not be lying to one another. Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it.—Col. 3:9, 10.

In a Christian household, what can help family members to treat one another with kindness and goodness? Accurate knowledge of God's Word plays an important role. Some family heads in-

clude a study of the fruitage of the spirit as part of their weekly Family Worship evening. Such a consideration is not difficult to arrange. Using the research tools available in your language, select material on each aspect of the spirit's fruitage. You might consider just a few paragraphs per week, spending several weeks on each aspect. As you study the material, read and discuss the cited scriptures. Look for ways to apply what you learn, and pray for Jehovah to bless your efforts.—1 Tim. 4:15; 1 John 5:14, 15. *w11 4/15 4:10*

Thursday, June 20

At once abandoning the nets, they followed him.—Matt. 4:20.

What helped Peter, Andrew, James, and John take up the full-time ministry? Was it an emotional, spur-of-the-moment decision? Hardly! Over the previous months, these men listened to Jesus, saw him perform miracles, observed his zeal for righteousness, and witnessed the amazing response to his preaching. As a result, their faith in Jehovah and their trust in him became stronger! (Matt. 4:18-22) How can we imitate Jesus in helping our Bible students to build their trust in Jehovah? (Prov. 3:5, 6) When teaching, we can highlight God's promise to bless us abundantly if we put Kingdom interests first. (Mal. 3:10; Matt. 6:33) Although we can use various scriptures to emphasize how Jehovah provides for his people, not to be overlooked is the effect of the example we ourselves set. Sharing experiences from our own life can accomplish much in helping our students develop reliance on Jehovah. *w11 11/15 4:6, 7*

Friday, June 21

With such sacrifices God is well pleased.—Heb. 13:16.

If an Israelite's sacrifice was a *voluntary* manifestation of sincere gratitude to Jehovah, then making the appropriate choice of animal would likely present no challenge. The worshipper would be happy to give Jehovah his very best. Christians today do not make the literal sacrifices stipulated by the Mosaic Law; yet they do make sacrifices, in the sense that they use their time, energy, and resources to serve Jehovah. The apostle Paul referred to the "public declaration" of the Christian hope and "the doing of good and the sharing of things with others" as sacrifices that please God. (Heb. 13:15) The spirit with which Jehovah's people engage in such activities reveals how grateful and appreciative they are for all that God has given to them. So there is a parallel between the attitudes and motivations of those who engage in Christian service today and those who offered voluntary sacrifices in ancient times. *w12 1/15 3:8*

Saturday, June 22

Shepherd the flock of God in your care.—1 Pet. 5:2.

Sometime before Nero launched his persecution against Christians in Rome, the apostle Peter wrote his first letter. He wanted to strengthen his fellow believers. The Devil was 'walking about,' seeking to devour Christians. To stand firm against him, they needed to 'keep their senses' and to 'humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.' (1 Pet. 5:6, 8) They also needed to

stay united. They could not afford to be "biting and devouring one another," for that could result in their being "annihilated by one another." (Gal. 5:15) Today, we face a similar situation. The Devil is looking for opportunities to devour us. (Rev. 12:12) And ahead of us looms a "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning." (Matt. 24:21) Just as first-century Christians had to guard against squabbling among themselves, so must we. To accomplish this, at times we need help from qualified older men. *w11 6/15 3:1, 2*

Sunday, June 23

I am proceeding to go down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.—Ex. 3:8.

God's purpose in delivering the Israelites was to raise them up as his people. (Gen. 22:17) God gave them a code of laws that would enable them to enjoy a peaceful relationship with him. (Isa. 48:17, 18) He told the Israelites: "If you will strictly *obey* my voice and will indeed *keep* my covenant [as outlined in the Law code], then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples." (Ex. 19:5, 6) Thus, the Israelites' enjoying a privileged relationship with God was contingent on their obeying his voice. Just think what life would have been like if the Israelites had only obeyed God's voice! Jehovah would have blessed their fields, their vineyards, their flocks, and their herds. Also, their enemies would have had no permanent hold on them, providing concrete proof that obedience to the true God brings spiritual and material blessings.—1 Ki. 10:23-27. *w11 7/15 3:7, 8*

Monday, June 24

The one covering over transgression is seeking love, and he that keeps talking about a matter is separating those familiar with one another.—Prov. 17:9.

If a Christian becomes aware of a serious sin on the part of a fellow believer, he should encourage that one to confess the sin to the elders. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Jas. 5:14-16) If the wrongdoer does not do so, the Christian who has come to know about the sin should report it. Failure to do this in a mistaken effort to maintain peace with the sinner makes one a party to the wrongdoing. (Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24) However, most disputes between brothers do not involve serious wrongdoing that requires judicial action. How good it is, therefore, lovingly to cover over the mistakes of others. Complying with the words of our text for the day will help all of us to preserve peace in the congregation and maintain a good relationship with Jehovah.—Matt. 6:14, 15. *w11 8/15 4:15, 17*

Tuesday, June 25

If anyone loves God, this one is known by him.—1 Cor. 8:3.

Some who have much love for Jehovah find it challenging to believe that God can know them in a positive way. Some have feelings of worthlessness, so they question the idea of belonging to Jehovah. How glad we can be, though, that God can see us from a different perspective! (1 Sam. 16:7) Your love for God is an important prerequisite for being known by him. Consider: Why are you reading this publication? Why are

you striving to serve Jehovah with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength? If you are dedicated to God and baptized, what led you to take those steps? The Bible explains that Jehovah, who examines hearts, draws desirable ones. (Hag. 2:7; John 6:44) Therefore, you can conclude that you are serving Jehovah because he drew you. He will never leave the ones whom he has drawn if they remain faithful. God views them as very precious, and he loves them dearly.—Ps. 94:14. *w11 9/15 5:3*

Wednesday, June 26

Do not forget the doing of good.—Heb. 13:16.

One of the most obvious ways in which we as Christians do good things for others is through “the public declaration of our hope.” Do you seize every opportunity to give a witness? Paul called this essential Christian activity “a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to [God’s] name.” (Heb. 10:23; 13:15; Hos. 14:2) Much could be said about the quantity and quality of the time that we spend preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and many Service Meeting parts are designed to stimulate our thinking on this matter. Briefly stated, however, since our field service and informal witnessing activities are “a sacrifice of praise,” a part of our worship, that sacrifice should be of the very best that we can offer. While circumstances vary, the amount of time that we devote to announcing the good news often reflects our appreciation for spiritual things. *w12 1/15 4:9, 10*

Thursday, June 27

[God] comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation.—2 Cor. 1:4.

A very important means of being comforted is to be present at Christian meetings, where Bible discussions encourage us. We read that Judas and Silas “encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them.” (Acts 15:32) Before and after our meetings, there is up-building conversation between members of the congregation. So even if we are suffering because of some distressing situation, let us not isolate ourselves, for doing so will not improve matters. (Prov. 18:1) Instead, we do well to follow the apostle Paul’s inspired counsel: “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near.”—Heb. 10:24, 25. *w11 10/15 4:11, 12*

Friday, June 28

Be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim.

—1 Tim. 4:7.

The elders take the lead in training men to reach out. Although others can help and support him, the primary responsibility for reaching out rests with the man himself. (Gal. 6:5) Of course, a brother does not have to be a ministerial servant or an elder in order to help others and have a full share in the ministry. However, reaching out for priv-

ileges in the congregation does mean striving to meet the qualifications set out in the Scriptures. (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3) So if a man desires to serve as a ministerial servant or an elder but has not yet been appointed to be one, he should give attention to areas where he needs to make spiritual advancement. This calls for regular Bible reading, diligent personal study, serious meditation, heartfelt prayer, and zealous participation in the Christian ministry. *w11 11/15 5:15, 16*

Saturday, June 29

Look! Jehovah’s slave girl! May it take place with me according to your declaration.—Luke 1:38.

In stating matters that way, Mary revealed a heart attitude that God had already noted. Her immediate response to the angel indicates that she was ready to accept God’s will concerning her. She did not raise any question about how people in the community would view her pregnancy or what possible effect it could have on her relationship with her fiancé. By referring to herself as the lowliest of servants, Mary showed that she trusted completely in Jehovah as her Master. Have you at times felt somewhat overwhelmed by challenges or responsibilities in God’s service? Each of us does well to ask himself: ‘Do I completely trust in Jehovah to work matters out in harmony with his will? Am I truly demonstrating a willing spirit?’ Be assured that God gives his spirit to those who trust in him with all their heart and recognize his sovereign will.—Acts 5:32. *w11 12/15 4:3, 4*

Sunday, June 30

You yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.—Ex. 19:6.

Was Jehovah's promise that the Israelites could furnish "a kingdom of priests" an empty one? Not at all. If they sincerely tried to obey, they would have this opportunity—but not under the Law. Why not? (Gal. 3:19-25) For those who faithfully endeavored to observe it, the Law had the effect of preserving pure worship. It made

the Jews aware of their transgressions and of the need for a sacrifice greater than their high priest could offer. It was a tutor that would lead them to the Christ, or Messiah, titles that mean "Anointed One." However, when the Messiah arrived, he would introduce the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah. Those who accepted the Christ were invited to become party to the new covenant and would actually become "a kingdom of priests." *w12 1/15 5:5, 10*

Monday, July 1

Safeguard your heart.

—Prov. 4:23.

Not all unbelieving spouses, children, parents, or other relatives embrace true worship, even after years of faithful conduct and tactful witnessing on the part of the believer. Some remain indifferent or become unrelenting opposers. (Matt. 10:35-37) However, displaying godly traits can have a very good effect. A former unbelieving husband states: "When the believing mate starts to let those lovely qualities shine, you do not know what is going on in the unbeliever's mind and heart. So don't ever give up on your unbelieving mate." Even if a family member remains an unbeliever, happiness is possible for the believer. Although her husband has not responded to the Kingdom message after 21 years of effort on her part, one sister says: "Immersing myself in spiritual activities—personal study, meeting attendance, the field ministry, and helping others in the congregation—has drawn me closer to Jehovah and has safeguarded my heart." *w12 2/15 4:15, 16*

Tuesday, July 2

He slaved with me in furtherance of the good news.

—Phil. 2:22.

You young brothers can make yourselves available to older ones in the congregation, offering to assist them in any way possible. You can also show an interest in the appearance of the Kingdom Hall, helping to keep it clean and neat. When you offer to help out in any way you can, your willing spirit gives evidence that you are serious about your ministry. Like Timothy, you can learn to care genuinely for the needs of the congregation. (Phil. 2:19-21) Elders, be conscious of putting to work young brothers who are endeavoring to "flee from the desires incidental to youth" and who are pursuing "righteousness, faith, love, peace," along with other serious traits. (2 Tim. 2:22) By assigning them things to do in the congregation, they can be "tested as to fitness" to shoulder responsibility, so that their "advancement may be manifest to all persons."—1 Tim. 3:10; 4:15. *w11 4/15 1:13, 14*

Wednesday, July 3

Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire.

—Jas. 1:14.

Jesus' example teaches us to be willing to suffer shame and not to put too much importance on our personal reputation. (Heb. 12:2) Also, when tempted by Satan, Jesus saw beyond the immediate temptation and considered the consequences of his actions. He relied on God's Word and also used Jehovah's name. When we are faced with temptations to do things that are displeasing to Jehovah, on what do we focus our attention? The more we focus on the temptation, the stronger that wrong desire will be. (Jas. 1:15) We need to take quick action to root out the desire, even if that action may seem as drastic as, in effect, removing a part of our body. (Matt. 5:29, 30) Like Jesus, we need to focus on the consequences of our actions—how they will affect our relationship with Jehovah. We must recall what his Word, the Bible, says. Only in this way can we prove that Jehovah is the most important Person in our life. *w11 5/15 3:13-15*

Thursday, July 4

None that rests his faith on [Jesus] will be disappointed.

—Rom. 10:11.

We should definitely bear in mind this aspect of the good news as we carry out our Christian ministry. The basic message about Jesus may not be strange to those who are acquainted with what the Bible says about sin. For others, though, this message will be quite new, something not known or generally believed in their culture. As such

ones come to believe in God and trust in the Scriptures, we will need to explain Jesus' role. How rewarding it is to help honest-hearted ones to understand the good news mentioned repeatedly in the book of Romans, the good news that "is, in fact, God's power for salvation to everyone having faith." (Rom. 1:16) Beyond our being thus rewarded, we will see others agree with the sentiment that Paul quoted at Romans 10:15: "How comely are the feet of those who declare good news of good things!"—Isa. 52:7. *w11 6/15 1:20, 21*

Friday, July 5

Do not toil to gain riches.

—Prov. 23:4.

Satan has seduced innumerable people into looking to material things to provide security. Money, possessions, and high-paying jobs may seem to deliver advantages. What do material things deliver, though, when health fails, when the economy crumbles, or when a natural disaster strikes? What do they deliver when people feel empty inside, in need of purpose, direction, and answers to life's deeper questions? What relief can they deliver in the face of death? If we look to material things to fill spiritual needs, we will be disappointed. Material possessions do not deliver; they are unrealities. In the long run, they cannot even provide physical security, for they have no lasting effect on the present brevity of human life or the likelihood of sickness and death. (Prov. 23:5) How much more real, then, is our God, Jehovah! Only in a strong relationship with him can we find genuine security. *w11 7/15 1:16*

Saturday, July 6

Although [Jesus] had performed so many signs before them, they were not putting faith in him, so that the word of Isaiah the prophet was fulfilled.

—John 12:37, 38.

Yes, despite all the good done by the Messiah, many people would not believe in him. (Isa. 53:1) Also, few put faith in the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, during the ministry of the apostle Paul. (Rom. 10:16, 17) The Scriptures foretold that the Messiah would be hated without cause. (Ps. 69:4) The apostle John quotes Jesus as saying: "They have both seen and hated me as well as my Father. But it is that the word written in their Law may be fulfilled, 'They hated me without cause.'" (John 15:24, 25) The Gospel accounts prove that Jesus was hated, especially by the Jewish religious leaders. Moreover, Christ said: "The world has no reason to hate you, but it hates me, because I bear witness concerning it that its works are wicked."—John 7:7. *w11 8/15 1:16, 17*

Sunday, July 7

Upon them be peace and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.

—Gal. 6:16.

When you read the name Israel in the Bible, what comes to your mind? Do you think of Isaac's son Jacob, who was renamed Israel? Or do you think of his descendants, the ancient nation of Israel? What of spiritual Israel? When Israel is referred to in a figurative sense, it usually applies to "the Israel of God," the 144,000, who are

anointed with holy spirit to become kings and priests in heaven. (Rev. 7:4; 21:12) But consider the special reference to Israel's 12 tribes that is found at Matthew 19:28. Jesus said: "You who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In this verse, "the twelve tribes of Israel" are those who will be judged by Jesus' anointed disciples and who are in line to receive eternal life in Paradise on earth. They will benefit from the priestly services of the 144,000. *w11 9/15 2:1, 2*

Monday, July 8

Do all things for God's glory.

—1 Cor. 10:31.

Before engaging in a form of recreation, we need to put it to the test. When it comes to *quality*, we want to know: 'What does it include? Is it wholesome or debased?' (Prov. 4:20-27) Regarding *quantity*, we want to find out: 'How much time would I spend on it? Is the amount appropriate or not?' (1 Tim. 4:8) And concerning *company*, we need to determine: 'With whom will I share in entertainment? Are such companions good or bad?' (Eccl. 9:18; 1 Cor. 15:33) If a form of entertainment fails to meet the Bible-based standards in any one of these three aspects, it does not pass the test. On the other hand, if we make sure that our leisure activities meet the Bible-based standards in all three aspects, our recreation will bring honor to Jehovah and benefits to us. (Ps. 119:33-35) So, then, when it comes to recreation, let us strive to do the right thing at the right time and with the right people. *w11 10/15 1:16-18*

Tuesday, July 9

I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.—Jer. 10:23.

On one occasion, the Philistines came up against Israel. David inquired of Jehovah and received a clear answer. God said: "Go up, for I shall without fail give the Philistines into your hands." (2 Sam. 5:18, 19) Shortly thereafter, the Philistines once more came up against David. What would he do this time? He could have reasoned: 'I have faced a similar situation before. Let me go up against God's enemies, as I did then.' Or would David seek Jehovah's direction? David did not rely on his past experience. He again went to Jehovah in prayer. How glad he must have been that he did! The instructions he received this time were different. (2 Sam. 5:22, 23) When faced with a familiar situation or problem, we must exercise caution that we do not rely solely on past experience. *w11 11/15 1:13*

Wednesday, July 10

Peter was being kept in the prison.—Acts 12:5.

Picture what happened: Suddenly, a bright light filled Peter's cell. An angel stood there, evidently unseen by the guards, and urgently woke Peter up. And those chains binding his hands simply fell off! The angel then led Peter out of the cell, right by the guards stationed outside, and through the massive iron gate, which opened "of its own accord."

(Acts 12:10) Once they were outside the prison, the angel vanished. Peter was free! Of course, we do not expect Jehovah to deliver us miraculously at this time. However, we have full faith that he uses his power in behalf of his people today. (2 Chron. 16:9) By means of his powerful holy spirit, he can make us equal to any trial we may face. (2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Pet. 2:9) And Jehovah will soon empower his Son to free countless millions from that most unyielding of prisons, death. (John 5:28, 29) Our faith in God's promises can give us tremendous courage when we face trials today. *w12 1/15 2:13, 15, 16*

Thursday, July 11

*Keep on the watch and pray.
—Matt. 26:41.*

You might wonder: 'Is it really possible to imitate Jesus' example of watchfulness? After all, Jesus was perfect! What is more, Jesus was at times able to see clearly into the future—even thousands of years beyond his own day! Did he really need to be watchful?' (Matt. 24:37-39; Heb. 4:15) In fact, he did. For instance, on the final night of his earthly life, Jesus urged his faithful apostles: "Keep on the watch with me." He added: "Keep on the watch and pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation." (Matt. 26:38, 41) Though he had manifested watchfulness all along, in those dire hours Jesus especially wanted to be watchful and as close to his heavenly Father as possible. He knew that his followers needed the same alertness—not just then but in the future. *w12 2/15 1:1, 3*

Friday, July 12

Let your light shine before men.

—Matt. 5:16.

Imagine that there was something that would enhance your abilities and attributes, making them more beneficial to your brothers and more useful to God. Would that not be wonderful? Actually, Jehovah gives us just such a gift—his holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) As God's spirit operates in our life, it produces in us beautiful qualities that enhance every aspect of our service to God. What a marvelous gift! (Gal. 5:22, 23) The qualities that holy spirit produces are a reflection of the very personality of the Source of that spirit, Jehovah God. (Col. 3:9, 10) Jesus indicated the foremost reason why Christians should strive to imitate God when he told his apostles: "My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit." (John 15:8) As we cultivate "the fruitage of the spirit," the results are plain to see in the way we speak and act; this, in turn, brings praise to our God. *w11 4/15 3:2, 3*

Saturday, July 13

Let us stay awake.

—1 Thess. 5:6.

How can you young ones work along with your parents so that your family will "stay awake" spiritually? Consider the prize that Jehovah has set before you. Perhaps from your childhood, your parents showed you illustrations depicting life in Paradise. As you grew older, they likely used the Bible and Christian publications to help you visualize what everlasting life would be like in the

new world. Keeping your eyes focused on service to Jehovah and planning your life accordingly will help you to "stay awake." Choose a course that will result in attaining the prize of everlasting life. (1 Cor. 9:24) Many have allowed the pursuit of material things to distract them. Planning a life around gaining riches does not lead to true happiness. The things money can buy are temporary. You, though, keep your eyes on "the things unseen." Why? Because "the things unseen are everlasting."—2 Cor. 4:18. *w11 5/15 1:15, 16*

Sunday, July 14

Abraham extended his residence as an alien in the land of the Philistines many days.

—Gen. 21:34.

When Lot was taken captive by invading armies, Abraham did not hesitate to rescue his nephew. (Gen. 14:14-16) Later, the Philistines "seized by violence" a well of water dug by Abraham's servants at Beer-sheba. How would a man who had rescued his nephew by overcoming the four kings who had captured him respond to this act? Rather than fight back and repossess his well, Abraham chose to remain silent about the matter. In time, the Philistine king visited Abraham to make a covenant of peace. Only after he got Abraham to swear to him to be kind to the Philistine king's offspring did Abraham bring up the matter of his stolen well. Shocked to hear about this, the king restored the well to Abraham. As for Abraham, he continued to live peacefully as an alien resident in the land.—Gen. 21:22-31. *w11 8/15 3:10, 11*

Monday, July 15

Run with endurance.

—Heb. 12:1.

What enabled ancient faithful servants of Jehovah to endure and succeed in the race for life? Consider the example of Noah. (Heb. 11:7) “The deluge of waters upon the earth [that would] bring to ruin all flesh” was something that Noah had “not yet beheld.” (Gen. 6:17) It was something that had never taken place before, something totally unprecedented. Still, Noah did not dismiss it as impossible or even improbable. Why? Because he had faith that whatever Jehovah said, Jehovah would do. Noah did not feel that what he was asked to do was too difficult. Rather, “he did just so.” (Gen. 6:22) Considering all that Noah had to do—building the ark, gathering the animals, stocking the ark with food for humans and animals, preaching a warning message, and keeping his family spiritually strong—it was no small task to do “just so.” Yet, Noah’s faith and endurance resulted in life and blessings for him and for his family. *w11 9/15 3:13*

Tuesday, July 16

Let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.—Phil. 4:6, 7.

At times, we may become so discouraged that we can be in danger of succumbing to the effects of negative emotions. Perhaps we feel unable to care for a certain Scriptural responsibility

or privilege of service. Here, too, Jehovah can comfort and help us. To illustrate: When Joshua was commissioned to lead the Israelites against powerful enemy nations, Moses told the people: “Be courageous and strong. Do not be afraid or suffer a shock before them, because Jehovah your God is the one marching with you. He will neither desert you nor leave you entirely.” (Deut. 31:6) With Jehovah’s backing, Joshua was able to lead God’s people into the Promised Land and to victory over all their enemies. Earlier at the Red Sea, Moses had experienced similar divine support. —Ex. 14:13, 14, 29-31. *w11 10/15 3:8, 9*

Wednesday, July 17

First make your peace with your brother.—Matt. 5:24.

You may realize that thoughtlessly, unwittingly, or carelessly, you may have offended a brother. Your conscience may tell you that you have fallen short in your conduct. Anyone who is serious about serving Jehovah would do all in his power to rectify the shortcoming, would he not? That could mean apologizing sincerely to the person offended or, in the case of serious wrongdoing, seeking the spiritual assistance of loving Christian overseers. (Jas. 5:14, 15) So it costs us something to rectify a sin committed against a fellow man or against God himself. Even so, when we make such “sacrifices,” we restore our relationship with Jehovah and our brother and we gain a clean conscience. This, in turn, reassures us that Jehovah’s way is the best way. *w12 1/15 3:9, 10*

Thursday, July 18

In faith all these . . . publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land.—Heb. 11:13.

From earliest times, faithful servants of Jehovah stood out as different from those in the ungodly world in which they lived. Before the Flood, Enoch and Noah “walked with the true God.” (Gen. 5:22-24; 6:9) Both of them were courageous preachers of Jehovah’s judgments against Satan’s wicked world. (2 Pet. 2:5; Jude 14, 15) Because they walked with God in an ungodly world, Enoch “pleased God well” and Noah “proved himself faultless among his contemporaries.” (Heb. 11:5; Gen. 6:9) At God’s invitation, Abraham and Sarah gave up the comforts of city life in Ur of the Chaldeans and accepted the challenge of living as nomads in a foreign land. (Gen. 11:27, 28; 12:1) The apostle Paul wrote: “By faith [Abraham] resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents.”—Heb. 11:8, 9. *w11 11/15 3:2, 3*

Friday, July 19

The undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit you show.—Phil. 4:23.

The first-century Christians in Philippi were materially poor. However, they were generous and showed exemplary love for their fellow believers. (Phil. 1:3-5, 9; 4:15, 16) In closing his inspired letter to them, the apostle Paul could therefore write the words of today’s text. Because a similar

spirit was shown by the Christians in Thyatira, the glorified Jesus Christ told them: “I know your deeds, and your love and faith and ministry and endurance, and that your deeds of late are more than those formerly.” (Rev. 2:19) Each congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses today likewise manifests a certain spirit, or dominant attitude. Some congregations are especially known for showing a warm, loving spirit. Others are exceptional in their zealous support of the Kingdom-preaching work. *w12 2/15 3:1, 2*

Saturday, July 20

*Put away all filthiness and that superfluous thing, badness.
—Jas. 1:21.*

Christians need to allow God’s spirit to lead them both in public and in private. Today in Satan’s world, sordid images and degraded entertainment have proliferated. This poses a danger to our spirituality. What is a Christian to do? Consider the example of Joseph. Although away from his family and his people, Joseph refused to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife. Why? He said: “How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?” (Gen. 39:7-9) Yes, Jehovah was real to him. If God is real to us, we will not view unclean entertainment or do anything else in private that we know displeases God. Our resolve will be like that of the psalmist who sang: “I shall walk about in the integrity of my heart inside my house. I shall not set in front of my eyes any good-for-nothing thing.” —Ps. 101:2, 3. *w11 4/15 4:13, 15*

Sunday, July 21

Do arise, O Jehovah! Save me, O my God! For you will have to strike all my enemies on the jaw. The teeth of wicked ones you will have to break.—Ps. 3:7.

Faced with Absalom's treachery and the disloyalty of so many others, David sings the above. David does not have a vindictive spirit. If his enemies were to be 'struck on the jaw,' God would do it. King David has written a personal copy of the Law and knows that in it Jehovah declares: "Vengeance is mine, and retribution." (Deut. 17:14, 15, 18; 32:35) It is also up to God to 'break the teeth of the wicked ones.' Breaking their teeth means rendering them powerless to do harm. Jehovah knows who the wicked are because "he sees what the heart is." (1 Sam. 16:7) How grateful we are that God gives us faith and strength to stand firm against the chief wicked one, Satan, who will soon be abyssed like a roaring but toothless lion fit only for destruction!—1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Rev. 20:1, 2, 7-10. *w11 5/15 5:9, 10*

Monday, July 22

Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly.—1 Pet. 5:2.

The apostle wrote that the older men were to 'shepherd the flock of God in their care.' It was most important for them to recognize that the flock belongs to Jehovah and Jesus Christ. The elders had to render an account about how they kept watch over God's sheep. Suppose that a close friend of yours asked you to look after his children while he was

away. Would you not take good care of them and feed them? If one child got sick, would you not make sure that he received any needed medical help? Similarly, the elders in the congregation are "to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28) They keep in mind that each sheep was bought with the precious blood of Christ Jesus. Being accountable, the elders feed, protect, and care for the flock. *w11 6/15 3:5*

Tuesday, July 23

I became disgusted with this generation and said, "They always go astray in their hearts, and they themselves have not come to know my ways." So I swore in my anger, "They shall not enter into my rest."—Heb. 3:10, 11.

What a privilege Israel had—to work along with Jehovah's purpose, resulting in blessings not only for themselves but, eventually, for all families of the earth! (Gen. 22:18) However, as a whole, that rebellious generation showed little interest in setting up a model kingdom under theocratic rule. Why, they even demanded to return to Egypt! (Num. 14:2-4) Now, how would their returning to Egypt advance God's purpose to make Israel into a model kingdom? It would not do so. In fact, if the Israelites returned to the custody of their pagan captors, they would never be able to follow the Mosaic Law and benefit from Jehovah's arrangement for forgiveness of their sins. How fleshly—how shortsighted—they were!—Ps. 95:10, 11. *w11 7/15 3:9*

Wednesday, July 24

There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.—Acts 24:15.

We enjoy a close personal relationship with Jehovah as we imitate his ways, and we contribute to the peaceful unity of our spiritual paradise. Pursuing peace inside the congregation also helps us to see ways in which we can pursue peace with those to whom we preach “the good news of peace.” (Eph. 6:15) We are better prepared ‘to be gentle toward all, keeping ourselves restrained under evil.’ (2 Tim. 2:24) Remember, too, the words of today’s text. When that hope becomes a reality here on earth, millions of people with varying backgrounds, temperaments, and personalities will be brought back to life—and that from times stretching all the way back to “the founding of the world”! (Luke 11:50, 51) Teaching resurrected ones the ways of peace will indeed be a great privilege. What a tremendous help the training we now receive as peacemakers will be to us at that time! *w11 8/15 4:18, 19*

Thursday, July 25

Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him.—Ps. 34:8.

Developing strong faith requires more than reading and hearing about how others have experienced Jehovah’s blessing. A Bible student also needs to experience Jehovah’s goodness personally. How can we assist the student to see that Jehovah is good? Suppose a student who has financial worries is also trying

to overcome a bad habit, such as smoking, gambling, or heavy drinking. (Prov. 23:20, 21; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 6:10) Would not teaching the student to pray for God’s assistance in overcoming a bad habit help him to experience Jehovah’s goodness? Consider also what can happen when we encourage the student to give priority to spiritual things by making time for weekly Bible study and preparing for and attending Christian meetings. Why, as he personally experiences Jehovah’s blessing on his efforts, his faith will grow stronger! *w11 11/15 4:8*

Friday, July 26

Beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God’s love.—Jude 20, 21.

Once Jehovah has drawn us, we should be concerned with remaining in his love. Remember, the Bible shows that it is possible to drift away or draw away from God. (Heb. 2:1; 3:12, 13) For example, just prior to the statement found at 2 Timothy 2:19, the apostle Paul mentioned Hymenaeus and Philetus. Those two men had evidently belonged to Jehovah at one point, but they later deviated from the truth. (2 Tim. 2:16-18) Recall, too, that in the Galatian congregations, some who had been known by God did not remain in the spiritual light they once enjoyed. (Gal. 4:9) May we never take for granted our precious standing with God. Moreover, there are some qualities that Jehovah especially values. (Ps. 15:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:4) Outstandingly, faith and humility distinguished some who were known by God. *w11 9/15 5:4, 5*

Saturday, July 27

All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that . . . we might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

Knowing the truth about God's purposes and having a genuine hope for the future will certainly provide great comfort. Jesus set us a fine example by using the Scriptures to instruct and comfort others. During one of his postresurrection appearances, for instance, he 'fully opened up the Scriptures' to two of his disciples. As he spoke to them, their hearts were deeply touched. (Luke 24:32) In keeping with Jesus' excellent example, the apostle Paul 'reasoned from the Scriptures.' In Beroea, his listeners "received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:2, 10, 11) How appropriate it is that we read the Bible daily, benefiting from it and from Christian publications designed to bring us comfort and hope in these troublesome times! *w11 10/15 4:13, 14*

Sunday, July 28

[God], for the sake of his good pleasure, is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act.—Phil. 2:13.

What can help a brother who lacks the desire to take on responsibility in the congregation? The desire to serve is God-given, and Jehovah's spirit can strengthen a person to render sacred service. (Phil. 4:13) Moreover, a Christian can pray that God will make him do what is

right. (Ps. 25:4, 5) Jehovah blesses the efforts of older men to train others. His blessing is also experienced by those who respond and reach out for privileges in the congregation. The Scriptures assure us that among God's people "seven shepherds, yes, eight dukes"—the required number of capable men—will be raised up to take the lead in Jehovah's organization. (Mic. 5:5) What a blessing it is that so many Christian men are being trained and are humbly reaching out for privileges of service to Jehovah's praise! *w11 11/15 5:18, 19*

Monday, July 29

*Immediately the spirit impelled him to go into the wilderness.
—Mark 1:12.*

The Bible reports that as a human, Jesus experienced what a powerful force God's holy spirit was in his life. He welcomed its influence, and when it impelled him, he yielded and acted accordingly. (Luke 4:14) Are you of that sort? God's active force still operates on willing minds and hearts to move and guide them. How can you let it work upon you to lead you in the right direction? Pray constantly to Jehovah that he send you his spirit and help you yield to its influence. (Eph. 3:14-16) Work in harmony with your prayers by searching out the counsel found in God's written Word, the Bible—a product of holy spirit. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Obey the wise instructions it offers, and then respond eagerly to the leading of holy spirit. Act with faith in Jehovah's ability to guide you properly through life in this wicked world. *w11 12/15 2:18, 19*

Tuesday, July 30

*Salvation belongs to Jehovah.
Your blessing is upon your
people.—Ps. 3:8.*

Although David has monumental problems because of Absalom's treachery, he bears in mind Jehovah's people in general and is confident that God will bless them. Should we not also keep our fellow believers in mind? Let us remember them in our prayers, asking Jehovah to give them his holy spirit so that they can muster up courage and can act with confidence in declaring the good news. (Eph. 6:17-20) Does David rejoice when he learns of Absalom's death? No. Instead, he weeps and cries out: "O that I might have died . . . instead of you, Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:24-33) Only Joab's words bring David out of his nearly overwhelming grief. What a tragic end for Absalom, whose blind ambition prompted him to fight against his own father—Jehovah's anointed—and bring disaster upon himself!—2 Sam. 19:1-8; Prov. 12:21; 24:21, 22. *w11 5/15 5:11, 13*

Thursday, August 1

*May my prayer be prepared as
incense before you.—Ps. 141:2.*

God expects us to desist from dead works and to study his Word, pray, and attend Christian meetings. And Christian family heads take the initiative in conducting family worship with the members of their own households. (1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:24, 25) Think for a moment about your prayers—about their regularity and their quality. The book of Revelation likens "the prayers

Wednesday, July 31

*You should all speak in agree-
ment.—1 Cor. 1:10.*

By "devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles," Jesus' early followers helped to develop a spirit of unity within the congregation. (Acts 2:42) They valued the Scriptural counsel and direction received from the older men. Because present-day elders cooperate with the faithful and discreet slave class, all in the congregation are encouraged and assisted to remain united. When we submit to the Bible-based instruction from Jehovah's organization and follow the direction of the elders, we give proof that we are "earnestly endeavoring to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3) By all means, then, let us work to preserve a healthy, positive spirit in the congregation. If we do so, we are assured that "the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with the spirit we show."—Phil. 4:23. *w12 2/15 3:17, 18*

of the holy ones" to incense in that acceptable prayers rise to Jehovah like a sweet-smelling and pleasant odor. (Rev. 5:8) In ancient Israel, the incense that was regularly offered on Jehovah's altar had to be carefully and precisely prepared. It was acceptable to Jehovah only if offered according to the guidelines that he had established. (Ex. 30:34-37; Lev. 10:1, 2) If our heartfelt prayers are similarly formulated, then we can be sure that they are acceptable to Jehovah. *w12 1/15 4:11, 12*

Friday, August 2

Make the calling and choosing of you sure.—2 Pet. 1:10.

Like the priests and Levites of old, anointed ones today view their service as a privilege. (Num. 18:20) The anointed do not expect to be given some territory or location on earth as a possession. Instead, they look forward to being kings and priests in heaven with Jesus Christ. While on earth, anointed ones live in a way that gives evidence that Jehovah is their share. (Ps. 142:5) Their privilege of serving God is of primary importance to them. They exercise faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice and follow him continually, thus 'making their calling and choosing sure.' Their individual circumstances and abilities differ. Yet, they do not use any limitations as an excuse to do only a small amount in God's service. On the contrary, they give high priority to God's service, doing all they can. And they set a good example for those who hope to live on a paradise earth. *w11 9/15 2:3, 4*

Saturday, August 3

This I am saying . . . to move you to that which is becoming and that which means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction.—1 Cor. 7:35.

Few aspects of life cause more elation, frustration, or worry than our dealings with the opposite sex. The need to deal effectively with such emotions is reason enough for us to seek divine guidance, but there are other motives for doing so. A Christian who

is content with being single may feel that his family or friends are pressuring him to get married. Another may want to get married but has not yet found a suitable mate. Some need direction on how to prepare for the responsibilities of being a husband or a wife. And both single and married Christians face tests regarding sexual morality. Apart from our personal happiness, these issues affect our standing before Jehovah God. *w11 10/15 2:1, 2*

Sunday, August 4

Carry on prayer, that you do not enter into temptation.

—*Luke 22:40.*

Having "sin's law" within our members, we need to put up a strong fight against sinful inclinations. (Rom. 7:21-25) This is a fight that can be won. How? Jesus told his followers that prayer is vital in resisting temptation. Even if wrong desires or thoughts persist after we have prayed to God, we need to "keep on asking God" for wisdom to cope with this trial. We are assured that "he gives generously to all and without reproaching." (Jas. 1:5) James also writes: "Is there anyone [spiritually] sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well." (Jas. 5:14, 15) Prayer is essential in resisting temptation, but we must be cognizant of the need to pray at the right time—*before starting down a dangerous path.*—Prov. 7:6-23. *w11 11/15 1:15-17*

Monday, August 5

Because sentence against a bad work has not been executed speedily, that is why the heart of the sons of men has become fully set in them to do bad.

—Eccl. 8:11.

If only Solomon had kept heeding that divine truth! Yes, he had done much good and had long enjoyed divine blessings. But over time, he took one false step after another. A bad pattern developed. How true what the apostle Paul was later inspired to write: "Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap!" (Gal. 6:7) In time, Solomon reaped sad fruitage from ignoring God's direction. We read: "King Solomon himself loved many foreign wives along with the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women." (1 Ki. 11:1) Many of those likely remained attached to false gods, and Solomon was not immune. He went astray and lost the favor of our patient God.—1 Ki. 11:4-8. *w11 12/15 1:17, 18*

Tuesday, August 6

I am more outstandingly [a minister of Christ]: in labors more plentifully, in prisons more plentifully, in blows to an excess, in near-deaths often.—2 Cor. 11:23.

Preaching with zeal and urgency is vital to keeping on the watch. The apostle Paul was an outstanding example in this regard. He exerted himself zealously, traveling extensively and establishing many congregations. He endured many hardships, yet

he never lost his zeal or his sense of urgency. (2 Cor. 11:24-29) Consider our last glimpse of Paul in the book of Acts, as recorded in Acts chapter 28. Paul arrived in Rome, where he was to appear before Nero. He was kept in custody, perhaps chained to his guard. Yet, no chain could silence the zealous apostle! Paul continued to find ways to bear witness. After three days, Paul summoned the principal men of the Jews in order to give them a witness. Then, on a chosen day, he gave an even greater witness.—Acts 28: 17, 23, 24. *w12 1/15 2:17, 18*

Wednesday, August 7

There exists a way that is up-right before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward.—Prov. 14:12.

If we rely on our own thinking, especially when we face serious problems, we are likely to endanger ourselves and those we love. For example, a family head may face severe pressure in providing materially for "those who are his own." (1 Tim. 5:8) He might be tempted to take a job that repeatedly causes him to miss out on attending Christian meetings, taking the lead in family worship, or participating in the ministry. If he relies solely on human thinking, such a course could seem justifiable, even upright. However, it may well result in spiritual sickness or death. How much better to follow the counsel of Proverbs 3:5, 6! Said Solomon: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." *w12 2/15 1:14, 15*

Thursday, August 8

Love . . . in deed and truth.

—1 John 3:18.

The love produced by holy spirit is markedly different from the sort of love that is common in the world. Jesus highlighted this difference in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:43-48) He noted that even sinners will follow a policy of like for like, treating others as others treat them. Such "love" does not involve real sacrifice but amounts to an exchange of favors. If we want to 'prove ourselves sons of our Father who is in the heavens,' we must be different. Rather than treating others as they treat us, we are to view and treat others as Jehovah views and treats them. Our love for fellow believers goes further. "We are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers." (1 John 3:16, 17) More often, though, we can show love in smaller ways. The intense love produced by holy spirit can help us to cover over minor transgressions, freely forgiving others "even as Jehovah freely forgave" us.—Col. 3:13, 14; 1 Pet. 4:8. *w11 4/15 3:4, 6*

Friday, August 9

Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.—Jas. 4:8.

Young ones, the first step on the road to life is to make the truth your own. Have you taken that step? Ask yourself: 'Am I a spiritual person, or is my participation in spiritual activities dependent on my parents? Do I cultivate qualities that make me pleasing to God? Do I make an effort to maintain a consistent routine of sharing in the activities related to true worship? Am I

drawing close to God by nurturing a personal relationship with him?' Reflect on Moses' example. Despite having been subjected to a foreign culture, he chose to be identified as a worshipper of Jehovah rather than a son of the daughter of Pharaoh. (Heb. 11:24-27) Christian youths, you too need to be determined to serve Jehovah faithfully. By doing that, you will gain true happiness, the best quality of life now, and the hope of getting "a firm hold on the real life."—1 Tim. 6:19. *w11 5/15 1:18, 19*

Saturday, August 10

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy spirit.—Rom. 5:5.

"The Romans' greatest . . . bequest to those who succeeded them [was] their law and their sense that life should be lived according to law." (Dr. David J. Williams of the University of Melbourne, Australia) However valid that might be, there is a bequest or gift of far greater value. This gift is a divine means to have an approved and righteous standing with God and the prospect of salvation and everlasting life. In a sense, there were legal aspects to how God made this gift available. In Romans chapter 5, the apostle Paul did not present these aspects as a dry, legalistic treatise. Rather, he began with this thrilling assurance: "We have been declared righteous as a result of faith, [so] let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1) Those who receive God's gift are moved to love him in return. Paul was one. *w11 6/15 2:1, 2*

Sunday, August 11

There will also be false teachers among you.—2 Pet. 2:1.

Jehovah through the apostles Paul and Peter warns us about false teachers. (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3) Who are such teachers and from where do they come? To elders of the Ephesus congregation, Paul said: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things." So they may arise from within the congregation. Such ones are apostates. What do they want? They are not content just to leave the organization that they perhaps once loved. Their aim, Paul explained, is "to draw away the disciples after themselves." Note the definite article in the expression "*the* disciples." Rather than going out and making their own disciples, apostates seek to take Christ's disciples with them. Like "ravenous wolves," false teachers are out to devour trusting members of the congregation, destroying their faith and leading them away from the truth.—Matt. 7:15; 2 Tim. 2:18. *w11* 7/15 2:3, 4

Monday, August 12

The man at peace with me, in whom I trusted, who was eating my bread, has magnified his heel against me.—Ps. 41:9.

With these words, it was foretold that the Messiah would be betrayed by a treacherous associate. A person who ate bread with someone was thought to be his friend. (Gen. 31:54) So the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot was treachery of the worst sort. Jesus called attention to the fulfillment of David's prophetic

words when He referred to his betrayer and told his apostles: "I am not talking about all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But it is in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'He that used to feed on my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'" (John 13:18) For this act of treachery, Judas received 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave! Judas never spent his ill-gotten sum, for he threw the money into the temple and went off and committed suicide.—Matt. 26:14-16; 27:3-10. *w11* 8/15 2:5, 6

Tuesday, August 13

To obey is better than a sacrifice.—1 Sam. 15:22.

In order to be accepted by Jehovah, the sacrifices prescribed by the Mosaic Law had to be offered with the right spirit and heart condition. The Bible, however, contains cautionary examples of sacrifices that were *not* acceptable to God. Consider the case of King Saul. The prophet Samuel told Saul that the time had come for Jehovah to execute judgment on the Amalekites. Saul therefore was to exterminate this enemy nation along with its livestock. After his victory, however, Saul allowed his soldiers to preserve alive Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Saul also spared the best of their livestock as something that could be sacrificed to Jehovah. (1 Sam. 15:2, 3, 21) What was Jehovah's reaction? He rejected Saul for his disobedience. (1 Sam. 15:22, 23) What do we learn from this? That to be acceptable to God, a sacrifice must be accompanied by obedience to his commands. *w12* 1/15 3:13, 14

Wednesday, August 14

Be courageous and strong and act. Do not be afraid nor be terrified, for Jehovah God, my God, is with you.—1 Chron. 28:20.

In the 11th century B.C.E., King David said those words to his son Solomon. Solomon acted courageously and built the splendid temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. In the tenth century B.C.E., the courageous words of an Israelite girl proved to be a blessing for a leper. She had been captured by a marauding band and became a servant of the leprous Syrian army chief Naaman. Having learned about miracles that Jehovah performed through Elisha, she told Naaman's wife that if her husband would go to Israel, God's prophet would cure him. Naaman did go to Israel, was miraculously healed, and became a worshipper of Jehovah. (2 Ki. 5: 1-3, 10-17) If you are a young person who loves God as that girl did, he can give you courage to witness to teachers, fellow students, and others. *w12 2/15 2:10, 11*

Thursday, August 15

*Abraham . . . obeyed.
—Heb. 11:8.*

Abraham and Sarah are mentioned in Paul's list of the "cloud of witnesses." (Heb. 11:8-12; 12:1) They were uprooted from their normal life in Ur, and their future appeared uncertain. They proved to be examples of unwavering faith and obedience in trying times. In conjunction with all the sacrifices that Abraham was willing to make for true worship, he was fittingly called "the father of all those having faith." (Rom. 4:11) Paul touched only on the high points, his readers be-

ing well-acquainted with the details of Abraham's life. Nonetheless, the lesson Paul drew is powerful: "In faith all these [including Abraham and his family] died, although they did not get the fulfillment of the promises, but they saw them afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land." (Heb. 11:13) Clearly, their faith in God and their personal relationship with him helped them run the race with endurance. *w11 9/15 3:10, 14*

Friday, August 16

*We are perplexed, but not absolutely with no way out.
—2 Cor. 4:8.*

Distressing events can have a negative effect on our physical health. Of course, eating properly, getting sufficient rest and exercise, and keeping clean can have a good effect on us. A spiritually healthy Bible-based outlook may well affect our body for the good. Thus, it is helpful when going through some anguish that we bear in mind Paul's experience and encouraging words. (2 Cor. 4:9) Some trials can have a detrimental effect on our spiritual health. Here, too, Jehovah can come to our rescue. His Word assures us: "Jehovah is giving support to all who are falling, and is raising up all who are bowed down." (Ps. 145:14) For help to counteract spiritual illness, we should seek the assistance of Christian elders. (Jas. 5:14, 15) And constantly keeping in mind the Scriptural hope of everlasting life can help to sustain us during tests of our faith.—John 17:3. *w11 10/15 3:10, 11*

Saturday, August 17

When Jehovah your God will bring you into the land that he swore to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give you, great and good-looking cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things and that you did not fill, . . . watch out for yourself that you may not forget Jehovah.—Deut. 6:10-12.

This warning was not unfounded. In Nehemiah's day, a group of Levites recalled with shame what occurred after the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land. After the people of Israel occupied comfortable houses and had an abundance of food and wine, "they began to eat and to be satisfied and to grow fat." They rebelled against God, even killing the prophets he sent to warn them. Jehovah therefore abandoned them to their enemies. (Neh. 9:25-27; Hos. 13:6-9) Later, under Roman domination, the faithless Jews went so far as to kill the promised Messiah! Jehovah rejected them and transferred his favor to a new nation, spiritual Israel.—Matt. 21:43; Acts 7:51, 52; Gal. 6:16. *w11 11/15 3:4, 5*

Sunday, August 18

*Faith follows the thing heard.
—Rom. 10:17.*

Though it has been in evidence since the days of Abel, "faith is not a possession of all people." (2 Thess. 3:2) So why does a person have this quality, and what enables him to be faithful? To a large extent, faith follows the things heard from God's Word. It is an aspect of the fruitage of God's holy spirit. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Therefore, to demonstrate and exercise

faith, we need holy spirit. It would be a mistake to conclude that men and women of faith are born that way, that faith comes naturally. The exemplary servants we read about in the Bible were people "with feelings like ours." (Jas. 5:17) They had doubts, insecurities, and weaknesses but "were made powerful" by God's spirit to face challenges. (Heb. 11:34) By considering how Jehovah's spirit operated on them, we today will be encouraged to continue in our course of faithfulness, living as we do at this time when our faith is under attack. *w11 12/15 3:1, 2*

Monday, August 19

*You sent something to me both once and a second time.
—Phil. 4:16.*

In the first century C.E., the congregation in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to Rome in order to care for Paul's physical needs. That envoy of the Philippians evidently carried with him a monetary gift from the congregation. This was not the first time that the Philippians had shown generosity to Paul. By their kindness they intended to free Paul of financial worries so that he could devote more time to the ministry. How did Paul view the gift? He called it "a sweet-smelling odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." (Phil. 4:15-19) Paul truly appreciated the Philippians' kind gesture, and so did Jehovah. Likewise today, Jehovah deeply appreciates our contributions to the worldwide work. Moreover, he promises that if we continue to put Kingdom interests first in our lives, he will take care of all our needs, spiritual and physical.—Matt. 6:33; Luke 6:38. *w12 1/15 4:13, 14*

Tuesday, August 20

As you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near."—Matt. 10:7.

Jesus warned his apostles that many would oppose their Kingdom-preaching work. (Matt. 10:16-23) An especially painful form of opposition is experienced when family members reject the Kingdom message. (Matt. 10:34-36) Does this mean that happiness is out of reach for Christ's followers who live in religiously divided households? Not at all! Though family opposition can sometimes be severe, that is not always the case. Then, too, family opposition is not necessarily permanent. Much depends on how believers respond to opposition or indifference. Moreover, Jehovah blesses those who are loyal to him, making them joyful despite unfavorable circumstances. Believers can add to their own happiness (1) by endeavoring to cultivate peace in the home and (2) by sincerely trying to help unbelieving family members to embrace true worship. *w12 2/15 4:1, 2*

Wednesday, August 21

Time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all.—Eccl. 9:11.

As we draw ever closer to the end of this wicked world, more and more of Jehovah's people are being affected by disasters and tragedies. We may find that our hearts are weighed down when we lose loved ones or suffer personal difficulties. Or we might even find ourselves plagued by some distressing circumstances or perceived injustices. Our anguished hearts may cry out: 'Why, Jehovah? Why me? What

did I do wrong?' (Hab. 1:2, 3) We need to be careful not to assume that such events are an indication of Jehovah's disapproval. Jesus highlighted this fact when referring to two tragedies that occurred in his day. (Luke 13:1-5) Many calamities are the result of "time and unforeseen occurrence." But no matter what the cause of our distress, we can cope if we focus our attention on "the God of all comfort." He will give us the strength required to continue on faithfully.—2 Cor. 1:3-6. *w11 5/15 3:16-18*

Thursday, August 22

The objective of this mandate is love out of a clean heart and out of a good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy.
—1 Tim. 1:5.

If we want God's spirit to lead us, we need to avoid placing ourselves in the path of temptation by aimlessly flipping through television channels or surfing the Internet. (Rom. 8:5-8) Of course, we can and should exercise self-control by taking immediate action if we are confronted with a provocative image. But how much better if we avoid the situation in the first place! (Prov. 22:3) Setting appropriate safeguards and adhering to them involve the exercise of self-control. For example, keeping the computer in an open area can serve as a protection. Some find it best to use the computer or watch television only when others are present. Others have decided not to have access to the Internet. (Matt. 5:27-30) May we take whatever measures are necessary to protect ourselves and our family. *w11 4/15 4:17, 18*

Friday, August 23

Save them by snatching them out of the fire.—Jude 23.

Today, elders need to be on guard against the lionlike attacks of the Devil. This may involve a courageous act of figuratively snatching the sheep from the Devil's jaws. Elders, of course, do not accomplish this without Jehovah's help. They handle an injured sheep tenderly, bandaging him and applying the soothing balm of God's Word. In Bible times, literal shepherds guided the flock to an appropriate pasture and a watering place. Likewise, elders direct the flock to the congregation, encouraging regular meeting attendance so that the flock can be well-fed and receive "their food at the proper time." (Matt. 24:45) The elders may need to spend extra time helping those who are spiritually sick to accept nourishment from God's Word. Instead of intimidating their brother, the elders tenderly explain Scriptural principles and show him how he can apply these in his life. *w11 6/15 3:7, 8*

Saturday, August 24

Israel continued to serve Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the older men who extended their days after Joshua.

—Josh. 24:31.

That obedient generation gradually died out and was replaced by a generation that "did not know Jehovah or the work that he had done for Israel." Consequently, "the sons of Israel fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah and serving the Baals." (Judg. 2:10, 11) The Promised Land did not prove to be a real "place of

rest" for them. Because of their disobedience, they did not enjoy lasting peace with God. In speaking of a later time, Paul wrote: "If Joshua had led [the Israelites] into a place of rest, God would not afterward have spoken of another day. So there remains a sabbath resting for the people of God." (Heb. 4:8, 9) "The people of God" Paul was referring to were Christians. Does that mean that Christians could enter into God's rest? Most assuredly—both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians! *w11 7/15 3:11, 12*

Sunday, August 25

[Isaac] made a feast for [his visitors] and they ate and drank. . . . After that Isaac sent them away . . . in peace.—Gen. 26:30, 31.

When Philistine King Abimelech told Isaac to 'move from their neighborhood' at Gerar, the peaceful man Isaac complied. (Gen. 26:1, 12-17) After Isaac moved his encampment farther away, his shepherds dug a well. Philistine shepherds claimed that the water was theirs. Isaac did not fight over the well. Instead, Isaac again had his men dig a well. The Philistines also claimed this one for themselves. For the sake of peace, Isaac moved his large encampment away to yet another location. Then, the Philistine king and his officials came to visit him in Beer-sheba and sought to make a covenant of peace with him, saying: "We have unmistakably seen that Jehovah has proved to be with you." (Gen. 26:28) For the sake of peace, Isaac had more than once opted to move rather than fight. This time too Isaac proved himself to be a peacemaker. *w11 8/15 3:12-14*

Monday, August 26

Abraham . . . came to be called "Jehovah's friend."—Jas. 2:23.

Abraham was a man who "put faith in Jehovah." In fact, he is called "the father of all those having faith." (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:11) In faith, Abraham left his home, his friends, and his possessions to go to a distant land. (Gen. 12:1-4; Heb. 11:8-10) Abraham's faith was still strong many years later. This was evident when he "as good as offered up Isaac" his son in obedience to Jehovah's command. (Heb. 11:17-19) Abraham demonstrated faith in Jehovah's promises, so God viewed him as special; he really knew Abraham. (Gen. 18:19) Jehovah was not merely aware of Abraham's existence; he cherished Abraham as a friend. It is noteworthy that Abraham did not during his lifetime receive the inheritance of the land promised to him. Yet, he maintained strong faith in Jehovah and lived his life in harmony with that faith. (Heb. 11:13) Are we known by Jehovah as having faith similar to Abraham's? *w11 9/15 5:6, 7*

Tuesday, August 27

*Keep comforting one another.
—1 Thess. 5:11.*

We can help and thus comfort fellow Christians in various practical ways. For instance, we might do some grocery shopping for elderly or sick fellow believers. We might help others with their chores, thus showing personal interest in them. (Phil. 2:4) Perhaps we can compliment fellow worshippers on their good qualities, such as their love, resourcefulness, courage, and faith. In an effort to comfort the elderly, we can

visit them and listen carefully to what they tell us about their past experiences and obvious blessings in Jehovah's service. Why, this may actually encourage and comfort us! We might read the Bible or our Bible-based publications with those we visit. Perhaps we could consider the current article for the weekly *Watchtower* Study or the material that will be covered during the Congregation Bible Study for the week. Then, too, we might read or relate some encouraging experiences found in our publications. *w11 10/15 4:2, 15, 16*

Wednesday, August 28

Happy are you whenever men hate you.—Luke 6:22.

Although none of Jesus' apostles were cowards, they all struggled with fear of man. (Mark 14:50, 66-72) How did Jesus help them to progress despite intense pressure from their peers? Jesus took steps to prepare his disciples for the opposition they would later face. (Mark 10:29, 30; Luke 12:4-12) We too need to assist Bible students to overcome fear of man. A challenge is often easier to face when it is anticipated. (John 15:19) For instance, why not help the student to prepare simple, reasonable, Bible-based replies to the questions and objections his fellow employees and others may bring up? In addition, we can introduce him to other members of the congregation, especially those with whom he might have something in common. Above all, we should teach him to pray regularly and from the heart. This can help him to draw close to God and make Jehovah his Refuge and Rock.—Ps. 94:21-23; Jas. 4:8. *w11 11/15 4:11, 12*

Thursday, August 29

It is the spirit of your Father that speaks by you.—Matt. 10:20.

Paul knew well the importance of God's holy spirit when it comes to speaking the truth. He even entreated the congregation in Ephesus to make supplication for him that "ability to speak" might be given him. (Eph. 6:18-20) Not only did holy spirit *enable* Paul to speak but, at times, it *forbade* him to speak in certain localities. As he embarked on his missionary journeys, Paul was guided by God's spirit. (Acts 13:2; 16:6-10) Jehovah still guides the preaching work by means of his spirit. Like Paul, all of Jehovah's obedient servants strive to declare the truth with boldness and zeal. Even though God's direction is not as obvious today as it was in Paul's time, we can be sure that Jehovah is using his holy spirit to make sure that deserving ones hear the truth.—John 6:44. *w11 12/15 4:10, 11*

Friday, August 30

*He who has anointed us is God.
—2 Cor. 1:21.*

Those invited to be in the new covenant were to be anointed with holy spirit. Faithful Jews and then Gentiles were included. (Eph. 3:5, 6) What were the prospects of those in the new covenant? They would receive true forgiveness of their sins. Jehovah had promised: "I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more." (Jer. 31:34) With their sins legally canceled, they would be in a position to become "a kingdom of priests." Ad-

ressing anointed Christians, Peter wrote: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet. 2:9) Peter here quotes Jehovah's words to Israel when introducing the Law and applies them to Christians in the new covenant.—Ex. 19:5, 6. *w12 1/15 5:13*

Saturday, August 31

*Take exquisite delight in Jehovah . . . Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him.
—Ps. 37:4, 5.*

If you are a faithful Christian living in a religiously divided household, do not give up. Remember that "Jehovah will not desert his people for the sake of his great name." (1 Sam. 12:22) He is with you as long as you cling to him. (2 Chron. 15:2) "Persevere in prayer," and have faith that our loving heavenly Father can help you to endure hardships of all kinds. (Rom. 12:12) Petition Jehovah for his holy spirit to help you promote peace in the home. (Heb. 12:14) Yes, it is possible to foster peaceful conditions that may eventually touch the heart of unbelieving family members. You will experience happiness and peace of heart and mind as you "do all things for God's glory." (1 Cor. 10:31) In these endeavors, how heartening it is to know that you have the loving support of your brothers and sisters in the Christian congregation! *w12 2/15 4:17, 18*

Sunday, September 1

The one who loves God should be loving his brother also.

—1 John 4:21.

How can we cultivate self-sacrificing love for our brothers? By deepening our love for God. (Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 John 4:9-11, 20) The intimate moments we spend with Jehovah in Bible reading, meditation, and prayer nourish our hearts and nurture our love for our heavenly Father. However, we need to buy out time to draw close to God. To illustrate: Imagine that it was possible to read God's Word, meditate on it, and pray to Jehovah only during a certain hour each day. Would you not jealously guard that time slot so that nothing interfered with your personal time with Jehovah? Of course, no one can restrict our access to God in prayer, and most of us can read the Bible whenever we want to. Yet, we may need to take measures to prevent the whirlwind of daily activities from infringing on our personal time with God. Do you buy out as much time as possible each day to draw close to Jehovah? *w11 4/15 3:7, 8*

Monday, September 2

How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear?

—Hab. 1:2.

We may at times feel like the prophet Habakkuk, who cried out to Jehovah for justice, not understanding why Jehovah had allowed certain unfair things to happen. (Hab. 1:3) How important it is for us to imitate the faith of that prophet, who said: "Yet, as for me, I will exult in Jehovah himself; I will be joyful in the

God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:18) Like Jeremiah of old, if we keep "a waiting attitude" with full faith in Jehovah, the God of justice, we can be confident that all things will be rectified at the right time. (Lam. 3:19-24) We live in exciting times. Wonderful events are happening now and more lie just ahead. May each one of us keep pace with Jehovah's organization. Let us heed the Scriptural counsel to look forward and not to look at the things behind. We will thereby prove that we do "remember the wife of Lot"—Luke 17:32. *w12 3/15 4:19, 20*

Tuesday, September 3

Keep ready.—Luke 12:40.

To be in a state of readiness for Christ's coming, families must be careful not to get sidetracked from matters pertaining to true worship. They need to be on guard against being turned aside by distractions. Consider what Jesus said about keeping our eye "simple." (Matt. 6:22, 23) Just as a lamp can illuminate our path and allow us to walk without falling, what we take in through our figurative 'eyes of the heart' can enlighten us, helping us to conduct ourselves without stumbling. (Eph. 1:18) For a literal eye to see clearly, it must function properly and be able to focus on what it is looking at. It is no different with the eyes of the heart. Having a simple figurative eye means that we are single-minded in purpose. Rather than leading a life that is centered on material things and being consumed with taking care of only the physical needs of the family, we keep our eye focused on spiritual matters.—Matt. 6:33. *w11 5/15 2:3, 4*

Wednesday, September 4

There will also be false teachers among you.—2 Pet. 2:1.

How do false teachers operate? Their methods reveal a cunning spirit. Apostates “quietly bring in” corruptive ideas. Like smugglers, they operate in a clandestine manner, subtly introducing apostate views. And just as a clever forger tries to pass phony documents, so apostates use “counterfeit words,” or false arguments, trying to pass their fabricated views as if they were true. They spread “deceptive teachings,” “twisting . . . the Scriptures” to fit their own ideas. (2 Pet. 2:1, 3, 13; 3:16) Clearly, apostates do not have our best interests at heart. Following them would only divert us from the road that leads to eternal life. How can we protect ourselves? The Bible’s counsel regarding how to deal with them is clear. (Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9-11) “Avoid them,” says God’s Word. Other translations render that phrase “turn away from them,” “keep away from them,” and “stay away from them!” *w11 7/15 2:5, 6*

Thursday, September 5

God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

—Rom. 5:8.

Think of one fact there mentioned: “We were yet sinners.” All need to know how that came to be so. Paul outlined the matter, starting with this point: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned.”

(Rom. 5:12) We are in a position to understand this because God had a record made of how human life began. Jehovah created two humans, Adam and Eve. The Creator is perfect, and so were those first humans, our ancestors. God gave them but one limiting directive and informed them that disobeying that law would bring a death sentence. (Gen. 2:17) However, they chose to act ruinously, violating God’s reasonable directive, thus rejecting him as Law-giver and Sovereign.—Deut. 32:4, 5. *w11 6/15 2:4, 5*

Friday, September 6

Violent witnesses rise up; what I have not known they ask me.

—Ps. 35:11.

True to this prophecy, “the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin were looking for false witness against Jesus in order to put him to death.” (Matt. 26:59) In fact, “many, indeed, were giving false witness against him, but their testimonies were not in agreement.” (Mark 14:56) Lying testimony mattered little to Jesus’ rabid enemies, who sought his death. At dawn on Nisan 14, the entire Sanhedrin met, had Jesus bound, and handed him over to Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. He questioned Jesus and found him guilty of nothing at all. When Pilate offered to release Jesus, however, the crowd shouted: “Impale him!” and called for the freeing of the criminal Barabbas. Wishing to satisfy the throng, Pilate released Barabbas, had Jesus whipped, and handed him over to be impaled.—Mark 15:1-15. *w11 8/15 2:8, 9*

Saturday, September 7

[Moses] looked intently toward the payment of the reward.

—Heb. 11:26.

Moses was not distracted by “the temporary enjoyment of sin.” (Heb. 11:25) God and his promises were so real to Moses that he demonstrated extraordinary courage and endurance. He exerted himself untiringly in leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Yet, Moses did not experience the fulfillment of God’s promise in his lifetime. This was because earlier he and Aaron, exasperated by the people’s rebelliousness, “acted undutifully toward [God] in the middle of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah.” (Deut. 32:51, 52) Did Moses become despondent or resentful? No. He pronounced a blessing on the people and concluded with these words: “Happy you are, O Israel! Who is there like you, a people enjoying salvation in Jehovah, the shield of your help, and the One who is your eminent sword?”—Deut. 33:29. *w11 9/15 3:15, 16*

Sunday, September 8

Trust in Jehovah . . . and do not lean upon your own understanding.—Prov. 3:5.

It is not easy to resist temptation or overcome bad habits. “The flesh is against the spirit in its desire,” wrote the apostle Paul, “and the spirit against the flesh.” Therefore, “the very things that [we] would like to do [we] do not do.” (Gal. 5:17) To meet this challenge, we need to pray fervently when wrong thoughts or temptations first come to mind and then act in harmony with our prayers. “No temptation has taken you ex-

cept what is common to men,” and with Jehovah’s help, we can remain faithful to him. (1 Cor. 10:13) Whether we are dealing with a difficult situation, making a weighty decision, or trying to resist temptation, Jehovah has given us a wonderful gift—the precious provision of prayer. By means of it, we demonstrate our reliance on him. We should also keep on asking God for his holy spirit, which guides and strengthens us. (Luke 11:9-13) And by all means, let us trust in Jehovah and not lean upon our own understanding. *w11 11/15 1:18, 19*

Monday, September 9

Each one has his own gift from God.—1 Cor. 7:7.

Like Jewish society in the first century, many cultures today emphasize marriage as being most desirable. If a young man or woman passes a certain age without getting married, concerned friends and relatives may feel impelled to give him or her some advice. In conversation, they may suggest that he or she search more actively for a mate. They may drop hints about an eligible member of the opposite sex. They may even use cunning to get two unmarried people to meet. These actions sometimes lead to embarrassment, broken friendships, and hurt feelings. Paul never pressured others either to marry or to remain single. He was content to serve Jehovah without a wife, but he respected the right of others to enjoy marriage. Individual Christians today also have the right to decide for themselves whether to get married or to stay single. Others should not pressure them to take one course or another. *w11 10/15 2:3, 4*

Tuesday, September 10

All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction.—Rom. 15:4.

Those written things include many good examples, men and women of outstanding faith. (Heb. 11:32-34) We can and should benefit from the good examples found in the Scriptures, following or imitating what is presented in those fine Biblical accounts. Certain Bible accounts, however, include warning examples. We can find some of those in the lives of men and women whom Jehovah at one point accepted and used as his servants. As we read the Bible, we can note where and how some of God's people went astray and thus became warning examples. We can discern that some gradually developed wrong attitudes or tendencies, which eventually produced sad consequences. How can we draw lessons from such accounts? We may want to ask ourselves such questions as: 'How did that develop? Might such a trend develop in my case? What can I do to avoid that and instead to benefit from this warning example?' *w11 12/15 1:19, 20*

Wednesday, September 11

Your word is truth.

—John 17:17.

Try as they might, enemies of Bible truth have been unable to prevent its spread. "The word of God is not bound," says 2 Timothy 2:9. In 1870 a group of sincere Bible students began searching for the truth. Their method of study? Someone would raise a question. They would discuss it. They would look up all related

scriptures on the point, and then, when they were satisfied with the harmony of these texts, they would finally state their conclusion and make a record of it. Does it not reassure you to know that like the apostles and older men of the first century, those faithful men, our "spiritual ancestors" of the late 1800's, were determined to align their beliefs solidly with God's Word? Since everyone who desires to gain God's approval must walk in the truth, may all of us continually strive to be guided by God's Word. *w12 1/15 1:18, 19*

Thursday, September 12

Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

—1 Tim. 4:16.

Like Jesus, we always need to be alert, watching for opportunities to share what we know about God's Kingdom. Each such opportunity is precious, and we do not want to squander any. Lives are at stake! Jesus knew something else that led him to remain watchful. He knew that Satan was determined to tempt him, to persecute him, and to break his integrity. That vicious enemy was always watching for "another convenient time" to put Jesus to the test. (Luke 4:13) Jesus never let down his guard. He wanted to be ready for any test, be it temptation, opposition, or persecution. Cannot much the same be said about us? We know that Satan is still "like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." That is why God's Word exhorts all Christians: "Keep your senses, be watchful."—1 Pet. 5:8. *w12 2/15 1:5, 6*

Friday, September 13

These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son.

—Deut. 6:6, 7.

A husband may provide materially for his family. But if he does not provide spiritual direction, he would be displaying a lack of discretion and wisdom. Thus, 1 Timothy 3:4 says that if you are the head of a family and are reaching out for extra privileges in the congregation, you must be a man who is “presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection *with all seriousness*.” In this regard, ask yourself, ‘Do I regularly set aside time for family worship in my household?’ Some Christian wives virtually have to beg their husbands to take the lead spiritually. Each husband should take a serious look at his own view of this responsibility. Of course, a Christian wife should be supporting the Family Worship arrangement and be cooperating with her husband to make it a success. *w11 4/15 1:17*

Saturday, September 14

This widow, although poor, dropped in more than they all did.—Luke 21:3.

Jesus, being perfect, could discern the unspoken indignation of a Pharisee, the sincere repentance of a sinful woman, and the self-sacrificing attitude of a widow. (Luke 7:37-50; 21:1-4) Thus, Jesus could respond to the spiritual need of each one. However, a servant of God does not have to be perfect to be a good observer.

The apostle Paul illustrates that. He adapted his presentation so as to appeal to different groups and to people with varying attitudes. (Acts 17:22, 23, 34; 1 Cor. 9:19-23) By our striving to be alert and observant like Jesus and Paul, we can discern how best to awaken interest in those we meet. For example, as you approach individuals, look for clues that indicate their culture, interests, or family situation. Perhaps you can notice what they are doing at the moment and make a polite comment about it as you initiate a conversation. *w12 3/15 1:10, 11*

Sunday, September 15

We pronounce happy those who have endured. . . . Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.—Jas. 5:11.

At times, certain tests of our faith may be embarrassing. Still, we should have confidence like that of the apostle Paul, who said: “For this very cause I am also suffering these things, but I am not ashamed. For I know the one whom I have believed, and I am confident he is able to guard what I have laid up in trust with him until that day.” (2 Tim. 1:12) The Bible foretold that during our time people would be “lovers of themselves.” (2 Tim. 3:2) No wonder, then, that we are surrounded by a me-first generation. May we never be tainted by such a selfish attitude! Rather, whether we are faced with temptation, beset by tragedies, or confronted with efforts to shame us, let each one of us be determined to prove that Jehovah is indeed the most important Person in our life! *w11 5/15 3:13, 20, 21*

Monday, September 16

Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly.—1 Pet. 5:2.

What moves elders to serve their brothers willingly? Well, what moved Peter to shepherd and feed Jesus' sheep? A key was his love and affection for the Lord. (John 21:15-17) Because of love, elders "live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them." (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) This love, combined with their love for God and their brothers, compels elders to serve the flock, devoting their efforts, resources, and time to doing so. (Matt. 22:37-39) They give of themselves, not grudgingly, but willingly. To what extent should the elders give of themselves? In caring for the sheep, they imitate the apostle Paul, even as he imitated Jesus. (1 Cor. 11:1) Having tender affection for the Thessalonian brothers, Paul and his companions were well-pleased to impart to them 'not only the good news of God but also their own souls.'—1 Thess. 2:8. *w11 6/15 3:11, 12*

Tuesday, September 17

There remains a sabbath resting for the people of God. For the man that has entered into God's rest has also himself rested from his own works, just as God did from his own.—Heb. 4:9, 10.

Likely with the observance of the weekly Sabbath under the Law in mind, Paul wrote the words above concerning the privilege of entering into Jehovah's rest day. Those Hebrew Christians had to stop thinking that they could earn Jehovah's approval by performing works

based on the Mosaic Law. Since Pentecost 33 C.E., God's favor has graciously been bestowed on those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ. What had prevented the Israelites in Moses' day from entering the Promised Land? Disobedience. What was preventing some Christians in Paul's day from entering into God's rest? The same—disobedience. They failed to recognize that the Law had served its purpose and that Jehovah was leading his people in a different direction. *w11 7/15 3:14, 15*

Wednesday, September 18

Do not feel hurt and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here; because for the preservation of life God has sent me ahead of you.—Gen. 45:5.

Joseph's older brothers became so jealous of him that they sold him into slavery and tricked their father into believing that he had been killed by a wild beast. (Gen. 37:4, 28, 31-33) Jehovah proved to be with Joseph. In time, Joseph became Egypt's prime minister—second in power only to Pharaoh. When a severe famine brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt, they did not even recognize him in his official Egyptian attire. (Gen. 42:5-7) How easy it would have been for Joseph to repay his brothers for their cruelty to him and to their father! Rather than seek revenge, however, Joseph tried to make peace with them. When it became clear that his brothers had repented, he made himself known to them, saying the words of today's text. Then he proceeded to kiss all his brothers and to weep over them. —Gen. 45:1, 15. *w11 8/15 3:15, 16*

Thursday, September 19

You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing.—Ps. 145:16.

We may have desires that we long to see fulfilled. Marriage, having children, and good health are all natural and appropriate desires. For many, though, one or more of those desires may go unfulfilled. If that is so in our case, how we deal with the situation may be a measure of our faith. How unwise it would be to seek to fulfill these desires in a way contrary to godly wisdom. That would be to one's spiritual detriment. Some, for instance, have chosen forms of health care that conflict with Jehovah's counsel. Others have taken on employment that keeps them away from their families or congregation meetings. Or what of developing a romantic relationship with an unbeliever? If a Christian follows such a course, is he truly seeking to be known by Jehovah? (2 Tim. 2:19) Is your faith strong enough for you to wait on Jehovah, who promises to satisfy your proper yearnings? *w11 9/15 5:8-10*

Friday, September 20

Remember the word to your servant, for which you [Jehovah] have made me wait. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your own saying has preserved me alive.—Ps. 119:49, 50.

Today, we have Jehovah's written Word, which contains many examples of God-given comfort. For instance, Abraham may have been quite distressed when he learned that Jehovah was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. That faithful patriarch asked God: "Will you really sweep away

the righteous with the wicked?" Jehovah comforted Abraham by assuring him that if only 50 righteous people could be found, He would not destroy Sodom. Five more times, however, Abraham asked Jehovah: What if there are only 45 righteous people? 40? 30? 20? 10? Each time, Jehovah very patiently and kindly assured Abraham that Sodom would be spared. Although there were not even ten righteous people in the area, Jehovah did preserve Lot and his daughters.—Gen. 18:22-32; 19:15, 16, 26. *w11 10/15 3:12*

Saturday, September 21

Because you are no part of the world, . . . on this account the world hates you.—John 15:19.

As Christianity spread, were Christians to come to terms with the world, conforming to its practices and becoming a part of it? No. Wherever they lived, they were to distinguish themselves from Satan's system. (1 Pet. 2:11, 12) Confirming that early Christians conducted themselves as "aliens and temporary residents" in the Roman world, historian Kenneth Scott Latourette wrote: "It is one of the commonplaces of history that in its first three centuries Christianity met persistent and often severe persecution . . . The accusations varied. Because they refused to participate in pagan ceremonies the Christians were dubbed atheists. Through their abstention from much of the community life—the pagan festivals, the public amusements which to Christians were shot through and through with pagan beliefs, practices, and immoralities—they were derided as haters of the human race." *w11 11/15 3:6-8*

Sunday, September 22

He does not give the spirit by measure.—John 3:34.

Moses was entrusted with enormous responsibility in the nation of Israel. God's spirit empowered him to prophesy, judge, write, lead, and perform miracles. (Isa. 63:11-14) Yet, at one point, Moses lamented that the load was simply too heavy. (Num. 11:14, 15) So Jehovah took "away some of the spirit" that was upon Moses and put it on 70 others to help carry the workload. (Num. 11:16, 17) However, Moses still had all the spirit that he needed. Today, Jehovah supplies as much of his spirit as we need, according to our circumstances. Are you enduring trials? Are legitimate demands on your time increasing? Are you striving to provide for the spiritual and physical needs of your family while coping with rising expenses or anxieties over health? Are you carrying weighty responsibilities in the congregation? Be assured that by means of his spirit, God can give you the strength you need to cope with any situation.—Rom. 15:13. *w11 12/15 3:3-5*

Monday, September 23

He explained the matter to them by bearing thorough witness concerning the kingdom of God and by using persuasion with them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.
—Acts 28:23.

Why was Paul so effective in bearing witness? Today's text highlights a number of reasons. (1) He focused on God's Kingdom and on Jesus Christ. (2) He tried to appeal to his listeners

"by using persuasion." (3) He reasoned from the Scriptures. (4) He showed a selfless attitude, bearing witness "from morning till evening." Paul gave a powerful witness, but not everyone responded. "Some began to believe the things said; others would not believe," notes verse 24. Dissension ensued, and the people departed. Was Paul disheartened because not everyone accepted the good news? By no means! Acts 28:30, 31 tells us: "He remained for an entire two years in his own hired house, and he would kindly receive all those who came in to him, preaching the kingdom of God to them." *w12 1/15 2:18-20*

Tuesday, September 24

Do not lean upon your own understanding.—Prov. 3:5.

When Jesus was under trial, he resolutely refused to lean on his own understanding. Think of it! The wisest man ever to live on this earth chose not to draw on his own wisdom for answers. For instance, when Satan tempted him, Jesus repeatedly answered with the phrase: "It is written." (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10) He relied on his Father's wisdom to ward off temptation, showing the humility that Satan despises and utterly lacks. Do we do the same? A family head who imitates Jesus' watchfulness lets God's Word guide him, especially in trialsome times. Around the world, thousands of family heads are doing just that. They are steadfastly putting God's Kingdom and pure worship first in life, even ahead of material concerns. Jehovah responds by blessing their efforts to provide for material needs, just as his Word promises.—Matt. 6:33. *w12 2/15 1:15, 16*

Wednesday, September 25

Preach the word, be at it urgently.—2 Tim. 4:2.

When you consider what stands to be gained or lost as a result of our preaching, you probably feel an urgent need to speak to others about the good news. (Rom. 10: 13, 14) God's Word says: "When I say to the wicked one: 'You will positively die,' and he actually turns back from his sin and carries on justice and righteousness, . . . he will positively keep living. He will not die. None of his sins with which he has sinned will be remembered against him." (Ezek. 33:14-16) Indeed, the Bible tells those who teach the Kingdom message: "You will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Tim. 4:16; Ezek. 3:17-21) Jesus had foretold that an apostasy would develop. (Matt. 13:24, 25, 38) As that development approached, it was urgent for Timothy to "preach the word" even inside the congregation so that Christians would not be misled by the deceptive attractiveness of false teachings. Lives were at stake. *w12 3/15 2:3, 4*

Thursday, September 26

When I call, answer me, O my righteous God. In the distress you must make broad space for me. Show me favor and hear my prayer.—Ps. 4:1.

We can have similar confidence if we practice righteousness. Aware that Jehovah, the "righteous God," blesses his upright people, we can confidently pray to him through his Son with faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (John 3:16, 36) What peace this gives us! At times, we may face a discouraging situation that robs us

of confidence. Temporarily, this may have been true of David, for he sings: "You sons of men, how long must my glory be for insult, while you keep loving empty things, while you keep seeking to find a lie?" (Ps. 4:2) The expression "sons of men" evidently refers to mankind in an unfavorable sense. David's enemies 'loved empty things.' Even if we become discouraged because of what others do, let us continue to pray earnestly and manifest complete trust in the only true God. *w11 5/15 5:15, 16*

Friday, September 27

Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter.

—Ps. 55:22.

As we personally cope with life's problems and diligently seek to comfort others, we can have the same faith and conviction as did the psalmist who sang the above. Indeed, Jehovah will always be there to comfort and support us as his loyal servants. God told his worshippers of ancient times: "I—I myself am the One that is comforting you people." (Isa. 51:12) Jehovah will do the same for us and will bless our good deeds and words as we comfort mourning ones. Whether our hope is heavenly or earthly, each of us can be comforted by Paul's words to his spirit-anointed fellow Christians: "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave everlasting comfort and good hope by means of undeserved kindness, comfort your hearts and make you firm in every good deed and word."—2 Thess. 2:16, 17. *w11 10/15 4:17, 18*

Saturday, September 28

Humble yourselves . . . under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; while you throw all your anxiety upon him.—1 Pet. 5:6, 7.

Certain men hold back from getting involved in spiritual matters because they do not read well or cannot express themselves fluently or are just shy. Some men are uncomfortable sharing their views or feelings in a public setting. The thought of having to study, comment at Christian meetings, or share their faith with others may seem overwhelming to them. “When I was young,” admits a Christian brother, “I would quickly walk up to the door, pretend to ring the doorbell, and quietly walk away, hoping no one would hear or see me. . . . The thought of going from door to door made me physically ill.” A fine way to help someone struggling with feelings of inadequacy is to encourage him to focus on Jehovah instead of on himself. This requires that we help our Bible student to develop spirituality. *w11 11/15 4:13, 15*

Sunday, September 29

All these operations the one and the same spirit performs, making a distribution to each one respectively just as it wills.

—1 Cor. 12:11.

Do accounts of Jehovah’s blessing on the first-century congregation of anointed ones provide significant encouragement to God’s dedicated servants today? Without a doubt! Bear in mind Paul’s inspired words to the congregation in Corinth concerning the miraculous gifts of the spirit in his day: “Now there are va-

rieties of gifts, but there is the same spirit; and there are varieties of ministries, and yet there is the same Lord; and there are varieties of operations, and yet it is the same God who performs all the operations in all persons.” (1 Cor. 12:4-6) Yes, holy spirit can operate in different ways on different servants of God for a purpose. Indeed, the holy spirit is available both to Christ’s “little flock” and to his “other sheep.” (Luke 12:32; John 10:16) Yet, it does not always operate in the same way on each member of the congregation. *w11 12/15 4:12*

Monday, September 30

[God] loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins.—1 John 4:10.

It would take a long time to enumerate the many reasons we have for being grateful to Jehovah. Is it not true that we should thank him each day for the gift of life? He gives us all that we need to sustain ourselves—food, clothing, and shelter as well as every breath that we take. Moreover, our faith, based on accurate knowledge, gives us hope. It is appropriate that we worship Jehovah and offer sacrifices of praise to him, simply because of who he is and what he has done for us. (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Rev. 4:11) After reflecting on all the good that Jehovah has done for them, many have been moved to organize their time and activities to increase their participation in the Kingdom-preaching work or other theocratic activities. Still others have engaged in Kingdom construction projects. Are not these excellent ways to show one’s appreciation? *w12 1/15 4:15-17*

Tuesday, October 1

[Jesus] continued the whole night in prayer to God.—Luke 6:12.

Jesus set a sterling example in prayer. You may recall that he once spent an entire night praying to his Father. Let us try to picture the scene. It is springtime, likely near the fishing town of Capernaum, Jesus' home base in the region. As evening falls, Jesus goes up one of the mountains that overlook the Sea of Galilee. As he views the darkening landscape, he perhaps sees the flickering of oil lamps down in Capernaum and other nearby villages. When Jesus addresses Jehovah, though, he focuses intently on his prayer. Minutes—then hours—pass. He takes little note as the lights far below go out one by one or as the moon drifts across the sky or as the nocturnal animals forage in the brush. His prayer likely dwells on the big decision that lies before him—that of choosing his 12 apostles. We can imagine Jesus immersed in telling his Father all his thoughts and concerns about each disciple as he earnestly begs for guidance and wisdom.—Luke 6:13. *w12 2/15 1:8*

Wednesday, October 2

Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.—1 Thess. 5:6.

The apostle Paul exhorted fellow believers not to “sleep on as the rest do.” What did he mean? One way we can “sleep on” is by ignoring Jehovah's moral standards. Another way we can “sleep on” is by ignoring the fact that Jehovah's time to destroy the ungodly has approached. We must make sure that such ungodly in-

dividuals do not influence us to adopt their ways and attitudes. (1 Thess. 5:4-8) Some people imagine that there is no God who will call them to account. (Ps. 53:1) Others imagine that God is not interested in us humans, so there is no point in our being interested in him. Still others feel that belonging to a church will make them friends of God. All these people are spiritually asleep. They need to wake up. We must do all that we can to help them. *w12 3/15 1:4, 5*

Thursday, October 3

Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: “I have no delight in them.”—Eccl. 12:1.

Children are encouraged to take life seriously. There is no harm in young children learning to work hard, doing chores in the home that are reasonable for their age and abilities. (Lam. 3:27) When King David was still a young boy, he learned to be a fine shepherd. He also learned to be a musician and a composer—skills that led him to serve before the ruler of Israel. (1 Sam. 16:11, 12, 18-21) No doubt, as a lad David knew how to be playful, but he also learned valuable skills that he later used to praise Jehovah. His skills as a shepherd helped him to lead the nation of Israel patiently. You young people, how many useful skills are you learning—skills that will help you to serve your Creator and prepare you for future responsibilities? *w11 4/15 1:18*

Friday, October 4

Guard against every sort of covetousness.—Luke 12:15.

Christian families should think seriously about the time and money they spend on entertainment, recreation, and the acquisition of material things. Making a purchase is more involved than simply deciding whether an item is affordable or not. Take into consideration factors such as these: 'Will I have the time to use the item regularly and care for its upkeep? How long will it take to learn to operate it properly?'

You young ones, do not believe all the world's advertising about consumer goods and thus make unreasonable demands for expensive brands of clothing or for other items. Exercise restraint. Also, think of how acquiring something will affect your family's preparedness for the coming of the Son of man. Have faith in Jehovah's promise: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you."—Heb. 13:5. *w11 5/15 2:7, 8*

Saturday, October 5

Sin is not charged against anyone when there is no law.

—Rom. 5:13.

Adam's offspring had not violated the divine law as Adam had, so they were not charged with the same sin; nor had any law code yet been given. (Gen. 2:17) Still, Adam's descendants inherited sin. Thus, sin and death ruled down to the time when God gave the Israelites a law code, which clearly showed that they were sinners. (Rom. 5:14) The effect of inherited sin might be illustrated

with certain inherited diseases or defects, such as Mediterranean anemia or hemophilia. You may have read that Alexis, son of Russian Czar Nicholas II and Alexandra, inherited the bleeding disorder hemophilia. Granted, even in such a family, some children do not suffer from those diseases, but they still may be carriers. Not so with sin. The defect of sin from Adam was inevitable. All are subject to it. It is always fatal. And it is passed on to all children. *w11 6/15 2:6*

Sunday, October 6

Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep's covering.—Matt. 7:15.

What is involved in avoiding false teachers? We do not receive them into our homes or greet them. We also refuse to read their literature, watch TV programs that feature them, examine their Web sites, or add our comments to their blogs. Why do we take such a firm stand? Because of love. We love "the God of truth," so we are not interested in twisted teachings that contradict his Word of truth. (Ps. 31:5; John 17:17) We also love Jehovah's organization, through which we have been taught thrilling truths—including Jehovah's name and its meaning, God's purpose for the earth, the condition of the dead, and the hope of the resurrection. Can you recall how you felt when you first learned these and other precious truths? Why, then, allow yourself to be soured by anyone who would denigrate the organization through which you learned these truths?—John 6:66-69. *w11 7/15 2:4, 7*

Monday, October 7

The assembly of evildoers themselves have enclosed me. Like a lion they are at my hands and my feet.—Ps. 22:16.

Reporting an event well-known to Bible readers, the Gospel writer Mark states: "It was now the third hour [about nine o'clock in the morning], and they impaled him." (Mark 15:25) It had also been foretold that the Messiah would be numbered with sinners. "He poured out his soul to the very death," wrote Isaiah, "and it was with the transgressors that he was counted in." (Isa. 53:12) So it was that "two robbers were impaled with [Jesus], one on his right and one on his left." (Matt. 27:38) "They apportion my garments among themselves," wrote the psalmist, "and upon my clothing they cast lots." (Ps. 22:18) That is what occurred, for "when [the Roman soldiers] had impaled [Jesus] they distributed his outer garments by casting lots."—Matt. 27:35; John 19:23, 24. *w11 8/15 2:12, 14*

Tuesday, October 8

Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.—Matt. 6:33.

People of the world tend to seek personal interests first as "men of this system of things, whose share is in this life." (Ps. 17:1, 13-15) With no regard for their Creator, many devote themselves to making a comfortable living, raising a family, and leaving behind an inheritance. In contrast, many Christians have put spiritual activities ahead of their secular employment. Some who

have been in a situation where their job seemed at risk may have wondered, 'How will I fulfill my responsibility to provide for my family?' (1 Tim. 5:8) Whether you have faced a similar challenge or not, from your own experience you are likely sure that you will never be disappointed if you highly treasure the privilege of serving Jehovah. Our trust in God's power to provide becomes more and more important as we move deeper into the last days. —Rev. 13:17. *w11 9/15 2:6, 8, 9*

Wednesday, October 9

It is well for them that they remain even as I am.—1 Cor. 7:8.

Although Paul was unmarried, he did not exalt himself over those who were married, as the celibate clergy of Christendom do. Rather, the apostle highlighted an advantage that many unmarried ministers of the good news enjoy. What is that advantage? A single Christian often has the flexibility to accept assignments in Jehovah's service that might be out of reach for a married person. Paul received a special privilege as "an apostle to the nations." (Rom. 11:13) Read Acts chapters 13 through 20, and follow him and his fellow missionaries as they open up territories and establish congregations in one place after another. In his service, Paul endured hardships that few today will face. (2 Cor. 11:23-27, 32, 33) But his joy in helping many to become disciples made those difficulties worthwhile. (1 Thess. 1:2-7, 9; 2:19) Would he have accomplished all that he did had he been married or had a family? Probably not. *w11 10/15 2:5, 6*

Thursday, October 10

The minding of the flesh means death, but the minding of the spirit means life and peace.

—Rom. 8:6.

Cell phones are among the devices that can distract a motorist from the one thing he or she is supposed to be doing—driving. Over one third of the people interviewed in one survey said that they had been hit or nearly hit by a vehicle with a driver using a cell phone. Multitasking while driving may seem to be expedient, but the result can be disastrous. The same could be true of our spiritual well-being. Just as a distracted driver often fails to notice signs of danger, a person who is distracted spiritually can easily fall into harm's way. If we allow ourselves to drift away from our Christian course and theocratic activities, the result could be the shipwreck of our faith. (1 Tim. 1: 18, 19) The apostle Paul warned of this danger when he cautioned his fellow Christians in Rome by writing the words of today's text. *w11 11/15 2:1, 2*

Friday, October 11

The spirit . . . will guide you into all the truth.—John 16:13.

Have you ever used a compass to find your way? A compass is a simple device with only one moving part—a magnetic needle pointing toward the north. Because of an invisible force known as magnetism, the needle of the compass aligns itself with the magnetic field surrounding the earth between its poles. There is another invisible force that is even more essential for our guid-

ance. What is it? The one described in the opening verses of the Bible. Speaking of what Jehovah accomplished aeons ago, Genesis states: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." As he did so, he sent forth a powerful force, for the creation account adds: "God's active force was moving to and fro." (Gen. 1: 1, 2) What was at work? Holy spirit—the dynamic force behind creation. We owe our existence to Jehovah's use of this spirit to produce all his works.—Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30. *w11 12/15 2:1-3*

Saturday, October 12

Jesus went out with his disciples . . . to where there was a garden, and he and his disciples entered into it.—John 18:1.

Three of the apostles—Peter, James, and John—accompany Jesus to a spot deeper in the garden of Gethsemane. "Stay here and keep on the watch with me," he tells them, and then he goes off to pray. When he comes back, he finds his friends fast asleep. Again he implores them: "Keep on the watch." Yet, they fall asleep two more times! Later that same night, all the apostles fail to keep spiritually alert. Why, they even abandon Jesus and flee! (Matt. 26:38, 41, 56) Surely the apostles regretted their failure to keep on the watch. Those faithful men quickly learned from their mistake. The Bible book of Acts shows that they went on to set an outstanding example in keeping watchful. Their faithful course must have influenced their fellow Christians to do the same. Now more than ever, we need to keep on the watch.—Matt. 24:42. *w12 1/15 2:1-3*

Sunday, October 13

Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.—1 Thess. 5:6.

Without question, Jesus set the best possible example of watchfulness. His example is practical, beneficial, and even lifesaving. Remember, Satan is eager to lull you into spiritual sleep—a state of weak faith, lackadaisical worship, and compromised integrity. Do not let him succeed! Remain watchful as Jesus did—watchful in your prayers, in your ministry, and in dealing with trials. By following that course, you will enjoy a rich, happy, fulfilling life even now in the twilight of this dying system of things. A watchful course will also ensure that when your Master comes to bring this system to its end, he will find you alert and active, doing his Father's will. How delighted Jehovah will be to reward you for your faithful course!—Rev. 16:15. *w12 2/15 1:17*

Monday, October 14

A joyful heart has a good effect on the countenance.
—Prov. 15:13.

Ministers who are awake and alert listen carefully to those they meet. Are they concerned about the number of religions, the violence in the area, or the failure of governments? Can you awaken interest in spiritual matters by commenting on the marvelous design of living things or by pointing out how practical the Bible's advice is? Prayer interests people of nearly all cultures, even some atheists. Many won-

der if anyone hears prayers. Others may be intrigued by the questions: Does God hear *all* prayers? If not, what should we do to be heard by God? We can likely learn much about the art of initiating conversations by observing how experienced publishers do it. Notice how they avoid the appearance of interrogating or prying. How do their tone of voice and facial expression communicate their interest in understanding the householder's views? *w12 3/15 1:13, 14*

Tuesday, October 15

Always rejoice in the Lord. Once more I will say, Rejoice!
—Phil. 4:4.

A notable characteristic of the fruitage of the spirit is its stability. Joy, the second aspect, exemplifies this resilience. Joy is like a hardy plant that can thrive even in a hostile environment. Throughout the earth, many of God's servants have "accepted the word under much tribulation with joy of holy spirit." (1 Thess. 1:6) Others face hardships and deprivations. Yet, Jehovah empowers them by means of his spirit "to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy." (Col. 1:11) What is the source of this joy? Unlike the "uncertain riches" of Satan's world, the spiritual treasures we have received from Jehovah have lasting value. (1 Tim. 6:17; Matt. 6:19, 20) He holds before us the joyful prospect of an unending future. We have the joy of being part of a worldwide Christian brotherhood. Above all, our joy is founded on our relationship with God. *w11 4/15 3:9-11*

Wednesday, October 16

Jehovah . . . is cognizant of those seeking refuge in him.

—Nah. 1:7.

Why is knowing Jehovah and becoming known by him such a great privilege? Because not only is he the greatest Personage in all the universe but he also serves as the Protector of those whom he loves. (Ps. 1:6) In fact, our very prospects for eternal life are dependent on our coming to know the true God and his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) Coming to know God means more than simply knowing his literal name. We must get to know him as a Friend, understanding his likes and dislikes. Our living in harmony with that knowledge also plays a vital part in our showing that we have come to know God intimately. (1 John 2:4) But something else is required if we truly wish to know Jehovah. We need to know not only what he has done but also how and why he has acted that way. The more we understand Jehovah's purposes, the more we are compelled to marvel at 'the depth of God's wisdom.' —Rom. 11:33. w11 5/15 4:2, 3

Thursday, October 17

We were working so as not to impose an expensive burden upon any one of you.—2 Thess. 3:8.

Peter encouraged elders to shepherd the flock, "neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly." (1 Pet. 5:2) The work of the elders takes up a considerable amount of time, yet they do not expect any financial compensation. Peter saw the need to warn his fellow older men about the

danger of shepherding the flock out of "love of dishonest gain." That danger is evident in the life of luxury led by religious leaders of "Babylon the Great" while many people are forced to lead a life of poverty. (Rev. 18:2, 3) The elders today have good reason to be on guard against any tendency in that direction. Paul set a fine example for Christian elders. Though he was an apostle and could have been "an expensive burden" on Christians in Thessalonica, he did not "eat food from anyone free." Rather, he 'labored and toiled night and day.' w11 6/15 3:14, 15

Friday, October 18

The wisdom from above is . . . ready to obey.—Jas. 3:17.

How well do you do in the matter of accepting Bible-based counsel? The Scriptures tell us that it is God's will to gather to himself "the desirable things of all the nations." (Hag. 2:7) Of course, most of us were far from desirable when we first learned the truth. However, love for God and for his dear Son impelled us to make significant changes in our attitude and habits so as to be fully pleasing to God. Finally, after much prayer and effort on our part, the blessed day arrived when we were able to present ourselves for Christian baptism. (Col. 1:9, 10) The battle against imperfection did not end with our baptism, however. The fight continued and will continue as long as we are imperfect. We are assured, though, that if we keep up the struggle and are determined to become ever more desirable in God's eyes, Jehovah will bless our efforts. w11 7/15 4:1-3

Saturday, October 19

They will have to beat their swords into plowshares.

—Isa. 2:4.

The true God gives holy spirit to his loyal servants, and the fruitage of that spirit includes peace. (Gal. 5:22) Another reason for our peaceful unity is that we are “no part of the world.” (John 15:19) Rather than taking sides in political issues, we remain neutral. Having ‘beaten our swords into plowshares,’ we do not get involved in civil or international wars. The peace we can enjoy with one another goes deeper than merely refraining from doing harm to our brothers. Although the congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses that we belong to may be made up of individuals from many different ethnic groups and cultures, we “love one another.” (John 15:17) Our peace allows us to “work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.” (Gal. 6:10) Our peaceful spiritual paradise is something to be treasured and safeguarded. *w11 8/15 4:2, 3*

Sunday, October 20

Run in such a way that you may attain it.—1 Cor. 9:24.

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul used a powerful word picture to encourage his fellow Christians. He reminded them that they were not alone in running the race for life. Surrounding them were a ‘great cloud of witnesses,’ who had successfully completed the race. (Heb. 12:1) Having clearly in mind the faithful acts and strenuous efforts of these forerunners would give the Hebrew Chris-

tians incentive to press on and not to give out in their race. Ancient Greek runners completely stripped themselves of any extraneous weight or burden that could slow them down. While we would object to their lack of modesty and propriety, they ran that way with the sole objective of winning the prize. Paul’s point was that to gain the prize in the race for life, it is essential for runners to remove hindrances of any sort. This was sound counsel for Christians back then, and it is for us today. *w11 9/15 4:1, 3*

Monday, October 21

According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I myself know, and my sin is in front of me constantly.

—Ps. 51:1-3.

King David of ancient Israel is an example of an individual comforted by God. Inasmuch as Jehovah “sees what the heart is,” when he selected David to be a future king of Israel, he knew that David was sincere and devoted to true worship. (1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Sam. 5:10) Later, however, David committed adultery with Bath-sheba and tried to cover up the sin by having her husband killed. When David came to realize the enormity of his sin, he prayed to Jehovah, saying the words of today’s text. David was truly repentant, and Jehovah forgave him. However, David had to face the consequences of his wrongdoing. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Nevertheless, Jehovah’s mercy was a source of comfort to his humble servant. *w11 10/15 3:14*

Tuesday, October 22

Let those . . . making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full.—1 Cor. 7:29, 31.

We are convinced that Jehovah's Kingdom government under Christ will shortly put an end to imperfect human rulership, replacing it with a righteous new system of things. (Dan. 2:44; 2 Pet. 3:13) In view of the imminent end of the present system of things, as Jehovah's servants we realize that this is no time to settle down in this dying world. Then how do present-day Christians make use of the world? They do this by using modern technology and means of communication to spread Bible knowledge worldwide in hundreds of languages. They make limited use of the world to earn a living. They purchase necessary goods and services made available in the world. However, they avoid using the world to the full in that they keep worldly possessions and occupations in the proper place.—1 Tim. 6:9, 10. *w11 11/15 3:9, 10*

Wednesday, October 23

[Jehovah] has filled them with wisdom of heart to do all the work.—Ex. 35:35.

The experience of Moses' contemporary Bezalel reveals much about the way God's spirit can operate. (Ex. 35:30-34) Bezalel was appointed to take the lead in making the necessary furnishings for the tabernacle. Did he have knowledge of crafts prior to this vast project? Possibly, but in all likelihood his most recent job was that of making bricks for the Egyptians. (Ex. 1:13, 14) So how would Bezalel fulfill his complicated task? Jehovah "proceed-

ed to fill him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in every sort of craftsmanship and for designing devices . . . to make ingenious products of every sort." Whatever natural aptitude Bezalel may have had was enhanced by holy spirit. The same is true of Oholiab. Bezalel and Oholiab must have learned well, for they not only performed their duties but also taught others what to do. Yes, God put it into their hearts to teach. *w11 12/15 3:6*

Thursday, October 24

He would kindly receive all those who came in to him, preaching the kingdom of God to them.—Acts 28:30, 31.

Like Paul, many of God's people today maintain their joy and keep preaching despite being unjustly imprisoned because of their faith. Some of our dear brothers and sisters are housebound, perhaps even living in nursing homes because of advanced age or illness. As they are able, they preach to doctors and staff, visitors, and others who come in to them. Their heart's desire is to bear thorough witness about God's Kingdom. How we appreciate the example they set! There is much to learn about watchfulness from the apostles and other first-century Christians mentioned in the Bible book of Acts. As we await the end of this old system of things, let us be determined to imitate those first-century Christians in giving a bold and zealous witness. There is now no greater privilege we can have than to share in "bearing thorough witness" about God's Kingdom!—Acts 28:23. *w12 1/15 2:20-22*

Friday, October 25

Mordecai . . . got knowledge of everything that had been done.

—*Esther 4:1.*

Queen Esther was greatly distressed. Her cousin Mordecai sent her a copy of the law authorizing the massacre of the Jews and commanded her to appear before the king to implore favor for her fellow Jews. But anyone going in to the king when not summoned was put to death. (*Esther 4:4-11*) Yet, Mordecai told Esther: 'If you are silent, deliverance will come from another place. But who knows whether it is for a time like this that you attained royal dignity?' Esther urged Mordecai to gather the Jews in Shushan and fast in her behalf. "I shall fast likewise," she said, "and upon that I shall come in to the king, . . . and in case I must perish, I must perish." (*Esther 4:12-17*) Esther acted courageously, and the book bearing her name shows that God delivered his people. In our day, anointed Christians and their dedicated associates display similar courage under trial.—*Ps. 65:2; 118:6. w12 2/15 2:14, 15*

Saturday, October 26

They will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled.—2 Tim. 4:3.

What teachings tickle people's ears today? In many places, the teaching of evolution has been promoted with religious fervor. Though evolution is usually presented in scientific language, it has become almost a secular religion, affecting how people view God and others. Another popular teaching is that God is not interested in us; thus, we do not

need to be interested in him. Why are these teachings so attractive that they lull millions into spiritual sleep? They both carry the underlying message, 'You can do anything you want because you will not be called to account.' This truly is a message that has tickled the ears of many. (*Ps. 10:4*) Some who still go to church like to have teachers who tell them, 'No matter what you do, God loves you.' Priests and pastors tickle the ears of others by convincing them that ceremonies, Masses, and images have God's blessing. *w12 3/15 2:4-6*

Sunday, October 27

Jehovah will make known who belongs to him.—Num. 16:5.

Moses and Korah stand in sharp contrast when it comes to demonstrating respect for Jehovah's arrangement and his decisions. Korah was a Kohathite Levite, and he enjoyed many privileges. (*Ex. 32:26-29; Num. 3:30, 31*) He had evidently been loyal to Jehovah for years and was looked up to by many in the camp of Israel. Nevertheless, Korah perceived what he imagined to be problems in God's arrangement. Then 250 other leading men in the nation sided with Korah in trying to make changes. Korah and the others must have felt secure about their relationship with Jehovah. They told Moses: "That is enough of you, because the whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst." (*Num. 16:1-3*) What an overconfident and prideful attitude! By the end of the next day, Korah and all those who had sided with him in rebellion were dead.—*Num. 16:31-35. w11 9/15 5:11, 12*

Monday, October 28

Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent.

—Ps. 4:4.

Courage and complete trust in Jehovah are required in order to remain loyal to him. For instance, these qualities are needed by a Christian family when an unrepentant relative is disfellowshipped. God honors those loyal to him and his ways. In turn, loyalty and complete trust in Jehovah promote joy among his people. (Ps. 84:11, 12) If we have been the object of unkind words or actions, let us not sin by retaliating. (Rom. 12:17-19) We can have our say in our heart while in bed. If we pray about the matter, we may see it in a different light and be moved to forgive out of love. (1 Pet. 4:8) Noteworthy in this regard is the apostle Paul's counsel, apparently based on Psalm 4:4: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil."—Eph. 4:26, 27. *w11 5/15 5:17, 18*

Tuesday, October 29

Holy spirit has appointed you overseers.—Acts 20:28.

Elders are appointed by holy spirit. But not all spirit-anointed ones serve as overseers in the congregation. What are we to conclude from this? Simply that God's spirit operates in different ways on members of the congregation. The spirit that instills in anointed ones "a spirit of adoption," or a sense of sonship, is the same spirit by which Jehovah raised his only-begotten Son from the dead to immortal life in heaven. (Rom. 8:11, 15) It is

the same spirit by which Jehovah brought the entire universe into existence. (Gen. 1:1-3) By that same holy spirit, Jehovah qualified Bezalel for special work on the tabernacle, empowered Samson to perform deeds requiring outstanding strength, and enabled Peter to walk on water. Let us, therefore, not confuse having God's spirit with being anointed with God's spirit, the latter being just one special operation of the spirit. Spirit anointing depends on God's choice. *w11 12/15 4:13, 14*

Wednesday, October 30

He that is showing insight in a matter will find good.

—Prov. 16:20.

We need to make an earnest effort to cultivate a peaceful relationship with unbelieving family members. This may present a challenge because what they want us to do may at times conflict with Bible principles. Our holding firmly to right principles may upset some unbelieving family members, but such a stand promotes peace in the long run. Of course, being unyielding when something does not violate Scriptural principles may cause unnecessary friction. (Prov. 16:7) When facing a challenge, it is important to seek Scriptural counsel. (Prov. 11:14) Cultivating peace in a household calls for trust in Jehovah and insight into the feelings of unbelieving family members. It is good to remember that unbelieving spouses may feel abandoned or threatened when their mate leaves to participate in Christian activities, but loving reassurances can go a long way in allaying such feelings. *w12 2/15 4:5-7*

Thursday, October 31

The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ, that we might be declared righteous due to faith.—Gal. 3:24.

By means of the ransom, Jehovah will permanently remove the effects of sin, and even now he allows us to have a good conscience before him. Jesus' ransom sacrifice is a wonderful provision! (Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:9, 14) Of course, more than a simple understanding of the ransom sacrifice is needed in

order for us to benefit from it. Faith is also needed. And such faith cannot be devoid of works. (Jas. 2:26) Paul thus encouraged first-century Christians who possessed the framework of knowledge conveyed by the Mosaic Law to put that knowledge into practice. By so doing, their conduct would harmonize with the divine principles they taught. (Rom. 2:21-23) Although Christians today are not required to observe the Mosaic Law, they must still present sacrifices that are acceptable to Jehovah. *w12 1/15 3:17-19*

Friday, November 1

Walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy.
—Rom. 13:13.

Avoiding such conduct can be challenging. Vigilance is vital. A car driver who underestimates the danger of falling asleep behind the wheel may be risking his life. Likewise, spiritual slumber can be deadly! For example, a Christian might imagine that all in his territory have irrevocably rejected the good news. (Prov. 6:10, 11) He might reason, 'If no one is going to respond, why be energetic in trying to reach or help people?' Granted, many might now be sleeping spiritually, but their circumstances and attitudes could change. Some do wake up and respond. And we can help them if we ourselves keep awake, such as by trying new ways to present the Kingdom message in an appealing manner. Part of our staying awake involves reminding ourselves why our ministry is vital. *w12 3/15 1:6, 7*

Saturday, November 2

Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry.—Ps. 100:2.

Why is it important for Christians to carry out their service to Jehovah with joy? Because of the issue Satan raised in connection with Jehovah's sovereignty. Satan claims that no one serves God out of a willing heart. (Job 1:9-11) If we were to serve Jehovah dutifully but joylessly, our sacrifice of praise would be incomplete. Service rendered from a joyful, willing heart glorifies God. Realistically, though, even devoted servants of Jehovah will have times when they become downhearted and struggle to maintain a positive outlook. (Phil. 2:25-30) When beset by negative feelings, we can beseech Jehovah in prayer and endeavor to meditate on praiseworthy things. (Phil. 4:6-9) Some find that softly humming along with recordings of our Kingdom songs lifts their spirits and helps to rechannel their thoughts. *w11 4/15 3:11-13*

Sunday, November 3

In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for you yourself alone, O Jehovah, make me dwell in security.—Ps. 4:8.

When the Israelites kept Jehovah's Law, they were at peace with him and felt secure. For instance, 'Judah and Israel dwelt in security' during Solomon's reign. (1 Ki. 4:25) Those trusting in God enjoyed peace even when neighboring nations were hostile. Like David, we sleep peacefully because God makes us feel secure. We can also be certain of experiencing heartfelt joy if we have a full share in today's spiritual harvest work. (Luke 10:2) Are you having a truly satisfying part in this joyful harvest? Then let us confidently press on in Jehovah's service. May we also pray in faith and thus experience "the peace of God that excels all thought." (Phil. 4:6, 7) What joy that brings us! And we can surely face the future with confidence if we maintain complete trust in Jehovah. *w11 5/15 5:21-23*

Monday, November 4

Death spread to all men because they had all sinned.—Rom. 5:12.

Lovingly, Jehovah made a provision for humans to overcome inherited sinfulness. Paul explained that this was possible by means of another man, a later perfect man—in effect, a second Adam. (1 Cor. 15:45) But the course of each of the two perfect men has led to very different results. How so? "It is not with the gift as it was with the trespass," Paul wrote. Adam was guilty of

that trespass, and he justly received an adverse sentence—he died. Yet, he was not the only one to die. We read: "By [that] one man's trespass many died." (Rom. 5:15, 16) The just sentence on Adam demanded the same for all his imperfect progeny, including us. Still, we can take comfort in knowing that the perfect man, Jesus, could produce an opposite result. What is the result? We see the answer in Paul's mention of "a declaring of [men of all kinds] righteous for life."—Rom. 5:18. *w11 6/15 2:5, 7, 8*

Tuesday, November 5

[Do not] pay attention to false stories . . . which furnish questions for research.—1 Tim. 1:4.

Paul's warning about "false stories" is part of his first letter to Timothy, a Christian overseer who was charged with preserving the purity of the congregation and helping fellow believers to remain faithful. (1 Tim. 1:18, 19) Here Paul uses a Greek word that can refer to fiction, myth, or falsehood. According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, this word refers to "a (religious) story that has no connection with reality." Perhaps Paul had in mind religious lies promoted by sensational tales or fanciful legends. Such stories only "furnish questions for research"—that is, raise frivolous questions that lead to pointless research. False stories are a ploy of the archdeceiver, Satan, who uses religious lies and godless myths to sidetrack unsuspecting ones. Paul's counsel is clear: Do not pay attention to false stories! *w11 7/15 2:9, 10*

Wednesday, November 6

If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man.

—Jas. 3:2.

Differences and misunderstandings between fellow believers are bound to arise. (Phil. 4: 2, 3) However, problems between individuals can be solved without disturbing the peace of the congregation. For example, if we realize that we may have offended someone, consider the counsel we should apply as recorded at Matthew 5:23, 24. What if we have been wronged in some small way? Should we expect the offender to come to us and apologize? “[Love] does not keep account of the injury,” states 1 Corinthians 13:5. When offended, we pursue peace by forgiving and forgetting, that is, by ‘not keeping account of the injury.’ (Col. 3:13) Minor transgressions in day-to-day life are best handled in this way, for this contributes to a peaceful relationship with fellow worshippers. A wise proverb states: “It is beauty . . . to pass over transgression.” —Prov. 19:11. *w11 8/15 4:4, 5*

Thursday, November 7

Keep on . . . seeking first [God's] righteousness.—Matt. 6:33.

This means putting Jehovah's standard of what is right and what is wrong ahead of human norms. (Isa. 55:8, 9) You may recall that in the past, a number of people were involved in growing tobacco or selling tobacco products, training others in warfare, or producing and selling weapons of war. After coming to a knowledge of the truth, most chose to change their employment and qualify for baptism. (Isa. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:14) Jesus told

his disciples: “If you have faith the size of a mustard grain, you will say to this mountain, ‘Transfer from here to there,’ and it will transfer, and nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matt. 17:20) Would you be able to put God's standards foremost if that would result in difficulties? If you are uncertain whether you could do so, speak with other members of the congregation. You will no doubt find it spiritually refreshing to hear their experiences. *w11 9/15 2:10, 12*

Friday, November 8

It is well for them that they remain even as I am.—1 Cor. 7:8.

Some assignments open to single pioneers might prove difficult for those who are married or who have children. Paul thought about the potential he observed for advancing the good news among the local congregations. He wanted all to have joy, as he did. For that reason, he spoke favorably of serving Jehovah as a single person. A single pioneer sister from the United States wrote: “Some people believe that happiness is unattainable for the unmarried. But I have seen that lasting happiness depends on a person's friendship with Jehovah. Singleness is an amazing gift if you take advantage of it. I know that Jehovah excludes no one, single or married, from his tender affections.” She now happily serves in a land where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers. If you are single, can you use your freedom to expand your share in teaching others the truth? You too may find singleness to be a priceless gift from Jehovah. *w11 10/15 2:5, 8, 9*

Saturday, November 9

I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law.—Rom. 7:23.

Paul was not indulging in self-justification or self-pity, as though he were so heavily laden with sin that he could not help himself. After all, he was a mature, spirit-anointed Christian, chosen to be “an apostle to the nations.” (Rom. 1:1; 11:13) Paul was honestly acknowledging that on his own, he was incapable of doing God’s will to the extent that he himself desired. The reason? “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” he said. (Rom. 3:23) As a descendant of Adam, Paul was subject to the effects of sin on the imperfect flesh. We can relate to him because all of us are imperfect and have to face similar struggles every day. Moreover, there are many distractions that could divert our attention and take us off ‘the cramped road leading into life.’ (Matt. 7:14) However, the situation was not hopeless for Paul, and it is not for us. *w11 11/15 2:3, 4*

Sunday, November 10

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Your spirit is good; may it lead me.—Ps. 143:10.

What is the true nature of holy spirit? A footnote at Genesis 1:2 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* states: “Besides being translated ‘spirit,’ *ru’ach* [Hebrew] is also translated ‘wind’ and by other words that denote an invisible active force.” (Compare footnotes at Genesis 3:8; 8:1.) Just as wind is invisible but

exerts force, so the immaterial, impersonal holy spirit is unseen but produces effects. This spirit is energy from God projected and exerted on people or things to accomplish his will. Can Jehovah continue to use his spirit to guide us through life? He promised the psalmist David: “I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go.” (Ps. 32:8) Did David want that? Yes, for he appealed to Jehovah using the words of today’s text. We should have the same desire and willingness to be guided by God’s spirit. *w11 12/15 2:5, 6*

Monday, November 11

They were forbidden by the holy spirit to speak the word in the district of Asia.—Acts 16:6.

Evidently Jesus—by means of God’s spirit—wanted to guide Paul and his companions in a different direction. Where did the eager travelers go? Verse 7 explains: “Further, when getting down to Mysia they made efforts to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus did not permit them.” Prevented from preaching in Asia, Paul and his companions turned northward, intending to preach in the cities of Bithynia. However, when they neared Bithynia, Jesus again used the holy spirit to block them. By then, the men must have been puzzled. They knew *what* to preach and *how* to preach, but they did not know *where* to preach. We might put it this way: They had knocked on the door leading to Asia—but in vain. They had knocked on the door leading to Bithynia—again in vain. Did they stop knocking? Not those zealous preachers! *w12 1/15 2:4-6*

Tuesday, November 12

[Jesus] continued the whole night in prayer.—Luke 6:12.

What can we learn from Jesus' example? That we must spend long hours in prayer? No, for he kindly acknowledged about his followers: "The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41) Nevertheless, we can imitate Jesus. For instance, do we consult our heavenly Father before making any decision that may affect us, our family, or our fellow believers spiritually? Do our prayers include concerns about our brothers and sisters in the faith? Do we pray from the heart rather than repeat a set form of expressions? Notice, too, that Jesus valued intimate, private talk with his Father. In today's busy, hectic world, it is all too easy to get so caught up in the rush of life that we forget what matters most. If we make ample time for in-depth, private prayer, we will be more spiritually alert. (Matt. 6:6, 7) We will draw closer to Jehovah, eager to strengthen our relationship with him.—Ps. 25:14. *w12 2/15 1:8, 9*

Wednesday, November 13

Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt.—Col. 4:6.

Do you like to be awakened from a deep sleep? Many do not react well when awakened suddenly. A gentle approach is usually preferred. The same is true regarding efforts to awaken people spiritually. For example, if a householder reacts angrily to your visit, what is usually the best response? Kindly acknowledge his feelings, thank him for

being frank, and calmly take your leave. (Prov. 15:1; 17:14; 2 Tim. 2:24) Your kindness may move such a person to react more positively the next time a Witness calls. In other cases, you may be able to overcome a negative reaction. Someone may say, "No thank you. I have my own religion" or, "I am not interested" merely because it seems the easiest way to end the conversation. Yet, with skill and kind persistence, you may be able to raise an intriguing question that awakens the household's interest in spiritual things. *w12 3/15 1:15, 16*

Thursday, November 14

*This is not the way among you.
—Mark 10:43.*

Today, brothers who are "reaching out for an office of overseer" do well to examine themselves as to why they are reaching out. (1 Tim. 3:1) Those who are now elders may want to ask themselves frankly whether they have a desire for authority or prominence as some of the apostles did. If the apostles had difficulty in this area, then elders can appreciate that they need to work hard to avoid any worldly tendency to enjoy having authority over others. Granted, there are times when the elders need to be firm, such as when protecting the flock from "oppressive wolves." (Acts 20:28-30) Paul told Titus to keep "exhorting and reproving with full authority." (Titus 2:15) Yet, even when having to take such action, the elders try to dignify the ones who are involved. They appreciate that rather than harsh criticism, gentle persuasion is usually more effective in reaching hearts and in moving someone to follow a right course. *w11 6/15 3:17-19*

Friday, November 15

Even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man.—Gal. 6:1.

It is not easy to accept counsel from an imperfect human, no matter how tactfully and lovingly the counsel is presented. Yet, if we respond favorably, we will become even more desirable in God's sight. Curiously, when we pray, we freely admit that we are imperfect. However, when someone draws a specific failing to our attention, the tendency is to try to justify ourselves, minimize the problem, question the motive of the counselor, or object to the way in which the counsel was delivered. (2 Ki. 5:11) And if the counsel touches a particularly sensitive area—the actions of a family member, our dress and grooming, our personal hygiene, or a form of recreation that we enjoy but that Jehovah hates—we might react quite negatively, to our own surprise and to our counselor's dismay! But after we calm down, we usually concede that the counsel was appropriate. *w11 7/15 4:5*

Saturday, November 16

Just as it occurred in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of man.

—Luke 17:26.

Jesus was referring to the people's way of life. (Matt. 24:37-39) The majority of the people in Noah's day did not show interest in God, let alone endeavor to please him. What had distracted them? Nothing extraordinary. Eating, drinking, and marrying—things that are normal aspects

of life. The real problem was that "they took no note," as Jesus said. Like Noah and his family, we have much to do every day. We need to make a living and to take care of ourselves and our family. That can occupy a large portion of our time, energy, and resources. We also share in the ministry, prepare for and attend Christian meetings, and keep spiritually strong by personal study and family worship. Surely, keeping the weight we have to carry to a minimum, as well as avoiding taking on any unnecessary burden, is vital if we are to run the Christian race to the finish. *w11 9/15 4:4, 5*

Sunday, November 17

As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing.

—1 Cor. 15:26.

Even if we ourselves should face death because of our firm stand as Christians, Jehovah can and will help us to maintain our integrity to him. Furthermore, we are comforted by the hope of the resurrection. God's loyal servants who have died, as well as others, are in Jehovah's infallible memory and will be resurrected. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Confidence in Jehovah's resurrection promise brings us comfort and a sure hope during times of persecution. How comforting it is to know that our loved ones now asleep in mankind's common grave have the prospect of resuming life in a wonderful new world free of all the present-day causes of distress! And what a privilege it will be for the "great crowd" of Jehovah's servants who survive the end of this wicked system of things to welcome and instruct those resurrected to life on earth! —Rev. 7:9, 10. *w11 10/15 3:16, 17*

Monday, November 18

Let those . . . making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full.—1 Cor. 7:29, 31.

Vigilant Christians refrain from using the world to the full with regard to higher education. Many people in this world consider higher education an indispensable stepping-stone to prestige and an affluent life. But we Christians live as temporary residents and pursue different goals. We avoid “minding lofty things.” (Rom. 12:16; Jer. 45:5) Since we are Jesus’ followers, we heed his warning: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15) Consequently, young Christians are encouraged to pursue spiritual goals, getting only as much education as is required to meet their basic needs while focusing on preparing themselves to serve Jehovah ‘with their whole heart, soul, strength, and mind.’ (Luke 10:27) Thus, they can become “rich toward God.”—Luke 12:21; Matt. 6:19-21. *w11 11/15 3:10, 11*

Tuesday, November 19

The copper altar that Bezalel . . . had made had been put before the tabernacle of Jehovah.—2 Chron. 1:5.

Unlike modern-day manufacturers, Bezalel and Oholiab had no interest in leaving their signature or trademark on their work. All credit went to Jehovah for their accomplishments. (Ex. 36:1, 2) Today, we may be faced with daunting tasks requiring special skills, such as building, printing, organizing conventions,

administering disaster relief, and communicating with doctors and hospital personnel about our Scriptural position on the use of blood. Often these deeds are carried out by volunteers without much background in a specific field. God’s spirit makes their efforts succeed. Have you held back from accepting an assignment in Jehovah’s service, feeling that others were more qualified than you? Remember, Jehovah’s spirit can enhance your knowledge and abilities and help you to fulfill any assignment he gives you. *w11 12/15 3:7, 8*

Wednesday, November 20

Jesus has become the one given in pledge of a better covenant.—Heb. 7:22.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul explained that the tabernacle was merely “a shadow of the heavenly things” and that Jesus became the Mediator of “a better covenant” than that mediated by Moses. (Heb. 8:1-5) In Paul’s day, such explanations of the Law were invaluable to Christians, and they still are. They help us to grasp more fully the value of the provisions that God has made for us. Writing to the Romans, Paul directed some of his comments to congregation members who were of Jewish stock and who had been instructed in the Mosaic Law. He acknowledged that such ones had the advantage of possessing a “framework of the knowledge and of the truth” concerning Jehovah and his righteous principles. A grasp of that ‘framework of truth’ and heartfelt respect for it enabled Jewish Christians to guide, teach, and illuminate those who were in ignorance of the Law.—Rom. 2:17-20. *w12 1/15 3:1, 2*

Thursday, November 21

Be courageous and very strong . . . Jehovah your God is with you.—Josh. 1:7-9.

We may think of a courageous person as one who is strong, valiant, even bold. At times, however, quiet courage is needed in order to pursue an upright course in daily life. Some people of Bible record were fearless under very trying conditions. For instance, it took courage to be a witness of Jehovah among wicked ones on earth before the Flood of Noah's day. Yet, Enoch, "the seventh one in line from Adam," boldly delivered this prophetic message: "Look! Jehovah came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him." (Jude 14, 15) Enoch spoke in the past tense because that prophecy was sure to be fulfilled. And ungodly humans did perish in a global deluge! *w12 2/15 2:1-3*

Friday, November 22

*Moses was by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground.
—Num. 12:3.*

There is no indication that Moses often questioned Jehovah's way of doing things or got annoyed at having to follow procedures that Jehovah set out. For example, Jehovah gave commands regarding the tabernacle construction down to the smallest detail, such as the color of the thread and the number of loops to

be used in making the tent cloths. (Ex. 26:1-6) Yet, when he gives many details, he does so for good reason. Take note, though, that Moses did not become irritated with Jehovah for giving that level of detail, as if Jehovah were demeaning him or stifling his creativity or freedom. Rather, Moses made sure that the workers "did just so" in following God's directions. (Ex. 39:32) What a humble course! Moses recognized that it was Jehovah's work and that he was just a tool being used to get that work done. *w11 9/15 5:13*

Saturday, November 23

There is eagerness on my part to declare the good news also to you.—Rom. 1:15.

A conscientious surgeon must give undivided attention to his work because lives are at stake. In our Christian ministry, we can demonstrate a sense of urgency by concentrating on our work, such as by thinking about what issues, questions, or information might interest the people we meet. A sense of urgency might also lead us to adjust our schedule so as to visit people when they are more disposed to receive us. (1 Tim. 4:16) Having a sense of urgency also involves setting priorities. (Gen. 19:15) For example, imagine that after getting your test results back, your doctor called you into his office and earnestly said to you: "Look! Your situation is urgent. You have at most a month to do something about your illness." You likely would not charge out of his office like a fireman on an emergency call. But you would probably get his recommendations, go home, and give serious thought to your priorities. *w12 3/15 2:7, 8*

Sunday, November 24

What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?

—Matt. 24:3.

Jesus treated his disciples as friends, not as inferiors. He spent time with them, took them into his confidence, and 'made known to them all the things he had heard from his Father.' (John 15: 15) Imagine how thrilled they were when Jesus answered their question concerning the end of this system of things. He also shared with his followers his private thoughts and feelings. Like Jesus, Christian elders today befriend and help others. They cultivate a warm, close relationship with their fellow believers by taking time to show personal interest in them. Elders trust their brothers and share with them Scriptural truths they themselves have learned. By no means do elders treat as inferior a ministerial servant who may be comparatively young. Instead, they think of him as a spiritual man with potential who is performing a valuable service in behalf of the congregation. *w11 11/15 5:4, 5*

Monday, November 25

Let anyone hearing say: "Come!" And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free.—Rev. 22:17.

Moved by God's spirit, Christians today extend Jehovah's life-giving invitation to "anyone that wishes" to accept life's water. Anointed Christians are taking the lead in doing this. Yet, those of the other sheep join in extending this invitation. Both classes

cooperate with the same holy spirit in accomplishing this work. Those of both classes have symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by being baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." (Matt. 28: 19) And all of them yield to the action of God's spirit in their lives, allowing it to produce in them its fruitage. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Like the anointed, the other sheep allow God's spirit to help them. With its help, they do their utmost to measure up to Jehovah's requirements of holiness.—2 Cor. 7:1; Rev. 7:9, 14. *w11 12/15 4:16*

Tuesday, November 26

The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ.—Gal. 3:24.

In the first century C.E., Jehovah revealed to his people that Jesus' ransom sacrifice had abolished the Mosaic Law. (Col. 2: 13, 14) All the sacrificial offerings that the Jews had been making for hundreds of years were no longer necessary and no longer had any value. The Law had fulfilled its function as a "tutor leading to Christ." That is not to say that Christians are no longer interested in sacrifices. On the contrary, the apostle Peter spoke of the need to "offer up *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5) Moreover, the apostle Paul had made it clear that a dedicated Christian's life—every aspect of it—may appropriately be considered "a sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1) So, then, a Christian makes sacrifices for Jehovah, either by offering up certain things to him or by giving up certain things for him. Our sacrifices, however, must be acceptable to Jehovah. *w12 1/15 4:1-3*

Wednesday, November 27

Work at good, . . . be liberal, ready to share.—1 Tim. 6:18.

Paul was recommending that his fellow worshippers cultivate the spirit of generosity. Even in difficult economic times, we can promote a generous spirit. A fine way to do this is to provide transportation in the field ministry and to and from the meetings for those needing it. And what about those who benefit from such acts of loving-kindness? They would be encouraging a positive spirit in the congregation if they showed appreciation, perhaps by offering what they can to help defray the increasingly high cost of fuel. Moreover, would not our arranging to spend more time with our spiritual brothers and sisters make them feel needed and loved? When we abound in good deeds “toward those related to us in the faith” and are ready to share our time and resources with them, we not only deepen our love for them but also help to build a warm and positive spirit in the congregation.—Gal. 6:10. *w12 2/15 3:6*

Thursday, November 28

Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these days?”

—Eccl. 7:10, “*New English Translation.*”

Do we have a distorted view of the good old days? Remember, our memory is not always reliable. We may unwittingly minimize the problems we had in the past and at the same time exaggerate the joys, making it seem that things were a lot better than they really were. This distorted recollection can cause us to

long for the good old days. Why is this type of thinking so dangerous? Consider what happened to the Israelites in Moses’ day while they were in the land of Egypt. The Egyptians “set over [the Israelites] chiefs of forced labor for the purpose of oppressing them in their burden-bearing.” (Ex. 1:11; 3:7) Unbelievably, though, within a short time of their miraculous deliverance, these same people began to grumble and murmur. (Num. 11:5, 6) Yes, their viewpoint had become distorted—so much so that they even wanted to return to the land of their slavery!—Num. 14:2-4. *w12 3/15 4:6, 7, 9*

Friday, November 29

Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed your very hands have become filled. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of your dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad.—Isa. 1:15, 16.

Jehovah took no pleasure in sacrifices offered by unrepentant sinners. However, the prayers and offerings of those sincerely striving to live in harmony with God’s commands were acceptable to him. The framework of the Law taught such individuals that they were sinful and in need of forgiveness. (Gal. 3:19) That realization appropriately produced a contrite heart. Similarly today, we need to recognize our need for Christ’s sacrifice, which is truly capable of atoning for sins. If we understand and appreciate this, then Jehovah will be “delighted” with all that we offer him in our dedicated service.—Ps. 51:17, 19. *w12 1/15 3:15, 16*

Saturday, November 30

You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with them according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one.

—1 Pet. 3:7.

The apostle Peter provided inspired counsel for Christian wives living in religiously divided households. "Be in subjection to your own husbands," he wrote, "in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through

the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect." (1 Pet. 3: 1, 2) A wife may be able to win her husband over to true worship by being in subjection and showing deep respect for him, even if he treats her harshly. Likewise, a believing husband should conduct himself in a godly way and be a loving head of the household despite any opposition he may encounter from his unbelieving wife.—1 Pet. 3:8, 9. *w12 2/15 4:10*

Sunday, December 1

Entreat . . . older women as mothers, younger women as sisters.—1 Tim. 5:1, 2.

Job's example of dignifying women, especially his marriage mate, is worthy of imitation. He made a conscious effort to keep from gazing lustfully at another woman. (Job 31:1) Taking our brothers and sisters seriously would rule out flirting with them or doing anything that would make a brother or a sister feel uncomfortable around us. Dignifying others is especially important when two people are pursuing a romantic relationship with marriage in mind. A serious Christian would never toy with another's emotions. (Prov. 12:22) We also need to be careful to maintain a serious view of our God-given roles in the family. The entertainment industry takes pleasure in reducing the family head to a mere subject of ridicule and disrespect. However, the Scriptures place a great deal of responsibility on the husband, assigning him as "head of his wife."—Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3. *w11 4/15 1:15, 16*

Monday, December 2

Let wives be in subjection to their husbands.—Eph. 5:22.

An exemplary wife works for the good of her household. (Prov. 14:1) In contrast with a foolish woman, who shows disrespect for the headship arrangement, a wise woman has deep respect for this provision. Rather than manifesting the world's attitude of disobedience and independence, she is in submission to her mate. (Eph. 2:2) A wife who is foolish does not hesitate to speak unfavorably of her husband, whereas a wise woman works to increase the respect that her children and others have for him. Such a wife is careful not to undermine her husband's headship by nagging him or arguing with him. There is also the matter of being economical. A foolish woman likely squanders her family's hard-earned resources. A supportive wife cooperates with her husband in financial matters. Her way of doing things is marked by prudence and economy. She does not pressure her husband to work overtime. *w11 5/15 1:10, 11*

Tuesday, December 3

All those who sinned under law will be judged by law.

—Rom. 2:12.

Paul pointed out that people of nations or ethnic groups unacquainted with the divine code of laws that were given to Israel often “do by nature the things of the law.” Why do such ones commonly forbid incest, murder, and stealing? Paul identified the reason: They have a conscience. (Rom. 2:14, 15) Nonetheless, you have likely seen that having a conscience that functions like an inner witness bearer does not mean that a person will follow its guidance. The case of ancient Israel shows that. Though the Israelites had both a God-given conscience and specific laws from God against stealing and adultery, they often violated both their conscience and Jehovah’s Law. (Rom. 2:21-23) They were doubly culpable and thus certainly were sinners, falling short of God’s standards and will. This seriously marred their relationship with their Maker.—Lev. 19:11; 20:10; Rom. 3:20. *w11 6/15 1:15, 16*

Wednesday, December 4

Godliness with contentment is great gain.—1 Tim. 6:6, “New International Version.”

That is the very opposite of the viewpoint of people in today’s world. For example, when young people get married, many of them expect to ‘have it all’ right away—a house or an apartment fully furnished and well-equipped, a nice car, and the latest electronic devices. However, Christians who live as temporary residents do not let their desires

go beyond what is reasonable and possible for them. Indeed, it is commendable that many forgo certain material comforts in order to devote more time and energy to Jehovah’s service as zealous Kingdom publishers. Others serve as pioneers, at Bethel, in the traveling work, or as missionaries. Our living contentedly as temporary residents in this system of things enables us to keep our eye “simple,” or “in focus,” looking “all one way” toward God’s Kingdom and keeping its interests first in our lives.—Matt. 6:22, ftn. *w11 11/15 3:13, 14*

Thursday, December 5

They will not put up with the healthful teaching.—2 Tim. 4:3.

The apostle Paul foretold that after the death of the apostles, the Christian faith would be contaminated by false teachings. (2 Thess. 2:3, 7) Among those who would not put up with “the healthful teaching” were some in responsible positions. Paul warned elders in his day: “From among *you yourselves* men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30) *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* describes one major factor that led to twisted reasoning: “Christians who had some training in Greek philosophy began to feel the need to express their faith in its terms, both for their own intellectual satisfaction and in order to convert educated pagans.” An important doctrine that was given a pagan twist had to do with the identity of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls him the Son of God; the lovers of Greek philosophy insisted that he is God. *w12 1/15 1:9*

Friday, December 6

[Rahab] took the two men and concealed them.—Josh. 2:4.

Through the centuries, many courageous women have taken their stand as valiant worshippers of Jehovah. For instance, the prostitute Rahab of Jericho exercised faith in God, courageously concealing two spies sent out by Joshua, and then misdirecting the henchmen of that city's king. She and her household were preserved when the Israelites took Jericho. (Josh. 2:1-6; 6:22, 23) Canaanite King Jabin had oppressed the Israelites for 20 years when God had the prophetess Deborah motivate Judge Barak to take action. Defeated, Jabin's military chief Sisera sought refuge in the tent of Jael, but she killed him while he slept. In line with Deborah's prophetic words to Barak, "the beautifying thing" of this victory went to the woman Jael. Because Deborah, Barak, and Jael acted courageously, Israel "had no further disturbance for forty years." (Judg. 4:1-9, 14-22; 5:20, 21, 31) Many godly men and women have displayed similar faith and courage. *w12 2/15 2:8, 9*

Saturday, December 7

God anointed him with holy spirit and power.—Acts 10:38.

That anointing commissioned Jesus as High Priest for believing ones of the entire human family and as their future King. (Heb. 1:8, 9; 5:5, 6) As High Priest, what sacrifice could Jesus offer that would completely cover the inherited sin of believing ones? As he indicated when instituting the Memorial of his death, his own perfect human life was the sac-

rifice. (Heb. 9:11, 12) From the time of his baptism in 29 C.E., Jesus as High Priest submitted to tests and training until the time of his actual death. (Heb. 4:15; 5:7-10) After he was resurrected, he ascended to heaven and presented the value of his sacrifice to Jehovah himself. (Heb. 9:24) Thereafter, Jesus could plead with Jehovah on behalf of those exercising faith in his sacrifice and assist them to serve God with everlasting life in view. (Heb. 7:25) His sacrifice also served to validate the new covenant.—Heb. 8:6; 9:15. *w12 1/15 5:11, 12*

Sunday, December 8

They spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house.—Acts 16:32.

Naturally, we would like to help our relatives to accept the good news. (Josh. 2:13; Acts 10:24, 48; 16:31) If our initial effort is rebuffed, that could dampen our enthusiasm for trying again. We might imagine that there is little we can do or say that will change their attitude. Still, events may cause a change in your relatives' life or viewpoint. Or you may have improved in your ability to explain the truth, so that you might now have a different result. We should avoid being insensitive to our relatives' feelings. (Rom. 2:4) Should we not speak as kindly and respectfully to them as we do to those we meet in the preaching work? Without being preachy, give evidence of how the truth has affected you for the good. (Eph. 4:23, 24) Make plain how Jehovah has enriched your life, "teaching you to benefit yourself." (Isa. 48:17) Let your relatives see in you an example of Christian living. *w12 3/15 1:19, 20*

Monday, December 9

Think so as to have a sound mind.

—Rom. 12:3.

Referring to an elder, one brother stated, “He expects much from himself but never expects perfection from others.” Can that be said of you? It is proper to have some reasonable expectations of others. For example, children respond well when parents set reasonable goals and help the children to reach them. Similarly, elders may encourage individuals in the congregation to grow spiritually and offer them specific suggestions on how to do so. Furthermore, when an elder has a balanced view of himself, he will have a warm and refreshing manner. One sister said: “I don’t want an elder to take everything as a joke. But if he is serious all the time, it is difficult to approach him.” Never would elders want to diminish the joyful view that all believers should have of their worship of Jehovah, “the happy God.”—1 Tim. 1:11. *w11 4/15 1:10*

Tuesday, December 10

Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it.

—Gen. 1:28.

Was that stated purpose foiled by the rebellion in the garden of Eden? Absolutely not! Jehovah immediately reacted to that new situation by using an alternate “route” to achieve his purpose. He foretold the appearance of a “seed” who would undo the damage done by the rebels. (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14-17; 1 John 3:8) Jehovah’s ability to adapt to new circumstances while in the process of bringing his purpose to completion is in harmony with

a description he gave of himself. When Moses presented Jehovah with potential impediments to the assignment he had been given, Jehovah assured him by saying: “‘I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.’ And he added: ‘This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, “I shall prove to be has sent me to you.”’” (Ex. 3:14) Yes, Jehovah is able to become whatever he needs to become in order to accomplish his purpose fully! *w11 5/15 4:6, 7*

Wednesday, December 11

His heart did not prove to be complete with Jehovah.

—1 Ki. 11:4.

Will we let Solomon’s course be a warning example for us? (1 Ki. 11:1-6) A sister might attempt to rationalize forming a romantic link that ignores God’s directive to marry “only in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 7:39) With similar rationalizing, one might share in extracurricular sports or clubs at school, underreport taxable income, or tell untruths when asked to reveal actions that could be embarrassing. The point is, Solomon must have used imperfect reasoning to get around what God commanded, and that same danger exists for us. Solomon had ignored God’s instructions, yet there is no indication that Jehovah quickly rejected him as king or strongly disciplined him. The Bible even relates that God granted his request for wisdom, and He also added riches. (1 Ki. 3:10-13) That accords with the fact that God realizes that we are imperfect humans, made from dust. (Ps. 103:10, 13, 14) Remember though: Our actions can have consequences now or perhaps down the line. *w11 12/15 1:10, 14, 15*

Thursday, December 12

The law of that spirit which gives life . . . has set you free.

—Rom. 8:2.

The word “law” here does not refer to certain rules, such as those in the Mosaic Law. One reference work suggests: “The Greek term for *law* here means an inward principle of action—either good or evil—operating with the regularity of a law. The term also designates a standard for a person’s life.” The Mosaic Law, with its many commandments, condemned sinners. Moreover, Israel’s high priests serving under the Law were imperfect and could not offer an adequate sacrifice for sin. Hence, the Law was “weak through the flesh.” But “by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” and offering him as a ransom, God overcame the “incapability on the part of the Law.” As a result, anointed Christians are counted righteous on the basis of their faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. They are urged to “walk, not in accord with the flesh, but in accord with the spirit.”—Rom. 8:3, 4. *w11 11/15 2:8, 9*

Friday, December 13

Let both grow together until the harvest.—Matt. 13:30.

In a parable, Jesus indicated that from the first century onward, there would always be some genuine anointed Christians on the earth. He compared them to “wheat” growing among “weeds.” Of course, we cannot say for certain who they were, but we can confirm that there have always been some who have courageously defended God’s Word and exposed the church’s unscriptural teachings. For example, Arch-

bishop Agobard of Lyons, France (779–840 C.E.), spoke out against image worship, churches dedicated to saints, and the church’s unscriptural liturgies and practices. Bishop Claudius, a contemporary of his, also rejected church tradition and objected to prayers to saints and the veneration of relics. In the 11th century, Archdeacon Berengarius of Tours, France, was excommunicated for rejecting the Catholic teaching of transubstantiation. Moreover, he held that the Bible is superior to church tradition. *w12 1/15 1:14, 15*

Saturday, December 14

I must declare the good news of the kingdom.—Luke 4:43.

Was Jesus so focused on his work that he was a fanatic or an ascetic? Was he so absorbed in his ministry that he was aloof from the practical needs of families? No, Jesus set a perfect example of balance. He enjoyed life, taking pleasure in happy times with his friends. He valued families, showing profound empathy for their needs and problems, and he freely showed his affection for children. (Mark 10:13–16) As we imitate Jesus’ example of watchfulness, we do not let this world distract us from our work. Even well-meaning friends and relatives may urge us to slow down in our ministry or to seek what they see as a normal life. If we imitate Jesus, however, we view our ministry as if it were food. (John 4:34) Our work nourishes us spiritually and brings us delight as well. Yet, we never want to be extremists, displaying a self-righteous or ascetic spirit. Like Jesus, we want to be joyful, balanced servants of “the happy God.”—1 Tim. 1:11. *w12 2/15 1:11–13*

Sunday, December 15

Preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season, reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching.

—2 Tim. 4:2.

The call to ‘be at our ministry urgently’ is not intended to *overwhelm* us with our commission. Nevertheless, the preaching work should take priority in our lives. The example of a small group of Bible Students who prior to 1914 set out to preach the good news illustrates what it means to have a sense of urgency. Although they were only a few thousand strong, they appreciated the urgency of the times and enthusiastically took up the Kingdom preaching work. They had sermons published in hundreds of newspapers and presented a program of color slides and motion pictures called the “Photo-Drama of Creation.” In this way, they reached millions with the good news. If they had not had a sense of urgency, how many of us would have heard the Kingdom message?—Ps. 119: 60. *w12 3/15 2:9, 10*

Monday, December 16

O Lord, I am conscious that a man's way is not in himself: man has no power of guiding his steps.—Jer. 10:23, “The Bible in Basic English.”

Would it not be foolhardy for an inexperienced person to set off alone, without a skilled guide and not so much as a compass, hiking deep into an uncharted wilderness? Not knowing how to survive inhospitable conditions in the wild and not having the expertise to find his way safely to

his destination, he would be putting his life in jeopardy. So, too, the person who thinks he can direct his course through this wicked world without allowing God to show him the right way is placing his life in grave danger. The only chance we have of traversing this system of things successfully is to make the same prayerful request to Jehovah that David did: “Let my steps take hold on your tracks, in which my footsteps will certainly not be made to totter.” —Ps. 17:5; 23:3. *w11 12/15 2:7, 8*

Tuesday, December 17

We sought to go forth into Macedonia, drawing the conclusion that God had summoned us to declare the good news to them.

—Acts 16:10.

You may have been thinking about serving as a pioneer or moving to an area where the need is greater. But it may be only *after* you take steps to reach your goal that Jesus, by means of God’s spirit, will guide you. To illustrate: A driver can direct his car to turn left or right but only if the car is moving. Likewise, Jesus may direct us in expanding our ministry but only if we are moving—if we are putting forth effort to reach our goal. What, though, if your efforts do not bear fruit right away? Should you give up, concluding that God’s spirit is not guiding you? Well, remember that Paul too encountered setbacks. Yet, he kept on searching and knocking until he found a door that opened. Similarly, if you persevere in searching for “a large door that leads to activity,” you too may be rewarded.—1 Cor. 16:9. *w12 1/15 2:4, 8, 9*

Wednesday, December 18

No man that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God.—Luke 9:62.

That is how Jesus answered a man who had asked if he could return to his family to say good-bye before becoming a disciple. Was Jesus being harsh or unreasonable in answering this way? No, for he knew that the man's request was merely an excuse to evade responsibility. Jesus described such procrastination as looking at "the things behind." Does it matter whether the person plowing looks momentarily at what is behind or actually puts down the plow and turns around? Either way he is distracted from what he should be doing, and his work may be affected negatively. Rather than turning our attention to the past, we must keep our eyes focused on what is yet ahead. Notice how this is clearly expressed at Proverbs 4:25: "As for your eyes, straight ahead they should look, yes, your own beaming eyes should gaze straight in front of you." *w12 3/15 4:3, 4*

Thursday, December 19

I will laud you in the big congregation.—Ps. 35:18.

The psalmist did not hold back from praising Jehovah when he was with other servants of God. Weekly congregation meetings, including the *Watchtower* Study, present fine opportunities for us to display a zealous spirit when we comment and make expressions of faith. All of us may well ask ourselves: 'Am I taking full advantage of the privilege to participate in meetings? Do I pre-

pare well for them and make meaningful comments? As a family head, do I help my children to prepare comments in advance and teach them to answer in their own words?' The psalmist David associated the steadfastness of our heart with our singing. (Ps. 57:7) The songs used at Christian meetings provide us a fine opportunity to "sing and make melody" to Jehovah with a steadfast heart. May we be determined to 'sing to Jehovah throughout our life and make melody to him as long as we are.'—Ps. 104:33. *w12 2/15 3:3, 4*

Friday, December 20

Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.—Josh. 1:9.

Shortly after the Exodus, the Amalekites launched an unprovoked attack on God's people. Although totally unaccustomed to war, the Israelites had to engage in their first military action as a freed people. (Ex. 13:17; 17:8) Jehovah directed that Joshua lead the force that would vanquish the enemy. With Joshua's implicit obedience and his keen appreciation for the guidance of God's holy spirit, Israel proved victorious. (Ex. 17:9-13) Later Joshua, "full of the spirit of wisdom," succeeded Moses. (Deut. 34:9) Holy spirit did not produce in him the ability to prophesy or to perform miracles as it had in Moses, but it did enable Joshua to lead Israel in the military campaign that brought about the conquest of Canaan. Today, we may feel inexperienced or underqualified to carry out certain aspects of our sacred service. Yet, like Joshua, we are assured of success if we adhere closely to divine instruction.—Josh. 1:7-9. *w11 12/15 3: 9-11*

Saturday, December 21

The Law has a shadow of the good things to come.

—Heb. 10:1.

It could hardly have been lost on the ancient Jews that many aspects of the Mosaic Law emphasized their sinfulness. For example, anyone who touched a human corpse was required to undergo purification. To this end, a sound red cow was slaughtered and burned. Its ashes were kept to make “water for cleansing,” which was sprinkled on the person being purified on the third and the seventh day after contamination. (Num. 19:1-13) And as a reminder that human reproduction transmitted imperfection and sin, a woman who gave birth was required to observe a period of uncleanness, after which she was to make atonement by means of a sacrifice. (Lev. 12:1-8) Animal sacrifices were required in many other situations of everyday life to atone for sins. Whether the worshipper realized it or not, these sacrifices—and those later offered at Jehovah’s temple—were “a shadow” of Jesus’ perfect sacrifice.—Heb. 10:1-10. w12 1/15 3:4, 5

Sunday, December 22

Keep on the watch with me.

—Matt. 26:38.

Jesus wants us to remain watchful because of what we do not know and what we do know. When Jesus was a man on earth, did he know all that the future held? No, for he humbly acknowledged: “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matt. 24:36) At that time, Jesus, “the Son,”

did not know exactly when the end of this wicked world would come. What about us today? Is our knowledge of the future limited? Of course it is! We do not know just when Jehovah will send forth his Son to put an end to this wicked system of things. If we did, would we really need to keep on the watch? As Jesus explained, the end will come suddenly, unexpectedly; so we need to keep ever watchful. (Matt. 24:43) And, thanks to Jesus, we do know a great deal about God’s Kingdom and what it will accomplish in the near future. w12 2/15 1:3-5

Monday, December 23

If these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful.—2 Pet. 1:8.

The limited number of Christians chosen by Jehovah to be associated with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom government undergo “a new birth” as spirit-begotten sons of God. They are anointed with holy spirit to become kings and priests with Christ. (Rev. 20:6) Peter states that this “new birth” opens up to them “a living hope,” which he calls “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance” reserved for them “in the heavens.” Small wonder that the anointed ‘greatly rejoice’ in their living hope! (1 Pet. 1:3-6) The realization of that hope, however, depends on their faithfulness. Peter exhorted anointed Christians to ‘do their utmost to make their calling and choosing of themselves sure.’ (2 Pet. 1:10) They must exert themselves to develop such qualities as faith, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love. w12 3/15 3:4, 5

Tuesday, December 24

Keep on asking, and it will be given you.—Luke 11:9.

Your continued preaching of the good news of the Kingdom may draw ridicule. But remember that “if you are being reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy, because the spirit of glory, even the spirit of God, is resting upon you.” (1 Pet. 4:14) Holy spirit is God’s free gift to those who sincerely seek it. It can enhance not only your abilities but also your desire to do your best in his service. “God is the one that, for the sake of his good pleasure, is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act.” The precious gift of holy spirit, coupled with our earnest efforts to keep “a tight grip on the word of life,” will allow us to “keep working out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12, 13, 16) With complete confidence in God’s spirit, then, pour your heart into every assignment, become skilled at what you are given to do, and look to Jehovah for assistance.—Jas. 1:5. *w11 12/15 4:17-19*

Wednesday, December 25

Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.—Col. 3:23.

If you have dedicated your life to Jehovah or hope to do so in the near future, then the spirit with which you approach mundane activities is important. We are Christians 24 hours a day. Scriptural principles need to be applied in every aspect of our lives. A Christian’s day-to-day activities are not part of his sacred service. Yet, the fact that Paul urges us to work “whole-souled as

to Jehovah” makes us think about our entire course of life. So how might we apply this to ourselves? Do we act and dress with proper decorum at all times? Or while engaging in day-to-day activities, might we be embarrassed to identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses, either because of the way we behave or because of the way we dress? Never may that be! Jehovah’s people would not want to do anything that might reflect badly on God’s name.—Isa. 43:10; 2 Cor. 6:3, 4, 9. *w12 1/15 4:4, 5*

Thursday, December 26

By faith Moses . . . refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh.—Heb. 11:24.

Moses had exemplary faith and courage. He and his brother, Aaron, repeatedly appeared before tyrannical Pharaoh of Egypt and courageously announced the Ten Plagues by which Jehovah disgraced Egyptian gods and delivered His people. (Ex., chaps. 7-12) Moses displayed faith and courage because he had God’s unfailing support, even as we do. (Deut. 33:27) We need courage like that of Moses, for Jesus said: “You will be haled before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations. However, when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you are to speak; for what you are to speak will be given you in that hour; for the ones speaking are not just you, but it is the spirit of your Father that speaks by you.” (Matt. 10:18-20) If we are interrogated by secular authorities, Jehovah’s spirit will enable us to bear witness respectfully with faith and courage.—Luke 12:11, 12. *w12 2/15 2:5, 6*

Friday, December 27

Demas has forsaken me.

—2 Tim. 4:10.

Satan's system is designed to get us absorbed in personal pursuits and side issues. (1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 2:15-17) Some who at one time gave priority to Jehovah's service lost their sense of urgency. For instance, the first-century Christian named Demas had been a 'fellow worker' with Paul, but Demas became distracted by the ungodly system of things. Instead of continuing to give priority to strengthening his brother in a time of trouble, Demas abandoned Paul. (Philem. 23, 24) If we are to maintain our sense of urgency, we need to fight the urge to enjoy more of what life offers. We ought to work at getting "a firm hold on the real life." (1 Tim. 6:18, 19) You likely have no doubt that everlasting life on earth under God's Kingdom will provide endless opportunities to enjoy interesting activities. But for now, the opportunity to help others to survive Armageddon is unique to our time. *w12 3/15 2: 11, 12*

Saturday, December 28

You will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

—Ex. 19:5, 6.

As part of his covenant with Abraham, Jehovah had promised: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves." (Gen. 22:18) The Law covenant was a further development of this promise. On the basis of it, Israel could be-

come Jehovah's "special property out of all other peoples." For what purpose? To 'become to Jehovah a kingdom of priests.' The Israelites were familiar with kings and priests, but Melchizedek was the only man of the past who had held both offices at the same time with Jehovah's approval. (Gen. 14:18) Jehovah now offered to the nation the opportunity of producing "a kingdom of priests." As inspired writings later indicated, this meant the opportunity to furnish a royal priesthood, kings who would also be priests.—1 Pet. 2:9. *w12 1/15 5:5-7*

Sunday, December 29

My instruction will drip . . . as gentle rains upon grass.

—Deut. 32:2.

The apostle Paul advises Christians not to leave a marriage partner just because that individual is an unbeliever. (1 Cor. 7:12-16) Keeping in mind the possibility that an unbelieving marriage mate may become a Christian can help a believer to maintain his or her happiness although living in a divided household. In trying to reach the unbeliever with the message of the truth, though, a certain caution is in order. A Bible student may expect unbelieving family members to accept the Kingdom message immediately, but the good news could be met with an adverse response. If you are presently conducting a Bible study with a student whose mate has no desire to take part in true worship, why not hold regular practice sessions to help the student to approach issues tactfully? A few well-placed droplets of truth will often do more good than a spiritual downpour would. *w12 2/15 4:8, 9*

Monday, December 30

These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.—2 Thess. 1:9.

We understand from God's Word that those who are judged as "goats" will go "into everlasting cutting-off." Our preaching expresses God's mercy, opening the way for people to change and to get "everlasting life." (Matt. 25:32, 41, 46; Rom. 10:13-15) If we did not preach, how would people have the opportunity to hear the message that can mean life? Preaching the good news also benefits us. (1 Tim. 4:16) Have you not found that speaking about Jehovah and the Kingdom hope strengthens your faith and your love for God? Has it not helped you to develop Christian qualities? Does not expressing your devotion to God by sharing in the ministry contribute to your happiness? Many who have been privileged to teach the truth to others have had the joy of seeing God's spirit help such ones to improve their way of life. *w12* 3/15 1:8, 9

Tuesday, December 31

There exists a friend sticking closer than a brother.
—Prov. 18:24.

True friends keep personal matters confidential. When our brothers reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings to us and are sure that these will not become public knowledge, the bond of love that may already exist will grow stronger. May we promote a loving, familylike spirit in the congregation by being a trustworthy friend who can keep things confidential. (Prov. 20:19) How wrong and hurtful it is to spread confidential information about someone! Even so, when serious sin has been committed, those Scripturally obligated to handle the matter—the elders in the congregation—should be informed. (Lev. 5:1) So if we know that a brother or a sister has fallen into such wrongdoing, we should encourage that one to approach the elders and seek their help. (Jas. 5:13-15) If he or she does not do so within a reasonable period of time, though, we should report the wrongdoing. *w12* 2/15 3:7, 15