“Declare The Good News Regional Convention (2024)”
Full Transcript

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1. Music Video

Our convention now begins with a music video presentation. The video highlights our joy in gathering for worship and in declaring the good news of the kingdom. Please enjoy the video.

2. Introduction

Welcome to the opening session of this Declare the Good News Regional Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. Today's scripture theme is taken from Luke 2:10, where we read of an angel declaring good news of great joy that all the people will have. Today's program will deepen our appreciation for that grand announcement.

Please note that the entire program is being broadcast in English on FM frequency 95.9. Additionally, for those who would benefit from the audio descriptions of the videos, the program, including audio descriptions, is being broadcast in English on FM frequency 72.1. You must use an FM radio to receive these broadcasts. They cannot be received by internet audio radio apps on mobile devices. If you have a cellular telephone or other electronic device with you, please adjust it to a setting that will not disturb others. Any recordings of this program should be for your personal use or for the benefit of those unable to attend a convention this year. Recordings should not be made available for general circulation or distribution.

At this time, please take note of the nearest exit. In the event of an emergency, please follow the direction of the attendants.
2.1. Song 150

(12:41) Now we invite you to stand as we sing together song number 150, entitled "Seek God for Your Deliverance." After the song, Brother Joel Kostacek will offer the opening prayer. Again, that's song number 150.

3. Chairmans Address: Why Do We Need Good News?

(15:02) What is the good news that our convention theme invites us to declare? How will this convention strengthen our faith in the good news and equip us to share it with others? Please pay careful attention to our convention chairman, Brother Lemuel Lacy, as he presents the talk, Why Do We Need Good News? Brother Lacy.

It is a pleasure. It is indeed an honor to be able to welcome all, to our 2024 Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. This convention has the theme, Declare the Good News. Now, when you first heard that theme, perhaps you heard the theme months ago, when it was originally announced to the public, or maybe you heard that theme days ago, when you personally received a invitation. But I'm sure you would agree that, whether you heard the theme sometime ago, or whether the theme is new to you, you would agree that mankind in general needs good news. Mankind desperately needs good news, because bad news is always around us. It comes at us from every corner.

3.1. No news is good news

In fact, do you know that bad news has been around so long, and there has been so much of it, that there was even a phrase that
was developed concerning bad news. And this phrase, some history books tells us, was developed centuries ago. Maybe you've heard it before, or maybe you've said it before. The phrase is this, "No news is good news." Have you ever heard of that? Well, you know, some history books tells us that that phrase developed centuries ago. And the reason it developed, some history books will tell us, is because years ago, you see, people could not access news as easily as we can today. So in other words, they couldn't simply go and turn on the television and be privy to the evening news. They couldn't just go and purchase a newspaper and have the local news. They couldn't just access the internet and have world news at their fingertips. So the way news was dispensed, it was dispensed by means of couriers, or it was dispensed by means of sending letters, or even dispensed by word of mouth. So in dispensing news, it took effort, it took sacrifice, and even expense on occasion.

So individuals felt, as the history books tell us, that if they're going to expend the effort, if they're going to make the sacrifice to deliver news, they would gather as much news as possible to deliver it at one time, and the news that was available was only bad all the time. So whenever the couriers came, whenever the letters came, it was bad news. So individuals felt, well, if you don't get any news, then it must be good news. No news is good news. They felt that the good news was not worth the effort, the sacrifice to declare.

3.2. Jehovah’s view of good news

Now, that is not the way our heavenly Father feels about good news. In fact, you know that phrase, good news, those two words, good news, that phrase is mentioned over 140 times in Scripture? Jehovah feels very strongly about declaring the good news. In fact,
let's do this. Let's open our Bibles, please, and look at one area where this particular phrase is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9. And here we see the Apostle Paul mentioning this phrase, the good news. And as we read the verses, see if you can pick up on the emotion of the Apostle Paul.

### 3.2.1. Necessity of declaring good news - 1 Cor 9:16

See if you can decipher the feelings of the Apostle Paul as we read 1 Corinthians 9:16. It says here, "Now, if I am declaring the good news, it is no reason for me to boast, for necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe to me if I did not declare the good news." Now, when you read words like this from the Apostle Paul, he says things like, "Necessity is laid upon me to declare the good news." He says things like, "Woe to me if I did not declare the good news."

Do you get the sense that the Apostle Paul was willing to make the sacrifice to declare the good news? Do you get the sense that the Apostle Paul was willing to put forth effort to declare the good news? Do you get the sense that the Apostle Paul felt the good news was definitely worth declaring? Absolutely. Thus, the wonderful title we have for this convention, the wonderful theme, "Declare the Good News." Now, if individuals needed good news back in the Apostle Paul's day, do you think good news is needed, especially today? With so many things that individuals are going through, so many injustices that the world of mankind see, there's violence, there's war that individuals have to live through, there are natural disasters, there's sickness, there's ailments, there's pestilence, and there's death that individuals have to contend with. Do you think with all of those things that the good news is needed? Absolutely.
Well, what is this good news that we've been talking about for just a few minutes? Well, as we mentioned, that phrase good news is mentioned numerous times throughout the Bible. Let's see what the prophet Isaiah had to say with regard to the good news. And as we read his description of the good news, see if you can determine how much this good news is worth declaring.

3.2.2. Good news of peace - Isa 52:7

Let's go to Isaiah 52, and let's read together verse seven, and let's read of the description that the prophet Isaiah gave to the good news. Isaiah 52.7 says this, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, the one proclaiming peace, the one bringing good news of something better, the one proclaiming salvation, the one saying to Zion, 'Your God has become king.'" How precious. When you read the words of Isaiah, when you read words such as the good news of peace, when you read words such as the one proclaiming salvation, the good news of something better, the one saying that God has become king, is this not good news? Can't you see why the apostle really preached so enthusiastically? He wanted everyone to know that there is something better, and that's the same way Jehovah's Witnesses feel. We want everyone to know that there is something better. We want everyone to know that Jehovah does care about them, that the things that they contend with, the stresses, the anxieties, the frustrations, won't always be, that there will be peace.

3.2.3. Good news from the happy God

So this good news is definitely worth declaring. Now, the Bible helps us to see that the good news doesn't come from human origin. The good news comes from God. In fact, the Bible says that it is the good news of the happy God. So of course, Jehovah is the
originator of this good news, and that's exactly what our convention will discuss over the next three days, the good news that we, of course, look forward to declaring.

### 3.3. Review of daily themes

Well, how will the convention help us to do that? We invite you, please, to take out your programs, if you have them, either electronically or if you have a paper program, and let's take a look at the theme of today and the theme over the next several days.

#### 3.3.1. Day 1 - Good news of a great joy - Luke 2:10

Now, if you look at the program, here you'll find that the theme for today is good news of a great joy that all the people will have, and this particular theme is based off of Luke 2:10, and these words were announced when Jesus was born, and of course, Jesus would become the ruler that God's people had long been waiting for, and that was indeed good news. Let's see how the program today highlights that fact.

#### 3.3.2. Day 2 - Good news of salvation - Ps 96:2

Now, moving on to tomorrow's theme, tomorrow's theme, as you see in your program, is proclaim the good news of his salvation day after day, and it's based off of the scripture at Psalm 96:2, and this verse reminds us that when we preach the good news, we're sharing a message of salvation that if individuals accept, can lead to their everlasting life. Now, how precious is that? Wouldn't you say that that good news is worth declaring?

#### 3.3.3. Day 3 - “And then the end will come” - Matt 24:14

Let's move on to our final day's theme. The final day's theme, you see right there in your program, is and then the end will come, and
this is based off of the verse at Matthew 24, verse 14, and here, Jesus promised that after the good news would be thoroughly preached, that all of the bad things happening to mankind would indeed finally end, and this good news, as we mentioned, is the good news of the happy God, but as we search the scriptures and look at the good news, we find that this good news is centered, it is centered on Jesus Christ. He is the King of God's kingdom. He is the means by which Jehovah will cause all of his promises to be fulfilled, so it is certainly good news.

3.3.4. Good news according to Jesus - 1st episode

Now, at this point, we must just take a moment to talk about a special feature of our convention. After waiting nearly four years since it was announced, at this convention, we will have the privilege of seeing the first episode of the new series entitled "The Good News According to Jesus." (audience applauding) Now, this particular series is an 18-episode, epic portrayal of Jesus' life and his teachings. It shows all of the events in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the order that these particular events happened, and this series will definitely touch our hearts, and as we watch this series, and as we follow the example of Jesus Christ, it will help us to love him even more, and it will help our love for his father, Jehovah, also to grow.

3.3.5. Video - Reading the gospels

In the following video, please see how members of the governing body feel about reading the inspired Gospels, and then seeing how these accounts come to life on the big screen. Please watch the following video. -

Geoffrey Jackson: God's word is powerful, and when I find that I'm reading the written word, that power comes through, but mainly
I'm focusing on the event itself, who did what to whom, and what the lesson is. An example of that is with Zechariah and Elizabeth. Now, I'm very familiar with the account. I've read it many times, but seeing it helped me to see what a setting this was, what a wonderful privilege Zechariah had, and all of a sudden, Gabriel appears, and what a magnificent representation of Gabriel, but after Gabriel tells Zechariah the good news, I just couldn't believe it when he says, "How can I be sure of this?" Part of me was screaming out, "Don't say that, whatever you do, don't say that." You see, I became emotionally involved with the account, and of course, it helped me to understand why Zechariah had a little bit of a punishment coming to him.

Stephen Lett - When Jesus was born, Satan tried to murder the baby Jesus, but all wise Jehovah completely outwitted the devil and protected his precious, but very vulnerable son. Jehovah ensured that he could grow up, become the Messiah, and preach the message Satan hates, the good news of the kingdom. Seeing all of this reenacted on screen makes me appreciate even more fully how Jehovah can protect us, no matter how weak or vulnerable we may feel in the face of Satan's attacks, and also how important it is to imitate Jesus in preaching the good news of the kingdom.

Kenneth Cook Jr - Well, I've long appreciated these accounts, and reading them in the Bible reminds me of the blessings that Jehovah has in store for all those who love him, including, of course, our dear, loyal older ones. And seeing the reenactment reminds me that Jehovah understood well in advance what this assignment would mean for Jesus. Yet Jesus was willing to go on that journey to vindicate his father's name and to lay the basis for eternal life for all those who respond favorably to the good news.
Geoffrey Jackson - So it's our hope and desire that our brothers and sisters, as they watch these video presentations, will feel as if they were there, and they're part of the event. And this will help them to remember all the details, but more importantly, that it will build appreciation and love for Jesus, and in turn, that that will strengthen their love for Jehovah. And of course, once you get excited about these stories, that helps us to continue to boldly preach the good news of the kingdom. (audience applauding) -

[End of Video]

Now, we are sure that you will be just as excited to watch the video series, "The Good News According to Jesus."

And in a few minutes, you will see episode one, part one of the video series, and then tomorrow morning, you'll see episode one, part two of the video series. Throughout the program, we'll consider lessons that we've learned from the video series, and we'll see how to apply them in our daily lives. And many of the parts will feature excerpts from the drama.

**3.4. Program Review**

At this point, we invite you again to take out your program and let's review the program together of our convention.

**3.4.1. Day 1 - Friday**

So here we see Friday morning of the program.

Now, after we watch part one of the drama, the first symposium will present evidence that the gospel accounts on which the drama is based are inspired and beneficial.
And then of course, we move on to see the second symposium of the day. And this symposium will present important truths about Jesus and explain how we can uphold those truths in our lives.

Now, the third symposium of the day is a new feature, and it is entitled, "Lessons from the Land of Jesus," which will help us to understand the environment, the culture, the home life of Israel in Jesus' day.

And then we go to the first talk of the last day, the first Days in Talk, which is, "Everlasting Good News in What Sense," in which will be described, the scope, the importance, and the impact of the message that we preach to others when it comes to declaring the good news.

We have a power-packed day today, don't we? Wonderful day of declaring the good news information.

3.4.2. Day 2 - Saturday

Let's move on to Saturday. Saturday morning, we see here, the second day starts out with a pre-recorded talk by a member of the governing body who will introduce part two of episode one of the drama, "The Good News According to Jesus."

Now, the drama is followed by another new feature in the program you can see there. It is entitled, "Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled," which will point out six prophecies that were fulfilled by the events shown in episode one of the drama.

Now, a highlight of any convention of Jehovah's Witnesses, as you can see from your program there, is the baptism, the baptism of new disciples of Jesus Christ. And during this convention, they will be encouraged to continue to be submissive to the good news.
Now, that moves us on to the second symposium of the day. The second symposium of the day will show us practical things we can do to use good news to defeat bad news.

Now, moving on, we see there the third symposium of the day, which is entitled, "Eager to Declare the Good News," and it will show us how the new brochure, "Love People, Make Disciples," can assist us in our ministry.

And then, of course, we'll have a video of how proclaimers of the kingdom message are increasing in number, in quality, and in reputation.

That brings us now down to the fourth symposium of the day. And in the fourth symposium, it will encourage us to keep preaching the good news wherever we are or wherever Jehovah directs that we go to expand our ministry. We know that you'll really enjoy that.

Now, the second day will end with the exciting talk for all young people, all young brothers and sisters. It is entitled, "What Will You Do for the Sake of the Good News?" This particular talk will highlight the many opportunities in sacred service that are available to you as young people, and it will outline how you can become effective ministers in preaching the good news. So once again, another power-packed day.

3.4.3. Day 3 - Sunday

Now, that moves us on to the third day of our convention, the final day. And this particular day of our convention opens with a symposium. Now, you'll notice here that this symposium is entitled, "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News." In this particular symposium, we will learn how we can imitate seven servants of
God who were portrayed in episode one of "The Good News According to Jesus."

And perhaps you still have time to invite others to the public discourse. The public discourse is entitled, "Why We Don't Fear Bad News." And that discourse will consider Psalm 112, verse by verse.

Now we move on in the afternoon to the dramatic Bible reading. And this year, the dramatic Bible reading is entitled, "There Will Be No Delay Any Longer." And this will bring to life the thrilling visions of Revelation. So we look forward to that, don't we?

And then that's going to be followed by a video featuring a member of the Governing Body who will review and apply key lessons from the convention.

And that brings us right down to the final talk of our convention. And it is entitled, "Hold Firmly to the Good News, Why and How." And this talk will focus on what we can expect in the days ahead. And we will see previews of future episodes of our epic drama about the life of Jesus.

And no doubt you've been waiting for the final song of our convention. And finally, we'll join together in singing a beautiful new original song and close with a prayer of thanks to our Heavenly Father Jehovah, who is indeed the great evangelizer.

The convention program will be enhanced with dozens of videos, dozens of videos that predict either real life accounts or real life situations that we can personally learn from and that we can relate to.

(38:27) Please note the following video of some things you can look forward to seeing during our convention program. (thunder
rumbling) (baby cooing) (baby crying) - At the heart of the Middle East lie the lands where Jesus walked. What lessons do they hold for our life today? -

We thought we had a happy life, but when we learned the truth, Jehovah showed us that true happiness comes from serving Him. -

The brothers and sisters may not always know the struggles I have, but Jehovah does. He not only cares for our physical needs, He also cares for our feelings. -

We are pleased to announce the requirement will now be 600 hours per year. - He paved the way for me to be able to pioneer, even though I thought that it would never be possible. -

The good news transforms lives. It gives us meaning. Where would we be without the good news? -

[End of video]

Well, what do you think? Are you ready? Are you excited to hear about the good news? Well, we say strap in. You're in for a wonderful ride over the next three days.

3.4.4. Paul’s ministry - 1 Tim 1:12

You know, toward the end of the Apostle Paul's life, he was writing to a close friend of his, his young friend, Timothy. And this is what he told Timothy toward the end of his life at 1 Timothy 1:12. 1 Timothy 1:12 says this, “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who imparted power to me because He considered me faithful by assigning me to a ministry”. Do you think that's why the Apostle Paul preached so enthusiastically? Because he considered this ministry to be precious. He considered the good news worth all the effort, worth all the sacrifice to declare. And isn't that how you feel? The good news is definitely worth declaring. Well, this convention
program will impress upon us the importance of the good news about Christ Jesus, and it will stimulate us to declare this good news as much as possible. We like to just make this one note about our convention program. Here's something to keep in mind.

3.4.5. Significance of feature drama

Everything we see in the feature drama will be the basis for what we hear in the days ahead. So please pay close attention to the feature drama. It's the basis of all that's to be said ahead in the convention program.

4. Episode 1 part 1: Good News according to Jesus - The True Light of the World

(43:03) Now, we invite you to sit back and enjoy part one of episode one of the good news according to Jesus. Now, after reminding us of the opening words of John's gospel, part one will mostly center on the events that's recorded in the first chapter of the gospel of Luke.

And this episode is entitled, The True Light of the World. Enjoy.

(audience applauding) (wind howling) (soft music) -

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was a God. This one was in the beginning with God. All things came into existence through him. And apart from him, not even one thing came into existence. (wind howling) What has come into existence by means of him was life. And the life was the light of men. (soft music) (wind howling) (soft music) (wind howling) (soft music) (birds chirping) (wind howling) (soft music) (wind howling) (soft music) (wind howling) (thunder rumbling) (wind howling) (soft music) And the light is shining in the
darkness. But the darkness has not overpowered it. (soft music) (soft music) (soft music)

4.1. Jerusalem - About 56 C.E.

(47:28) Seeing that many have undertaken to compile an account of the facts that are given full credence among us, just as these were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and attendants of the message.

I resolved also, because I have traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them to you in logical order, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know fully the certainty of the things that you have been taught orally.

4.2. Judea - About 3 B.C.E

(49:25) In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They both were righteous before God, walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah.

But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren.

And they both were well along in years. Now, as he was serving as priest in the assignment of his division before God, according to the established practice of the priesthood, it became his turn to offer incense when he entered into the sanctuary of Jehovah. And the entire multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of offering incense. (soft music) (fire crackling) (thunder rumbling)
4.3. Gabriel appeared before Zechariah

Jehovah's angel appeared to him, standing at the right side of the incense altar. But Zechariah became troubled at the sight, and he was overcome with fear.

Angel Gabriel: Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your supplication has been favorably heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son. And you are to name him John. You will have joy and great gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth, for he will be great in the sight of Jehovah. But he must drink no wine or any alcoholic drink at all, and he will be filled with Holy Spirit even from before birth, and he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to Jehovah their God. Also, he will go ahead of him with Elijah's spirit and power to turn back the hearts of fathers to children and the disobedient ones to the practical wisdom of righteous ones in order to get ready for Jehovah, a prepared people. (dramatic music)

Zechariah: How can I be sure of this? For I'm old, and my wife is well along in years.

Angel Gabriel: I am Gabriel, who stands near before God, and I was sent to speak with you and to declare this good news to you. But look, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their appointed time. (dramatic music) (waves crashing) (sobbing)

Outside the temple: Meanwhile, the people continued waiting for Zechariah. And they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. (dramatic music) (people chattering)

When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. And they perceived that he had just seen a supernatural sight in the
sanctuary. He kept making signs to them, but remained speechless. (dramatic music)

When the days of his holy service were completed, he went off to his home. Some days later, Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant, and she kept herself secluded for five months. (dramatic music) (people chattering) -

This is how Jehovah has dealt with me in these days. He has turned his attention to me to take away my reproach among men. -

4.4. Gabriel sent to Nazareth to Mary

In her sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth. (dramatic music)

To a virgin, promised in marriage to a man named Joseph of David's house. (dramatic music) (people chattering)

And the name of the virgin was Mary. (dramatic music) (people chattering) (dramatic music) (dramatic music) (dramatic music) -

Angel Gabriel: Greetings, you highly favored one. Jehovah is with you. - But she was deeply disturbed at his words, and tried to understand what kind of greeting this might be. -

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And look, you will become pregnant. And give birth to a son. And you are to name him Jesus. This one will be great, and will be called son of the most high. And 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 to his kingdom. -

Mary: How is this to be? Since I'm not having sexual relations with a man. -
Angel Gabriel: Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power of the most high will overshadow you. And for that reason, the one who is born will be called holy, God's son. And look, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month for her, the so-called barren woman. For no declaration will be impossible for God.

Mary: Look, Jehovah's slave girl, may it happen to me according to your declaration.

Narrator: At that, the angel departed from her. (people chattering)

4.5. Mary visits Elizabeth

So Mary set out in those days and traveled with haste into the mountainous country to a city of Judah. And she entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. - Hello. - Well, as Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the infant in her womb leaped. And Elizabeth was filled with Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruitage of your womb. So how is it that this privilege is mine? To have the mother of my Lord come to me.

For look, as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Happy too is she who believed. For there will be a complete fulfillment of those things spoken to her from Jehovah. (laughing)

Mary: My soul magnifies Jehovah and my spirit cannot keep from being overjoyed at God, my Savior. Because He has looked upon the low position of His slave girl. For look, from now on, all generations will declare me happy. Because the powerful one has done great deeds for me. And Holy is His name. And for generation after generation, His mercy is upon those who fear Him. He has
acted mightily with His arm. He has scattered those who were haughty in the intention of their hearts. He has brought down powerful men from thrones and has exalted lowly ones. He has fully satisfied hungry ones with good things. And has sent away empty-handed those who had wealth. He has come to the aid of Israel, His servant, remembering His mercy, just as He spoke to our forefathers, to Abraham, and to His offspring forever.

Narrator: Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned to her own home. (birds chirping)

4.6. John born

The time now came for Elizabeth to give birth. And she gave birth to a son. (baby crying) And the neighbors and her relatives heard that Jehovah had magnified His mercy to her. And they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day, they came to circumcise the young child. (birds chirping) And they were going to name him after his father, Zechariah. -

Elizabeth: No, but he will be called John.

Woman: Not one of your relatives is called by this name. (baby crying) -

Narrator: Then they asked his father by signs what he wanted him to be called. So he asked for a tablet. (birds chirping) And wrote, "John is his name." At this, they were all amazed. Instantly, his mouth was opened. And his tongue was set free. -

Zechariah: John. -

Narrator: And he began to speak. - John is his name. - Praising God. - Praise Jehovah. (laughing) -

Zechariah: John, John. - His name is John. -
Narrator: And fear fell upon all those living in their neighborhood. And all these things began to be talked about in the whole mountainous country of Judea. And all who heard noticed it in their hearts, saying, "What will this young child turn out to be?" For the hand of Jehovah was indeed with him.

Then, Zechariah, his father, was filled with Holy Spirit. (birds chirping)

Zechariah: And he prophesied. - “Let Jehovah be praised, the God of Israel, because he has turned his attention to his people and has brought them deliverance. And he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, his servant, just as he has spoken through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, of a salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all those hating us, to show mercy in connection with our forefathers and to call to mind his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to Abraham, our forefather, to grant us, after we have been rescued from the hands of enemies, the privilege of fearlessly rendering sacred service to him with loyalty and righteousness before him all our days. (birds chirping) -

But as for you, young child, you will be called a prophet of the most high, for you will go ahead of Jehovah to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender compassion of our God. With this compassion, a daybreak will visit us from on high to give light to those sitting in darkness and death's shadow and to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

Narrator: And the young child grew up and became strong in spirit, and he continued in the desert until the day he showed himself openly to Israel. -
4.7. Jesus’ birth

But this is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. During the time his mother Mary was promised in marriage to Joseph, she was found to be pregnant by Holy Spirit before they were united. However, because her husband Joseph was righteous and did not want to make her a public spectacle, he intended to divorce her secretly. (footsteps tapping)

But after he had thought these things over, look, - Joseph. - Jehovah's angel appeared to him in a dream. -

Angel: Joseph. - Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home for what has been conceived in her is by Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. -

All of this actually came about to fulfill what was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet saying, “look, the virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son and they will name him Emmanuel which means when translated with us is God.”

Then Joseph woke up from his sleep and did as the angel of Jehovah had directed him and he took his wife home but he did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son and he named him Jesus. -

[End of Video]

5. Conclusion

What a beautiful start to our convention. The video series, The Good News According to Jesus combines all four gospel accounts into a single narrative. All of the narration is directly quoted from the
New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. Did you notice that at times the voice of the narrator changes? This is because a different voice is used for the writer of each of the four gospel accounts.

Tomorrow morning we will see the conclusion of episode one.

5.1. Song 96

We now invite all who are able to do so to stand and sing song number 96 entitled God's Own Book, A Treasure. After the song you may wish to remain standing for some announcements. Again, that's song number 96.
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1. Introduction

There is an ongoing need for volunteers at Bethel and on theocratic construction projects. As you watch the following video, please note the spirit displayed by those who make themselves available for Bethel service.


Making yourself available for Bethel service is like knocking on a door that leads to many other privileges of service. Of course, to serve at Bethel requires a self-sacrificing spirit and a willingness to serve wherever there is a need in harmony with the attitude displayed by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6. Then I heard the voice of Jehovah saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am; send me." When Isaiah learned about an opportunity to do more in Jehovah's service, he responded eagerly, even though he did not know exactly what he was going to be assigned to do. It was enough for him to know that Jehovah was extending an invitation to serve in a special way and Isaiah wanted to volunteer. The same spirit is shown by Bethel family members worldwide. If the branch committee determines that there is a need for your services, they will decide where you can best be used, whether at Bethel or perhaps on the theocratic construction assignment. Submitting your application may open a door of opportunity to serve Jehovah and his organization in a variety of ways.

[End of Video]
That was an excerpt from the video Making Yourself Available for Bethel Service. If you are interested in serving at Bethel or on theocratic construction projects on a part-time or full-time basis, please watch the entire video on JW.org. Baptized Christians who are 19 years of age or older and are interested in volunteering should apply. Speak to your congregation secretary for more information. If possible, please submit your application electronically on JW.org.

2. (Sym1of4) They Were Moved by Holy Spirit - Matthew

(02:35) Why can we be confident that the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are reliable history? In what way is each account unique? The first symposium of this convention will answer those questions. Each speaker will introduce the one to follow. Brother Jorgen Svensson will begin with the talk, "They Were Moved by Holy Spirit, Matthew."

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were no ordinary writers or historians who just documented extraordinary events of their time. No, like all Bible writers, they spoke from God. The apostle Peter makes that clear for us in 2 Peter 1:21. Let's read that together. 2 Peter 1:21. Peter says, "For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but, notice, men spoke from God, as they were, notice, moved by Holy Spirit." What does that mean? Well, it seems that Peter, an old fisherman and sailor, was using actually a sailing term here, basically referring to the wind moving a boat or driving a boat forward. Now, in Greek, the word for wind and for spirit, including Holy Spirit, is the same, just as the words for breathing or blow or invisible force or spirit. So Peter's point is that just as wind in the
sails can drive a boat forward, Holy Spirit moved Bible writers. They spoke from God, not their own words, because God blew or breathed into their sails, so to speak. And Paul is using a similar expression in 2 Timothy 3:16, as we may recall, when he said that all Scripture is inspired by God. That expression literally means breathed by God. So this symposium now will help us to see how the four Gospels are unique, each in their own way, and why we can trust each four of them. Each Gospel writer tells his own story of the Christ. Each Gospel writer has his own personality. He has his own reasons to write. He has his own theme, and he is writing for a particular audience or reader.

The Bible Gospels differ much from so-called later so-called Gospels, whose writers did not know Jesus, they did not know his apostles, and they were not inspired by God. They might have had boats and sails, but there was no wind in those sails. But the more we read and study the inspired Gospels, the more we love them. Each one is unique, and yet they are harmoniously put together to complement each other, like the voices in a choir. And together they beautifully convey the good news of Jesus Christ. So let's discuss first Matthew.

2.1. Uniqueness

How is Matthew's Gospel unique? Well, Matthew wrote his Gospel for the benefit of the Jews, the Hebrews. And it appears that Matthew first wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, only about eight years after Jesus' death, long before the other Gospels. Later it seems, though, that Matthew also translated his Gospel himself from Hebrew to Greek to make it more widely available. Matthew is a beautiful bridge between the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures that precedes it in the order of the Bible and the 26 books that
follow Matthew in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In a way, it takes the reader from one side to the other. Matthew's approach clearly reveals that he had a purpose, an intention, and it was to convince his fellow Jews that Jesus from Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Matthew repeatedly refers to the Hebrew Scriptures. Some 100 references, and he makes some 40 direct, more or less, quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures. Matthew explains how Jesus fulfilled prophecies in those Scriptures.

In chapter 2, for example, verse 15, he says, "This fulfilled what was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet."

Verse 17 says, "Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet."

Verse 23, "And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets."

Matthew also listed Jesus' genealogy beginning from Abraham, the forefather of the Jewish nation. And Matthew, in a unique way, emphasized Jesus' main theme, God's kingdom, or the kingdom of the heavens, which was a concept well known to the Jews. Ever since Genesis, throughout the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, and other Bible books, Matthew mentions the kingdom some 50 times. It can even be called the kingdom gospel.

And in addition, Matthew recorded information that the other gospel writers do not repeat. Matthew has some 40% of unique information, much information about Joseph and Mary, 10 illustrations that Jesus gave, fascinating illustrations about the kingdom, most of them. And Matthew contains the Sermon on the Mount in its grandeur. Matthew generously provides 107 verses of that sermon, while Luke gives us 29.
2.1.1. Ex-taxman’s view

Matthew is uniquely fussy with numbers and money, just what you would expect from an ex-taxman.

For example, Mark, Luke, and John, they all mention the miracle where Jesus was feeding 5,000 men. But Matthew, the accountant, he adds, "as well as women and children," which bumped the number up to some 15,000 people. In these and many other ways, Matthew's gospel is unique.

2.2. Authentic and trustworthy?

However, is it also authentic and trustworthy? Yes, Matthew's gospel has the ring of truth. Matthew wrote humbly. He wrote honestly, as we would expect from anyone who spoke from God. For example, as we said, Matthew was a former tax collector, and he himself plainly acknowledged that. When he lists the names of the 12 apostles in Matthew 10:3, he doesn't mention the background of any of the other apostles, but he mentions Matthew, the tax collector. And this was not precisely bragging or a badge of honor in that society. Any Jew being a tax collector for the Roman Empire at the time was highly despised, we could say, and lowly regarded on the same level as apostates, outcasts, traitors, and sinners of all kinds. They were not even eligible to be witnessed in a court.

Matthew, thus, was very candid about himself. And he doesn't minimize or hide his own or the other disciples' mistakes or weaknesses. At times, for example, they had little faith or not enough.
2.2.1. Failure to expel demons - Matt 17:19,20

There is a unique detail about that in Matthew 17:19,20. If you would like to read Matthew 17:19,20, it's about a demon that they couldn't expel. And the account says that the disciples came to Jesus privately, and they said, "Why could we not expel it?" That was a failure in a way. He said to them, "Here's the unique detail. Because of your little faith."

2.2.2. Abandoned Jesus and fled - Matt 26:56

Mark and Luke also relate this account. But Matthew includes this humbling statement of fact about themselves that Jesus made. In Matthew 26:56, he also admits that all the disciples, including himself, abandoned Jesus and fled.

In Matthew 28:17, he admits that some disciples doubted even when they saw the resurrected Jesus. Another reason to trust Matthew is that he personally knew Jesus. He spent much time with Jesus. Matthew was an eyewitness. He was at the scene. He was there when it happened. Matthew, a scrupulous record-keeper, speaks of real people with real names who lived in real places, places that existed then and still exist on the map today. And this, too, makes Matthew trustworthy. And of course, there are some critics who say that the four Gospels contradict each other in some places. But to sincere readers, such criticism seems petty and trivial and can easily be proven wrong.

2.3. Video: Early manuscripts

Finally, scholars today have access to an abundance of early manuscripts that confirm that we have all the reason to trust the content in Matthew and the other Gospels. In fact, there are over 5,000 manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures and thousands
more of early manuscripts in other languages of the same Scriptures. As you watch the following video, please note some additional reasons why we can be confident that Jehovah inspired Matthew to write his Gospel.

It has been said that without writing a single line, Jesus set more pens in motion than any other man. Of all those penmen, none are better known than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In this video series, we will journey through time to see some of the earliest known manuscripts that contain their work and precious fragments of manuscripts that came before.

Have their Gospel accounts been transmitted accurately down to our day? Do they truly bear evidence that their writers were guided by the Holy Spirit? Travel with us to find out.

2.3.1. Oxyrhynchus papyri

In the late 1800s, archaeologists Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt went to Egypt in search of ancient Christian documents. Soon, under the centuries worth of rubbish near the town of Oxyrhynchus, they struck gold in the form of documents written on papyrus, an ancient form of paper. At the time they discovered it, this single leaf was part of the oldest known copy of Matthew. At the top, it bears the words of Matthew 1:1, "The book of the history of Jesus Christ." This fragment was the earliest witness to the greatest man who ever walked the earth.

In the years that followed, Grenfell and Hunt collected some 500,000 fragments at Oxyrhynchus, many of which are biblical and now reside right here in Oxford. Amongst them, other fragments from Matthew. Analyzing and understanding these manuscripts and scraps became known as papyrology, deciphering letters and words, putting the pieces together, painstaking work, like doing a...
fragile jigsaw puzzle. To keep track of significant Greek scripture papyri, referencing systems were developed, typically a number preceded by the letter P for papyrus. So for example, this is P77. It's in two pieces, but they're from the very same page. This one is P70. It contains portions of 16 verses, including the earliest record of Jesus' prophecy that the good news of the kingdom would be preached in all the inhabited earth. P77 and P70 are just two of many fragments that Grenfell and Hunt unearthed. Their finds alone contain portions from 13 different chapters of Matthew. It stirs the imagination to think that these were written and in use perhaps 1700, 1800 years ago. But there is one more important piece of the jigsaw to be found here in Oxford.

2.3.2. Magdalen College - P64

The old library at Magdalen College is home to about 20,000 rare books, but its oldest item predates them all by over a millennium. P64, dated to around 200 CE, is now regarded as one of the earliest known Matthew fragments. The writing on the front and back shows that they were originally part of a codex, or early book. Some have only a few words left intact, but even the tiniest of puzzle pieces can help form a faith-strengthening picture. P64 contains evidence of one of Matthew's most distinguishable traits, highlighting the fulfilment of Hebrew scripture prophecies. In this case, Zechariah's prophecy about the price for Jesus' betrayal, 30 pieces of silver, a detail unique to Matthew's account, and not to be missed by a former tax collector.

Scholars who have examined these texts attest to the close continuity of meaning between these earliest fragments and later manuscripts which form the basis for our translation today. They say one man's rubbish is another man's treasure. That was true for
Grenfell, Hunt and others who excavated in Egypt. Thanks to their work, the drifting sands of time that once buried these fragments have been brushed away. All of this gives us confidence that the text of Matthew remains essentially unchanged. Credit for that can only go to Jehovah.

Matthew - Completed - c. 41 C.E.

[End of Video]

(18:15) In summary, is Matthew's gospel of value to us? Yes, it is invaluable. It contains many of Jesus' precious teachings, including the unique Sermon on the Mount. You and I can read and study these teachings, and we can apply them in our lives with full confidence. Why? Because we know that Matthew was moved by Holy Spirit to convey Jehovah's thoughts and words through Jesus. These teachings can and will benefit us personally, every day, in every way. Just think of these expressions. “Keep on then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.” Or this one. “All things therefore that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them.” Timeless truths conveyed by humble Matthew, a man moved by Holy Spirit who spoke from God and who repeatedly referred back to the inspired word of God in the Hebrew scriptures. Just as Matthew used scriptures to support the good news and prove that Jesus is the Messiah, let us all strive to skillfully use Jehovah's inspired word as we preach, teach, and declare the good news.
3. (Sym2of4) They were moved by Holy Spirit

- Mark

Brother Sheridan Jackson, who serves as a regular pioneer in the South Warwick congregation, will now consider the next part of the symposium. They were moved by Holy Spirit. Mark.

Imagine that you're at the house of a householder, and as you're listening to them, you start to think to yourself, "I don't know what I'm going to say or how I'm going to respond." And then you immediately pray to Jehovah for His Holy Spirit. Has that ever happened to you? And it was like Jehovah provides an instant text message to us like a dear friend, and we're able to recall a scripture or perhaps a thought-provoking question to help that person. Well, what does this illustration teach us? That Jehovah directs us by means of His Holy Spirit. And likewise with Mark. When he wrote the gospel that's in his name, he prayed for Jehovah's Holy Spirit because he wanted to convey Jehovah's thoughts and Jesus' words in a way that would appeal to his audience.

And who was his primary audience? It was the Romans. And so Mark carefully described Jewish customs and also the plant and animal life of Palestine so that he could assist them or aid them. In addition, we know that as we examine this gospel account, Mark focused not so much on Jesus' sermons or teachings, but for the most part he focused on Jesus' activities or miracles. And throughout this gospel account, Mark also highlights on several occasions Jesus' feelings or emotions. And now why did he take this approach? Well, it was because the Romans didn't have an in-depth knowledge of the scriptures or perhaps Jewish customs,
but they could readily relate to feelings or emotions such as love and compassion like everyone else.

3.1. Rich young ruler - Mark 10:21

So let's examine an account in the book of Mark 10:21 where Jesus displays the quality of love. That's Mark 10:21. And notice the setting, if you will. A rich young ruler approaches Jesus. This man has many possessions. He has a privileged position in society and he openly approaches Jesus and he states in part, "What must I do to gain everlasting life?" How does Jesus respond? Notice Mark 10:21. Jesus looked at him and felt love for him and said, "One thing is missing about you. Go sell what things you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come, be my follower." Now notice Jesus said or stated that Jesus had love for this young man. Why did he have love for him?

Well, we know that Jesus could read hearts. He was an examiner of hearts and so he could readily detect that this young man had an intense desire to serve Jehovah. And because of this, Jesus was touched to his heart and he felt love for him. Have you ever been moved to the depths of your heart for someone that you met in the ministry? I'm sure you have because you wanted to help them. And of course, you recognize that you needed to assist them because it was difficult for them to serve Jehovah. As you read a scripture, perhaps you saw a little twinkle in their eye and they had that intense desire. You could see it. And it was obvious that they wanted to serve our Father. And perhaps when you left the house, what did you say to your partner? There was something special about that person. Jesus felt that way about that young man. He felt love for him. And others could sense the love of Jesus as well when he spoke to them.
3.2. How can we benefit?

But now let's discuss this question. How can we benefit from Mark's gospel account? Well, Mark's account provides additional proof in connection with the other gospel accounts that these miracles that Jesus performed were a reality. These gospels collected together stand as a witness, like witnesses in the court of law in defense of the Bible, standing out, saying in a sense, "God's word is reliable, trustworthy, and is the truth." Now, isn't it obvious that Mark was moved by Holy Spirit?

3.3. Authenticity

Some may wonder, were Mark's gospels or are Mark's gospels authentic or trustworthy? Or are they missing short or long conclusions? Well, let's consider this. Mark's gospel is in harmony with the rest of the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, and it appears in the early catalogs of the Christian Greek scriptures.

Now let me ask you this question. What do you think the Christian Greek scriptures are? That is, the catalogs of the Christian Greek scriptures. Well, they're a collection of Bible books, and some refer to them as the "divine library." Now this listing of official books is limited to "all scriptures inspired of God."

3.3.1. Library illustration

Now let's illustrate this. Let's say that you go to the library, your local library. Well, what are you going to find there? You're going to find a listing of all the books that you can check out and take home. And the librarian, she will only submit books that are approved. So likewise, in this divine library, no unauthorized books are included. So who is the greatest librarian? Isn't it Jehovah? He's the greatest librarian, and he determines which books are in this catalog.
then the Bible contains 66 books in that catalog, and they're a product of his Holy Spirit, and this Gospel of Mark is within this collection. And so we can have complete confidence in this gospel account.

Furthermore, some say that Jesus' miracles were legends or fantasies. Have you ever heard that before? But Mark, like all the other gospel writers, penned their writings or their gospels shortly after Jesus died, within the span of about 57 years, between 41 to 98 CE. So that was too soon for legends to develop. For example, there are some legends, such as the one written by the ancient writer Homer. He wrote a Greek legend, and it took hundreds of years for that legend to develop, solidify, and to stabilize. Now, what a contrast to the gospel accounts, because these writers were moved by Holy Spirit. Mark's gospel is also trustworthy. We know that our early Christian brothers in the first century and sisters were willing to suffer and even die, and some were even confronted by the Roman army or government and thrown into the Roman coliseums, and they were viciously killed by wild beasts.

What gave them that firm conviction to suffer and to die? Well, they had confidence. They had confidence in Mark's gospel, as well as the other gospel accounts, which shows or states that Jesus was resurrected. And so they knew that since Jesus was resurrected, even if they were to suffer and die, then they would be resurrected, too. And so doesn't that really encourage us? Because it encourages us in the sense that we recognize that this life and this system is not all there is. There will be a resurrection, and that is our confidence as well. So the short and long conclusions that are found in some of the fragments, or rather some translations, let me rephrase that, some of the translations and manuscripts are not
inspired by God. And so they're not in the New World Translation. They don't appear in the main text.

3.4. Video: Mark completed c. 60-65 C.E.

Now as you watch the following video, note the additional reasons for having confidence in Jehovah's inspired word in the book of Mark, the gospel. The Gospel of Mark is an action-packed account, recalling at least 19 of Jesus' recorded miracles. Although only two early fragments are known to have survived, the most significant one, P45, features portions of 12 of those miracles. No wonder the very first verse of this gospel declares its theme to be "the good news about Jesus." It's the perfect opening line.

3.4.1. Controversy over Mark's conclusion

When it comes to the book's conclusion, however, there has been some controversy. In fact, three different versions of it have circulated for centuries. How can we know which one to trust? The earliest Bible manuscripts can help. Casually wrapped in paper, the Codex Sinaiticus is on its way to the British Museum. The Codex Sinaiticus is the earliest manuscript that preserves the entire Greek scriptures. It was the work of at least three trained scribes in the fourth century who based their work on earlier texts. Beautiful, isn't it? Yes. Accumulated through the centuries behind the walls of the Vatican Library is the greatest... The Codex Vaticanus is also dated to the fourth century, and although a few portions have been lost over time, the gospels remain completely intact.

3.4.2. Bethel Museum, Britain

These priceless manuscripts are regarded as key sources by modern Bible translators, and here at our Bethel Museum in Britain, we're going to take a look at two exact facsimile editions. These
3.4.3. How Mark’s gospel ends

In the New World Translation, Mark's gospel ends at chapter 16, verse 8, where we are told that after visiting Jesus' tomb, the women fled, trembling and overwhelmed with emotion, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were in fear. Unlike the other gospels, Mark doesn't report on any post-resurrection encounters with Jesus. The closest we get to him is an empty tomb. Some later readers evidently felt that this conclusion lacked enough closure to have been the original.

From the fifth century onwards, manuscripts appeared with alternative conclusions, some with two additional verses, and others with 12.

(34:35) What about the Codex Vaticanus? Let's see for ourselves. Here the original Greek has been translated, "And going out, they fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

Below that, the ancient ink states "According to Mark", indicating the end of the book.
The Codex Sinaiticus also concludes this way. Together, these two pillars provide strong support for verse 8 as the original ending penned by Mark. Thanks to the survival of precious manuscripts like these, we can be confident that we have the complete text of Mark's gospel.

So why the seemingly abrupt ending? Well the gospel writers each had their own style. And simply put, Mark's was brevity. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Mark's concise style produced the shortest yet most dynamic portrayal of Jesus as a man of action, a man of miracles, and a man of true compassion.

3.5. Value of Mark’s gospel

(36:04) Truly we have numerous reasons to have confidence and faith in Mark's gospel as well as all the other gospel accounts. But now let's consider, of what value is Mark's gospel to us? As aforementioned, Mark apparently wrote to a Roman audience, and that's why he explained Jewish customs as well as the geography of the land.

And so we can take from this that when we preach to others and teach them, we want to explain difficult things in a simple way. So we can use simple illustrations to explain complicated matters.

Furthermore, Mark portrayed Jesus as a man of action and strong feelings. People could sense his love for them. So by extension, when we witness to others, people should sense our love for them as we display the loving quality of compassion, concern, and of course, love itself.

There's an old expression, and it states in part:
• "People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care."

So let us continue to preach in a way that people can sense how much we care.

Mark's gospel describes the revelation or resurrection of Jesus. And now we know that Jesus is reigning as King of God's kingdom. So this really shows us that no matter what trials we face now in this system, eventually Jesus is going to remove all the problems that we're contending with. And the gospel of Mark strengthens our conviction in that hope. Wouldn't you agree that Mark was moved by Holy Spirit? And so likewise, we know that Jehovah will continue to move us by means of his Holy Spirit as we continue to declare the good news.

4. (Sym 3of4) They Were Moved by Holy Spirit

- Luke

In the next part of our symposium, "They Were Moved by Holy Spirit Luke," please give your attention to Brother Jason Hall from Walk Hill Bethel.

If you have a color printer, then likely you know that with just four colors—black, cyan, magenta, and yellow—you can print in millions of hues—bright, vibrant images. And yet if you're missing just one of those colors, the images simply aren't as bright. They're not as compelling. Well, in some ways, that's like the gospels. Every gospel adds a particular shade or color to Jesus' life and ministry, and yet when we view them all together, our view of Christ becomes vibrant and clear.
That also means, however, without the gospel of Luke, our view of Christ would not be as complete. Why? What makes Luke's gospel so unique? What color does it add to Jesus' life and ministry? We can say that the gospel of Luke is unique in five different ways.

4.1. (Unique 1of5) Content

First, it's unique in content. In fact, some 60% of the material covered in Luke is not covered by other gospel writers. For example, Luke includes six specific miracles that we don't read about in Matthew, John, or Mark—impactful miracles like the healing of ten lepers and the raising of the widow's son at name. Additionally, Luke includes over a dozen illustrations that Christ included in his teaching that we don't read about in the other gospels—such impactful illustrations like the neighborly Samaritan and the prodigal son. Think about how these illustrations and these miracles help us better appreciate the love and compassion of Jesus and, by extension, his Father, Jehovah. That's vibrant.

4.2. (Unique 2of5) Universal appeal

Consider the second reason that Luke is unique—it's because of its universal appeal. While Matthew wrote his book primarily for the Jews and Mark primarily for the Romans, Luke wrote his gospel in such a way that it would appeal to people of all the nations. Consider an example. Turn to Luke 3:6, you'll notice it says very simply, "All flesh"—that literally means all humans, all humanity—"will see the salvation of God." Well, yes, salvation from God, then, would be available to all humans. And in keeping this broader audience in mind, Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back all
the way to the forefather of all mankind, Adam, and not just to Abraham like Matthew does.

The message is clear, isn't it? The good news about Jesus can benefit all kinds of people, regardless of their background.

4.3. (Unique 3of5) Focus on women

(41:34) Here's the third reason that Luke is so unique—its keen focus on women. In fact, some very important women are only mentioned by Luke.

Without Luke, we wouldn't know about individuals like Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. We wouldn't know about the prophetess Anna or the widow of Nain, just to name a few.

And Luke alone includes Mary's faithful expressions and expressions of integrity concerning the birth of Jesus. In fact, in Luke chapter 1, we have a beautiful prayer recorded there. Mary in one prayer makes 20 different references or allusions to the Hebrew scriptures that shows her spirituality. And doesn't that add color, then, to Jesus' life, his early life, his home life, helping us to better envision the warm spiritual environment in which he was raised?

4.4. (Unique 4of5) Focus on Prayer

Fourth way that Luke is unique is in its focus on prayer. Luke often describes Jesus as finding a desolate place to pray. He often mentions that he prays through the night. And of course, Luke includes a number of prayers we don't read about in other Gospels.

- For example, Luke alone tells us that Jesus was praying when the heavens opened up and Holy Spirit poured out upon him at his baptism.
And Luke alone includes the very final prayer of Jesus as a human when on the torture stake he prayed, "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit."

Well, isn't it true that these details, this color, helps us better appreciate how close Jesus was with his Father Jehovah?

4.5. (Unique 5of5) Detail and Vocabulary

Well, finally, the fifth reason in which we say Luke is unique is in terms of detail and vocabulary. Now, as a physician, Luke was well-educated and he had a keen interest in people. That comes through in his writing. The vocabulary of Luke is more than all the other Gospels combined, and that gives us meaningful detail.

For example, what one Gospel writer may simply refer to as leprosy, Luke refers to it as a man full of leprosy. What might simply be an illness or a fever to one Gospel writer, Luke refers to it as a high fever. Now that's nuanced, but doesn't it help us better appreciate the severity of those conditions? And that, in turn, helps us better appreciate the empathy and compassion of Jesus and the relief that those he healed must have experienced.

4.6. Authenticity

Well, clearly Luke is unique for a number of reasons, and it adds vibrant color to Jesus' ministry and life. But now that brings us to a very important question. Can we trust what we read? Is Luke authentic? Well, that's particularly important when we consider the fact that Luke became a believer after Jesus' death and therefore was not an eyewitness to the events he records in his Gospel.

4.6.1. Role of Holy Spirit

Consider first the role of the Holy Spirit, which we've done. 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that those who penned portions of the Bible spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Well, Luke, after his baptism and just like the other Gospel writers, was moved by the Holy Spirit to write his account. And, of course, we have confidence Jehovah controls what ends up in his written word. He prevents inaccuracies or false testimonies from entering into it. No, he helped Luke.

Consider Luke's reputation. Three times Luke is favorably mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Paul calls Luke "the beloved physician," "my fellow worker." Well, that means Luke was known among the first century brothers and sisters. He had a trustworthy reputation. He was a loyal man.

4.6.2. Objectives and research methods

Now consider his objectives for writing the Gospel and his careful research methods. In fact, Luke tells us what these are. Open your Bibles, if you would, to Luke 1:1. "Seeing that many have undertaken to compile an account of the facts that are given full credence among us, just as these were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses in attendance of the message, I resolved also, because I have traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them to you in logical order, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know fully the certainty of the things that you have been taught orally."

Well here Luke clearly states his intention to provide an accurate account about Jesus. In fact, he said he had a personal resolve to
take the life of Jesus, put it in a logical order so it would be easy for others to follow.

For what purpose? Well, look at verse 4. It says that we may know fully the certainty of the things that Jesus Christ taught and the things that he did.

### 4.6.3. Traced all things with accuracy

Well now how did Luke accomplish this? What methods did he use? Well did you notice here in verse 3 he says that he traced all things from the start with accuracy? Have you ever traced an image, perhaps as a child? Now I remember taking a very thin piece of paper, putting it over an image, and then carefully following or tracing the lines. Now if I was careful enough I would end up with an exact copy of the original image. Well in a sense that's what Luke did. By following sources and eyewitnesses, it's as if he traced the life of Jesus and was able to replicate it and present that accurate image to you and I through his gospel.

Well it's just like one scholar said concerning Luke, "Luke is a historian of the highest order." And that careful research comes through not only in Luke, but also Acts of the Apostle, which Luke also penned. For example, in Acts, Luke mentions 100 geographical locations. We can still visit them today.

And he mentions scores of individuals that have been verified by history, ones like Caesar Augustus, Tiberius Caesar, and King Herod the Great.

### 4.7. Where and when written

Well where and when would Luke have compiled this gospel? Well Luke accompanied Paul back after his third missionary journey to Jerusalem. While Paul was in prison then, that means Luke
spent two years in the very land where Jesus carried out his activity. Well certainly this would have provided him access to written documents while he compiled his account. And no doubt those written records helped him to piece together Jesus' genealogy.

Luke also had the luxury of referring to the Gospel of Matthew, which had been written some time earlier.

4.7.1. Consulted eyewitnesses

But perhaps most compelling of all, verse number two tells us that Luke consulted with eyewitnesses. Yes, no doubt during this time, Luke conducted personal interviews with individuals who walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, were instructed by Jesus. Such ones as the surviving disciples and perhaps Jesus' very own mother, Mary herself. So clearly we have many reasons for having complete trust in Luke and therefore we benefit from the color it adds to Jesus' life and ministry.


(49:26) As you watch the following video, note additional reasons for having confidence that Jehovah inspired Luke to write his gospel. Luke, known to early Christians as the beloved physician. P75, dated to around 200 CE, preserves an account unique to Luke's gospel, one which no physician could ignore. Jesus bringing a widow's son back to life at Nain. This fragment is therefore the earliest testimony to Jesus' earliest recorded resurrection. The emergence of P75 in the late 1950s was significant. The large number of pages that had survived allowed for a comprehensive comparison with the later Codex Vaticanus. The two were found to
be nearly identical. So the text of this gospel has been accurately transmitted down to our day and is trustworthy.

4.8.1. List of officials and authority

But is the information on these pages equally trustworthy? Actually a single sentence reveals the answer. At the beginning of chapter 3, Luke records a list of officials and authority when John the Baptist began to preach. Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias, as well as Annas and Caiaphas, seven in total. Now Luke's gospel, as stated at its outset, is fact, not fiction. So there should be historical evidence of these officials and of when they ruled.

So what does history say? Tiberius Caesar, second emperor of Rome, well attested to in literature and archaeology, as we would expect.

Next Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and district ruler of Galilee. Among other evidence, inscriptions bearing his name as well as coins he commissioned have been found.

Philip, his half-brother, confirmed by historians to be the Tetrarch, or territorial prince, under Tiberius.

Former high priest Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas. Both are noted by ancient historians and are also associated with this family tomb by many modern historians. Confirmation of five of the seven officials isn't bad.

But what about Pontius Pilate? He's called Pilate many times by the other gospel writers, but only ever Pontius Pilate by Luke.
And what about Lysanias, whom Luke linked to Abilene, a rather insignificant territory? Now, it should be mentioned that the Roman Empire's preference was to leave local government in place in their conquered territories. As a result, those in authority could be referred to in different ways, by a Roman title or by a local one. This created a potential for error, so much so that some historians might have played it safe, not daring to go to Luke's level of detail. Had his strength become his weakness, would five rulerships not have sufficed? For centuries, Pilate and Lysanias' existence was questioned. But then archaeology brought to light these stone inscriptions, confirmation of both rulers' existence and when they ruled. Seven officials, seven overlapping reigns, all tied together in time by means of just one sentence. This is authentic history.

But what does this mean for us? By setting his narrative in the context of Tiberius Caesar's 15th year in power, Luke pinpoints the start of John's ministry to 29 CE. As a result, the date of Jesus' baptism, his appearance when he became the Christ, a far superior ruler, is in a sense written in stone. Luke was moved by the Holy Spirit to trace all things with accuracy. No wonder one scholar called him a historian of the highest order.

(54:06) Did you catch that interesting thought? Seven officials, seven overlapping reigns, all tied together in time by means of just one sentence. Of course, the Gospel of Luke does much more than that.

With the rich color and detail that it provides, we see Jesus Christ as a compassionate teacher and leader.
4.9. Benefit

How do we benefit? It certainly benefits us in our ministry. We can be quick to imitate Jesus' compassion by sharing the good news about him with all kinds of people, regardless of their background. And we can imitate Luke's keen interest in people, too. We do that by paying attention to their unique circumstances and helping them appreciate how the good news of Jesus can fulfill their personal needs.

And then, of course, when we teach, just like Luke, we make sure we base our teachings on trustworthy material. That means we teach from the Scriptures, reading from it as often as possible. It's the most trustworthy source. And yet when we do use other sources, like news reports or even experiences, we make sure that they're correct and up-to-date. These are just a few ways we benefit from Luke.

But isn't it true the color, dimension, depth that his Gospel adds to our view of Jesus and his life benefits us in countless ways? It helps us to draw ever closer to Jesus and to his Father Jehovah. And how thankful we can be that Holy Spirit moved Luke to pen his Gospel, a Gospel that appeals to people of all the nations, a Gospel that helps us to be certain of everything that Jesus Christ said and did, and a Gospel that clearly identifies Jesus as our compassionate Savior.
5. (Sym 4of4) They Were Moved by Holy Spirit

- John

Brother Mark Laughdanny, a member of the Waukill Bethel family, will now consider the final part of this symposium, "They Were Moved by Holy Spirit - John".

The good news, according to Matthew. Mark, Luke, and we'll conclude with the good news, according to John. We will leave this symposium absolutely convinced that these four men were moved by Holy Spirit. What great evidence we have already heard about. But when we view this well-crafted, colorful mosaic of four writers, we see it as rich, we see it as complete, and as we've explained, absolutely trustworthy. Not only the content, but the writers themselves, as we get to see come to life; the life, ministry, purpose, and message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5.1. Uniqueness

When compared to the other three, John's Gospel is unique in a number of ways. Let's just mention three.

First of all, it was written 30 years after the other Gospel works were already circulating.

Another way is that 90 percent of this account is only contained in John's Gospel. In our study edition of the Bible; In the introduction, we learned that John's Gospel alone discusses Jesus' pre-human existence.

Six miracles are unique to John's account, including Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine, and his last miracle, after his being resurrected, of the huge catch of fish.
5.2. In the Beginning

Let's talk a little bit more about that unique feature. It's found in the prologue or the introduction, the first chapter of John, and it's remarkable. The book of John begins with the three simple words that the Bible itself begins with, "In the beginning." What do those three words do? Those three words transport us in time all the way back to the very beginning, the advent of creation. And there is Jesus. At that time, the Word. He is there, and He is there with His Father, His Creator. The Word. And the Word was with God. Was He simply observing? No. That's what verse 3 of John chapter 1 tells us. All things came into existence through Him, and apart from Him, not even one thing came into existence.

And then John tells us this fascinating fact over in verse 14. So the Word became flesh and resided amongst us, and we had a view of His glory. A glory such as belongs to an only begotten Son from a Father. The Bible writers, they got to see this glory.

And what does John do? He maps the journey from that moment of creation, the only begotten, and then he's moved with Holy Spirit to place the Word at His Father's side, soon to take up residence in the farthest away reaches of the just created heavens, and then the journey to the jewel of the universe to earth. And what when He was on earth? John says they had a view of His glory. John saw a splendor and a magnificence that could be displayed only by someone who perfectly reflected Jehovah. The glory of Jesus was no doubt enhanced by the fact of all of those eons of time that He had with His Father in the heavens.

It's only John who gives us this awesome glimpse of Jesus' life before He came to earth. This gospel allows us to see and know Jehovah and Jesus in unique ways. We've talked about them
together as Father and Son. Just think about it. Jesus has known Jehovah longer than anybody. They were coworkers, but a feature that is very touching. As Father and Son, they were best friends. Now John discerned this because of having the glimpse of Jesus' pre-human existence. And respecting that special relationship between Father and Son no doubt fueled what became a very special friendship between Jesus and John. Remember it was John who was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And John wanted to be Jehovah's friend. And John knew the rule. You want your friend's friend to be your friend. Therefore, if he could see the friendship between Jehovah and Jesus, he was drawn to have a very, very special closeness. And because of that, he gives us a very personal portrait of Jesus.

He gives us the word-for-word personal prayer, the recital of Jesus' longest prayer, the 26 verses that we find in John chapter 17. And just for a moment, imagine the emotion of John when 60 years after the death of his dear friend, he's sitting, he's writing, he's recounting his last night with Jesus at the meal at the table. Reclining on their left elbows, propped up by pillows, Jesus is visibly troubled. Jesus is beginning to speak of the betrayer in their midst. In fact, some of the 12 become nervous and they say, "Lord, it's not I, is it?" But what does John do? The account puts it this way. John leans back upon the breast of Jesus and asks, "Lord, who is it?"

Just as he had leaned upon the breast of Jesus or the bosom of Jesus, John now could look into that pre-human existence and what words did he use? John used the exact same expression when describing that relationship in heaven, that Jesus, the Son, was in the bosom of his Father. Because of this special friendship
with Jesus, John was also able to uniquely describe Jesus as the closest person who could explain God better than anybody else.

And it brings to life these words, Jesus' words, "Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father." How special to get a glimpse of this intimacy between Father and Son. And if you're fortunate enough that your Father is or was your best friend, you can just imagine how special that was.

5.3. Use of Love

Is it any wonder that John's gospel uses the Greek words for love more than all the other gospels combined? Here are some of the familiar ones that you know.

At 3:16, "For God loved the world so much."

At 15:12, "This is my commandment, that you love one another."

And at 15:13, "No one has love greater than this."

These are just a few examples of the use of love and the need for unselfish love that is just exemplified so well in John's gospel. I find it surprising that there are some who call themselves Bible scholars, students of the ancient writings, who doubt the authenticity of John's work. This is despite the fact that the gospel of John is found in the very earliest, very earliest works of translation.

5.4. Video: John - completed - C. 98 C.E.

As you watch the next segment of the series, note additional reasons for having confidence that Jehovah inspired John to write the gospel.
John, the last gospel to be written. Yet this account takes us farther back in time than any other.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. P66 and P75 preserve those words, the earliest record of the earliest moments of Jesus' pre-human existence. John's religious opponents viewed him as uneducated and ordinary. His vocabulary was smaller than most other writers of the Greek scriptures. Yet his use of simple words and simple sentences helps us grasp the most profound truths. One word that stands out is the Greek word often rendered, truth. It appears three times as often in this gospel than all the others combined. Yet the truthfulness of this gospel has itself been challenged.

5.4.1. Jesus sparing an immoral woman

Between John 7:53 and 8:11, some ancient manuscripts include an account about Jesus sparing an immoral woman. Others do not. So does this account belong in the inspired record penned by John? Or did someone else take it upon themselves to add it later? What do the earliest witnesses say?

Codex Bezae from the 5th century includes the account, but Codex Ephraim and Codex Alexandrinus are both missing this page of John completely. That careful measurement by scholars indicates that these codices would not have had enough space on the missing pages to include the account. The earliest and most authoritative manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, do not include this passage.

What about the earlier fragments, P66 and P75? Although the pages of chapter 7 and chapter 8 survive, they bear no trace of the account at all. So the verdict is clear. The account of the immoral
woman is spurious, meaning it was added centuries after John completed his gospel.

5.4.2. [John Rylands Research Institute and Library]

Now it seems clear that the further back in time we travel, the closer we get to the original words of truth. But there is one more stop that we do not want to miss. So we've come to the John Rylands Library in Manchester, known locally as the Cathedral of Books.

This is Papyrus 52, dated by some scholars to around 125 CE. It's a fragment of the oldest copy of John. In fact, it's the oldest fragment of the Christian Greek scriptures that has ever been found. What does it contain? Another simple yet profound sentence.

“For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth”.

P52's early date testifies to how quickly John's gospel spread. By about 170 CE, his account was combined with Matthew, Mark and Luke in the work commonly called the Diatesaron, a Greek word meaning 'through the four'. This work testifies that before the end of the 2nd century, these four inspired accounts alone were regarded as the definitive account of Jesus' life.

In John's last verse, he tells us that if all other things Jesus did were written in detail, the world itself could not contain the scrolls. Walking through a room like this, you feel the weight of those words. We can't help but be in awe of what Jehovah has accomplished. By using his Holy Spirit to guide the gospel writers and by preserving their accounts, he has left us with a remarkably trustworthy and intimate portrayal of his Son. More than any other
book in the world, these four, along with the rest of the Bible, convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

[End of Video]

(1:20:39) Did you catch that comment? The further back in time we travel, the closer we get to the original words of truth. No wonder the 1st century Christian congregation relied heavily on the writings of John and viewed it as authentic.

5.4.3. So we may know the truth - John 20:31

Just those words, truth. What is the truth? John wrote about the truth. John 20:31. “But these have been written down [talking about the truth] But these have been written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and because of believing, you may have life by means of his name.” Yes, certainly rich words, rich meaning that bring to life the importance of the gospel account. John wrote with three distinct objectives, convincing, trustworthy proof that Jesus, the man that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the one they walked with, the one they preached with, the one they ate with, the one they prayed with, he was Christ, the one anointed to be king of God's kingdom. And that this man's origin is that of the first creation, the only begotten Son of God, Jehovah's closest friend.

5.4.4. Knowing Jehovah and Jesus - John 17:3

And the third objective of this warm painting, this intimate picture of Jesus, is that we're helped to know, really know, Jesus and his Father Jehovah. And it brings to life the familiar words of John 17.3, "This means everlasting life. They're coming to know you and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ."
John admits at John chapter 20:30, he says, "To be sure, Jesus also performed many other signs before the disciples, which are not written down in this scroll. That could have been repeated in the three other gospels as well. The same though individual and these naturally different and distinct, unique in style, the four accounts are unified in purpose."

Like I said at the outside, they are a perfectly fitting mosaic. Together they offer us what is really a single gospel, a single unified message of good news. Together the four gospels convey the good news about Jesus Christ. And again, we know the Son and best friend of Jehovah God.

5.5. Trustworthy men inspired by Jehovah

In the introduction of our symposium, remember the song we sang during the intermission? God's Own Book of Treasure, song number 96. It has a stanza in there that says, "Its words were penned by men whom God inspired." And that's what makes them trustworthy, that though the work of man, the gospel is a product of Jehovah's. These were trustworthy men.

5.6. Review

We heard about Matthew. He introduces Jesus as the promised Messiah who fulfilled prophecies found in the Hebrew scriptures.

Mark portrays Jesus as a man of action who performed wondrous miracle after miracle after miracle.

Luke wrote to appeal to people of all nations to confirm the certainty of events surrounding the life of Christ and to identify Jesus as a very compassionate and a compassionate Savior.
And John gave us a glimpse of the Word, God's loving gift to humankind, our avenue to everlasting life.

This symposium has clearly shown that the four gospel accounts are in fact absolutely trustworthy. And that gives us good reason to trust and use the gospel accounts. When we do that, when we consider them, read them, meditate on them, we show our appreciation for the gospels and the ransom and appreciation for the work of Jehovah himself. We increase our conviction that what we read is in fact true. And we draw closer to Jehovah and Jesus, which puts us on the pathway to everlasting life.

So let us leave this dynamic symposium with renewed appreciation for the inspired work of these four trustworthy men. Additionally, let us show that we love both the message and the episodes comprising the good news according to Jesus.

[End of Talk]

Thank you, brothers, for those faith-strengthening talks.

6. Announcements

The attendance for the opening session of this Declare the Good News convention was 1,654. As a correction, the frequencies listed on the banner underneath the year text is correct. That is 72.1 FM for the English program and 75.9 for the audio descriptions. Sorry for any misunderstandings on what was announced earlier.

6.1. Song 110

So now we invite you to stand and join in singing song number 110, entitled "The Joy of Jehovah."
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1. Introduction

This afternoon's music video presentation shows the joy that results from doing good to our neighbors, to our brothers and sisters, and to our family. Please watch and listen quietly to this heartwarming video.

1.1. Song 117

The opening song for this afternoon's session highlights Jehovah's example of goodness and invites us to imitate him. Let's stand and sing together song number 117 entitled "The Quality of Goodness." Again, that's song number 117.

2. (Sym 1of3) Believe the Truth About Jesus, The Word

(12:57) What convinces us that our beliefs about Jesus are in line with the truth? The following three-part symposium will strengthen our conviction and motivate us to share the truth about Jesus with others. Brother Michael Brander, our convention program overseer, will begin with the talk, "Believe the Truth About Jesus, The Word." Each speaker will then introduce the one to follow.

Do you have the truth? Do you believe that you have the truth about who Jehovah and Jesus really are? Yes! Because when we look at the scriptures, we see that our beliefs line up with what's in the Bible. And so with confidence, we say we have the truth. And what a difference that makes in our life. It's a reason why we're all here together today. It affects the way that we treat others on a daily basis. It impacts our outlook, how we view the future and the things we hope for. But we also realize that so many people that we
come into contact with don't have the truth about Jehovah and Jesus, and we're anxious to share it with them. So in today's symposium, we're going to consider truths about Jesus.

First of all, his role.

Second, his name.

And then finally, some events that are connected with his birth.

2.1. Jesus’ Role

So first of all, his role. The Bible calls Jesus "the Word." So now let's watch a video where the Apostle John is speaking about the Word.

2.1.1. Video: John

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was a god. This one was in the beginning with God.

[End of Video]

The Word. Well, you saw John talking about how Jesus was with Jehovah in the beginning. He was the first creation. And then scriptures like Colossians 1:15-17, tells us that Jehovah then used him to create all other things, including angels and humans. And as the Word, it was Jehovah's choice to use him as a spokesman, someone who communicated things to angels, to humans. But humans rebelled. And so Jehovah was going to continue with his purpose. But he said, "I want Jesus to be the focal point in the fulfillment of all these prophecies." And so when you think about a focal point, you think someone's trying to direct your attention somewhere. And that's the case with you right now. Maybe you can see these intense spotlights where they kind of focus in. And on your screen, how things are framed up. Even the volume is to draw
your attention to the videos or to the speaker who has the role of conveying something important to you. And so when humans, they made mistakes, and then Satan's ways took over the earth, we see all sorts of problems for mankind.

Jehovah said, "Focus in on my Son for the solutions." And then soon, when God's kingdom is on the earth and reigning over everything and corrects it all, and we're so happy because of how things are, we'll praise Jehovah because he founded all those things in Jesus.

Do you start to get a feel for the significance of Jesus' role as the Word? Well, it didn't stop there. Jehovah gave him other titles--Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God, the Head of the Congregation, to list a few. But then Jehovah really increased Jesus' role.

2.2. Jesus’ name

And that happened after he was resurrected, after his time here on earth and then dying faithfully. So let's look at a scripture that details that. If you turn to Philippians 2:8-11. "More than that, when he came as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death. Yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason, God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus, every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

So you see there that Jehovah gave Jesus this name. And it was something to signify majesty, excellence, power, authority. Now, can you try to think of a name that we give to humans in a role that
might have those descriptions, like president or maybe even an emperor or a king? And yet Jehovah says it's not even close to the role that Jesus has. And then you notice in 10 and 11, it tells us that every knee should bend in his name. And it gets us to thinking, well, then, how can I show Jesus the honor that he deserves based on what we see here? And there's a few ways. One is something you probably do quite often, and that is in our prayers we say, "In Jesus' name." And you'll hear that throughout this convention as well. And that's excellent. We want to do that to show honor to Jesus. But we also want to remember that that can get routine, and we don't want it to. It's almost like the way you might communicate with someone if you're sending them an email. And you write the body, but then at the end, you have a signature. And you might pick your own, but some people write "sincerely." And nowadays, you can even make it so that it just inserts itself there automatically. And so maybe you do have an important email, and then it says "sincerely." And then you might say, "Well, come to this meeting." You probably forget about what it was for by the end of the day, but "sincerely." Or, "Hey, what are you doing for lunch?" "Sincerely." And the person thinks, "Well, I wasn't going to go to lunch, but hey, they said 'sincerely.' It's really moving."

We don't want it to get routine like that. So in our prayers, do we talk to Jehovah about his son, show appreciation for him and what he's doing and what he has done? He also looks at our life. And you know, Jesus had some amazing qualities that he showed us in imitation of his father while he was on earth. And we try to imitate him. So if we're thinking about that and we think, "Oh, he really was kind to people," but you know, that's not my best quality. However, we work on it to honor Jesus. And we also want to tell others about him.
So we're in the store and normally we think, "Heads down. I've got to get this done. I don't want to see people." But instead, we think, "No." Let me try to start a conversation. Knowing the truth about Jesus makes a difference in our life.

2.3. Video: Difference the truth makes

So now let's watch a video where we can see the difference it can make when we believe the truth about Jesus.

Michelle Shen - USA

I remember when I was a little girl. My grandmother and I would often go to a nearby temple to worship. What I disliked the most was looking at the gods inside the temple. Their faces looked so fierce, stern, and cold. Those hideous statues made me feel very uncomfortable. Many years later, when I had a family of my own, I really wanted to know God, but I didn't know how. My heart was very empty, and I felt life had no meaning.

One day, on a quiet afternoon, I sat by the window and looked up at the sky. At that moment, I prayed, "Oh Lord God, where are You? Do You exist? Please tell me." Not long after that, the doorbell rang. I went to open the door, and I saw a woman, a missionary. On that very day, I accepted a Bible study. I learned that Jesus had a purpose in coming to the earth. He came as God's representative. The way Jesus treated people. He was so humble and full of love and tenderness. He was merciful and compassionate, and He loved justice. So that made me think about what I saw in the temple when I was little. Compared to those scary, stern, and cold statues, the difference was like night and day. I decided to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
By coming to know Jesus, I have come to know the best, most loving Father in the world, Jehovah God. I have become more positive, and my life is full of meaning. So when I go out to preach, I really hope that everyone can learn these precious truths like I have. And that all can enjoy a happy, healthy life on a beautiful paradise earth forever. I welcome and encourage all to come and learn this precious truth.

[End of Video]

(26:17) Most people we talk to, they'd be familiar with Jesus. But can we say that they really know the truth about Him, His role, and the honor that He deserves? Well, if we truly believe it, may it motivate us to continue to tell others the good news about Him.

Now, of all the names that are given to God's Son, which one do you think is the most common and well-known? Isn't it Jesus?

3. (Sym 2of3) Believe the Truth About Jesus - His Name

(27:03) With that in mind, let's give our attention to Brother Jerome Fisher as he presents the next part of our symposium, "Believe the Truth About Jesus, His Name."

How significant is the name Jesus? As you watch the following video, try to imagine the magnitude of this moment being portrayed.

3.1. Video: Angel’s message to Joseph

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home. For what has been conceived in her is by Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. For He will save His people from their sins.
Even before his birth, God's Son was given the name Jesus, which when translated means "Jehovah is salvation," highlighting God's name Jehovah, and thereby giving credit to Jehovah and His purpose of bringing salvation to mankind. Now, how did Jesus' life exalt Jehovah's name? Well, when teaching us how to pray, how did Jesus show us how to pray? What was the first thing that He said in Matthew 6:9? He said, "Let your name be sanctified," thereby putting the importance on Jehovah. How else can we say that Jesus exalted Jehovah's name? At John 10:25, Jesus said that the works that I am doing in my Father's name, these bear witness about me.

Now, let's think about that for a moment. What did Jesus mean by the works that I perform? Well, what were some of these works that Jesus performed, and what do they teach us about Jehovah?

Well, recall that when Jesus healed the leper, that leper was full of leprosy. And what did Jesus do? He touched him and told him, "I want to be made clean." What did that teach us about Jesus? What did that leper see in Jesus? No doubt he saw his empathy, and not just Jesus' empathy, but Jehovah's empathy as well.

And what about at Lazarus' death? What do we learn about Jesus there? Well, when the Scripture said that Jesus groaned, and groaned in spirit, and became troubled, and gave way to tears, what did that teach us about Jesus? What did that teach us about Jehovah? Well, that taught us about Jesus' compassion and Jehovah's compassion as well. And no doubt you felt that.

What does that teach us? Well, Jesus' works on his Father's behalf give us a perfect picture of who Jehovah is. Seeing Jesus in action was like seeing Jehovah in action. And Jesus exalted

[End of Video]
Jehovah not only through his works or by telling others his name, but he exalted Jehovah by revealing the person behind the name, his purpose, his qualities, the things that would draw us closer to him once we got to know those qualities that Jehovah had. The more we learn the truth about Jesus, the more we come to learn about Jehovah himself, and that draws us closer to him.

In John 17, Jesus said that I have made your name manifest or known, thereby telling others that his name, Jehovah's name, everything behind Jehovah's name is what draws us closer to him, his reputation, what he declares himself to be. Those are all things that in the Bible the name can signify.

Now, Jesus' name in Hebrew corresponds with the name Yeshua, which literally means, as we mentioned earlier, salvation belongs to Jehovah, or Jehovah is salvation. So within his own name is Jehovah's name, thereby pointing to Jehovah as the source of salvation and accomplishing everything through Jesus Christ.

Now, we are in need of being saved, are we not? We all grow old because of sin. We all get sick and we die. But Jehovah sent his son, Jesus, as a salvation to save us from sin and death. And Jesus did this by offering his life as a sacrifice for us. Well, how did Jesus' earthly life and ministry point to Jehovah as the source of our salvation? Well, Jesus is frequently mentioned in the scriptures as being sent by Jehovah to save mankind. One of the first scriptures that we were taught when we learned the Bible was found at John 3:16,17. Verse 17 says that God sent his son into the world so that the world might be saved. How did learning that truth make you feel when you came to learn that? Did it not draw you closer to not only Jesus, but did it not warm your heart and draw you closer to Jehovah for what he did for us?
Open with me, I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Acts 4:12 and here Peter was speaking about how Bible prophecy had been fulfilled in Jesus. And in verse 8, it speaks of Peter being filled with Holy Spirit as he spoke these very powerful words here in verse 12. It says, "Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name unto heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." And when you look at these verses prior to this, you see that Peter was talking about the name Jesus. By recognizing Jehovah as the source of our salvation and the arrangements he provided through Jesus, both can be referred to as our Savior. And knowing that we have a Savior can bring us comfort from the many trials and tribulations that we may even be experiencing while sitting here.

**3.2. Video: Knowing the truth can change a person's life**

Now, as you watch the following video, please note how learning the truth about Jesus can change a person's life.

[Belle Schorr - USA]

I grew up in a big, beautiful family, very Jewish, just enjoyed everything. We enjoyed each other, we enjoyed our holidays, and so I just felt that I was privileged. When I left the house, I got married and came to New York. One day, a woman came to my door and said, "Do you know you could live forever?" So I looked at her and I said, "Oh, really? That's a nice thought, you know, but how is that possible? It's never happened." And that's when she said, "Well, but the Bible says it can happen, and that's what this book— that's going to tell you how you could live forever in paradise." I didn't know that taking the book that day was going to change my whole life. When she came back, she showed me that
God has a name and that it's Jehovah. I said, "You show it to me from my Bible." She opened up to Exodus chapter 6:3, and I saw the Hebrew letters there, yod, hei, vav, hei. There were no vowel points. I couldn't pronounce it, but I knew it was God's name. And then from there, I just—I had to know more.

When we were having our study, so she would always end the prayer with Yeshua, Mashiach. Mashiach, I know, means, you know, blessed one, anointed, Messiah. Who was Yeshua? And she said, "Well, that was Jesus' Hebrew name." And then she gave me a list of prophecies about Jesus, and I took that Bible. It's so worn out now, but I think I went through every single prophecy.

And then the clincher was, of course, Daniel, the ninth chapter. This whole part, it just opened my eyes to something that I had never seen before. It was so precise, the timing. It can't be an accident. So it answered the question that I had, "Why don't we sacrifice?" Well, because the Messiah already came and sacrificed His life, and now He's presented it to Jehovah in heaven. And so we don't have to wait for it anymore. The thought that Jehovah chose His Son to come to earth to die so that I, insignificant me, can live forever in paradise. I mean, that's special.

So I decided to get baptized and serve Jehovah, and I've been doing it since 1959. Look at, I'm 93 years old, I'm healthy, I'm still going out in the ministry, and I can still cook chicken soup with matzo balls. What can I tell you? I absolutely love teaching the Bible to people. As long as I have breath in me, I'm going to use it to share with others about Jehovah and the Messiah, Jesus.

[End of Video]

Learning these precious truths as found in God's Word, the Bible, motivate us, draws us closer to Jehovah. Perhaps even in looking
at this experience, you saw your own experience in the same. May we all have the same enthusiasm that Jesus had in making known the good news of salvation that Jehovah provides.

4. (Sym 3of3) Believe the Truth About Jesus - His Birth

(38:35) Brother Sean Mitchell, a Patterson Bethel family member, will now consider the final part of this symposium, "Believe the Truth About Jesus, His Birth."

Every Christmas season, you see nativity scenes depicting what was supposed to have occurred at the time of Jesus' birth. Such scenes depict Jesus as a newborn baby lying in a manger as he's being visited by the so-called three wise men or kings. And all of this happens on what is supposed to have been the date of Jesus' birth, December 25th. But are such depictions accurate? And was Jesus born on December 25th? Does it even matter?

- Well, this talk will help us to see that no, such depictions are not accurate.
- And yes, to true Christians, it does matter. Because true Christians do not embrace false teachings or false traditions regarding the birth of Jesus. Instead, we believe the truth about Jesus as revealed in the Bible.

4.1. Excerpt: The News according to Jesus

With that in mind, in the following preview video excerpt of what you will see tomorrow in "The Good News According to Jesus," see if Jesus is portrayed as being visited by three so-called wise men or
kings. And during that visit, see if Jesus is portrayed as being a newborn baby lying in a manger. Let's watch.

And when they went into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother. And falling down, they did obeisance to him. [Baby crying] They also opened their treasures and presented him with gifts. Gold. And frankincense. And myrrh.

[End of Video]

4.2. Number of astrologers

Did you notice? There were not three men depicted visiting Jesus. Instead, there were five. But what does the Bible say? Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 2:1,2. And let us see whether there were three wise men or kings that visited Jesus. And for that matter, were they really kings at all? Matthew 2:1,2. We'll see that these visitors first went to King Herod in Jerusalem. Let's read. Matthew 2:1,2. “After Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, look, astrologers from the east came to Jerusalem saying, ‘Where is the one born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when we were in the east, and we have come to do obeisance to him.’"

So notice in verse 1, they are not called wise men or kings. Instead, they are called astrologers, which is more in line with the original language word used in this verse. And notice in verse 1, the Bible does not say how many visitors there were. So there's no basis for nativity scenes to insist on always showing three men. And since the Bible does not say how many visitors came to see Jesus, then there should be no objection to our video showing five astrologers.
4.3. Did Jehovah send the guiding star?

Now, nativity scenes lead people to believe that it was God who sent the star to lead these astrologers to Jesus. But is that true? Well, look again, please, in Matthew 2:7,8. We see Herod sends the astrologers to Bethlehem to find Jesus. And then verse 9 shows that the star leads the astrologers right to where Jesus is living. But why did Herod want these astrologers to find Jesus? The last words of verse 13 tells us, "Herod wants to kill Jesus."

So surely it was not Jehovah God who sent this star. Instead, it was none other than Satan, the devil himself. He sent the star to help Herod try to find and kill Jesus before Jesus could ever begin his ministry as the Messiah.

4.4. Was Jesus still a baby when astrologers came?

Now, what about nativity scenes showing Jesus as a newborn baby lying in a manger when the astrologers arrived? Is that true? Well, no. Look at verse 11. It shows that by the time the astrologers arrived, Jesus was not a newborn baby lying in a manger. Instead, he was a young child living in a house. So nativity scenes clearly are not in harmony with the truth.

What, though, is the truth about the date of Jesus' birth? Well, the fact is, the Bible does not tell the exact date of when Jesus was born. However, it does provide evidence that he was not born in December. In the following video, note what the Bible reveals.

4.5. Video: When was Jesus born?

When was Jesus Christ born? Many would answer, "December 25th." On that date, Christmas is celebrated worldwide, even in many non-Christian countries. The Bible does not give an exact
date for Jesus' birth, but it does indicate something that would surprise many.

4.6. Not born in winter

He was not born in the winter. How do we know? First, the Bible tells us that at the time of Jesus' birth, shepherds were "living out of doors" and keeping watch in the night over their flocks” Luke 2:8.

For much of the year, shepherds in Bethlehem spent the night outside with their flocks, but not during their cold, rainy, occasionally snowy winter months. Instead, in winter, shepherds protected their flocks from the elements by keeping them under shelter.

Second, the Bible tells us that around the time of Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus ordered a general census. To comply with it, Jesus' parents had to travel at least 110 kilometers, or 68 miles, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It is unlikely that Augustus would order the Jews, who were already inclined to revolt, to make long trips in the harsh conditions of winter.

Third, the Bible points to a different time for Jesus' birth. The book of Luke says that Jesus was baptized and began his work at about 30 years of age, and Daniel prophesied that Jesus' ministry would last three and a half years. Jesus died on the Passover in the spring at 33 and a half years of age, so his birth, 33 and a half years earlier, would have been in autumn. Thus, the Bible indicates that Jesus was born not in winter, but in autumn.

4.7. Does it matter?

But does it really matter whether Jesus was born on December 25th, or whether certain traditions or celebrations may include
certain inaccuracies regarding Jesus' birth? Well, as the following video shows, it matters to those who want to know the truth about Jesus. Let's watch.

4.7.1. Video: Francisca Moreno - Mexico

Christmas was such a happy time for my family. I was happy because we could be together as a family. In our community, there are many traditions related to Christmas. Our whole family would go to church on Christmas Eve to worship Jesus.

My husband passed away when the children were still very young, and I felt very lonely. Our lives had completely changed. So I would pray to God, and all I would say was, "God, please help me to be a good wife to my children." I would say, "God, please help me to be a good wife to my children." I would pray to God, and all I would say was, "God, wherever you are, please help me to raise my children well."

If the witnesses come by again, this time I will listen to them. They answered all my questions using the Bible. I began to learn what the Bible says about Jesus' birth, and I found it difficult to grasp. What I had always been taught wasn't what the Bible said. I liked having a clear understanding of why God sent Jesus to the earth, what He was sent to do, what He will do in the future, and the blessings He'll bring. I realized that what I was studying was the truth. I stopped thinking of Jesus as a little baby.

I was excited to learn what the Bible says Jesus will do for mankind, like how He will resurrect the dead. A lot of people didn't like what I was learning. My parents came to my house, and they said they would kick me out of town if I didn't stop studying. But I decided that what I was learning from the Bible was more
important. I was able to teach my children about who Jesus is and what He will do for the earth.

Many years have gone by since we gave up those Christmas traditions. I'm so pleased to see how my children are doing because of following Bible teachings. Now, I am truly happy.

[End of Video]

So yes, knowing the truth about Jesus really does matter. And like the angel who spoke to the shepherds in the first century, we have the privilege of declaring good news of a great joy regarding Jesus. This symposium has helped us to see that our beliefs regarding Jesus' identity and His birth are firmly rooted in the truth as revealed in God's Word, the Bible. Therefore, we know Jesus is the Word, God's spokesman, and we recognize the vital role that He plays in the outworking of God's purpose. We appreciate that Jesus' name means "Jehovah is salvation," and we want as many as possible to come to know about Jehovah and His Son. And we reject all false teachings and all false traditions regarding Jesus' birth.

4.8. Why is truth important?

But why is believing the truth so important to us? Well, it's because all who believe the truth can enjoy Jehovah's rich blessing. For John 4:23 tells us Jehovah is looking for ones like these to worship Him. Therefore, we believe the truth. We want to worship with spirit and truth. We will keep preaching and teaching the truth until everyone, everywhere, will come to know and believe the truth about Jesus.

[End of Talk]
5. Song 99

Thank you, brothers, for highlighting the scriptural basis for our beliefs. We now invite all to stand and sing song number 99 entitled "Myriads of Brothers." After the song, there will be some announcements, and if you wish, you may remain standing. Again, that's song number 99.
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1. Introduction

We now encourage you to watch and listen quietly to the music video presentation, which begins by showing how Jesus has been depicted in our publications and videos over the years. Please enjoy the video.

Welcome to this second day of this Declare the Good News Regional Convention. The scriptural theme today for today's program is taken from Psalm 96 verse 2, where we read, "Proclaim the good news of his salvation day after day." This morning we will hear fascinating talks on Messianic prophecies. The afternoon program will emphasize the importance of the preaching work.

1.1. Song 53

To start the day, we invite all to stand and join in singing song number 53, entitled "Preparing to Preach." After the song, Brother Michael Quattrochi will offer the opening prayer. Again, that's song number 53.

2. I must . . . declare the good news of the kingdom

(13:17) Please be seated. What motivated Jesus to declare the good news? How can we imitate his example? Please enjoy the following talk presented by Brother Kenneth Cook, Jr., a member of the Governing Body. The theme is taken from Luke 4, verse 43,
where Jesus is recorded as saying, "I must declare the good news of the kingdom."

Welcome back to our "Declare the Good News" convention. I'm sure you enjoyed yesterday's sessions.

How exciting it was to see the first segment of our feature drama, "The Good News According to Jesus." What was your favorite scene? Was it going inside the Holy of the Temple where the aged priest Zechariah offered incense to God? Or seeing the angel Gabriel tell Zechariah that his barren wife Elizabeth would give birth to a boy named John? Remember the doubt that Zechariah expressed and how that cost him the loss of his speech until after the child was born? Or was your favorite scene when Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that miraculously she was to become pregnant and give birth to God's son?

Let's watch that scene again and note what the angel told Mary about the child who was to be born to her.

2.1. Video: Angel telling Mary about the child to be born to her

Angel: Greetings, you highly favored one. Jehovah is with you.

Narrator: But she was deeply disturbed at his words and tried to understand what kind of greeting this might be.

Angel: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And look, you will become pregnant and give birth to a son. And you are to name him Jesus. This one will be great and will be called son of the Most High. And 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 to his kingdom.
Mary: How is this to be since I'm not having sexual relations with a man?

Angel: Holy Spirit will come upon you and power of the Most High will overshadow you. And for that reason, the one who was born will be called holy, God's son. And look, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month for her, the so-called barren woman. For no declaration will be impossible for God.

Mary: Look, Jehovah's slave girl, may it happen to me according to your declaration.

[End of Video]

What did Gabriel tell Mary? He said of Jesus, Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father. And he will rule as king and there will be no end to his kingdom. That was glorious good news. Jehovah was making it known that his own son would serve as mankind's future ruler. That shows the intense interest that Jehovah has in us. That he would have his own beloved son take over rulership of the earth.

What will we see today in the good news according to Jesus? For one thing, the exciting event when Jehovah's angel declares to the shepherds who are out in the fields with their flocks, the good news of a great joy that all the people will have.

Then we'll watch and listen as those shepherds are privileged to see and hear a multitude of angels praising Jehovah. That will be a sight to see.

After the drama, six speakers will explain to us various prophecies that were fulfilled regarding the manner and timing of Jesus' birth.
Of course, the newborn Jesus grows up to be the Christ, the promised Messiah. By his teachings, Jesus reveals Jehovah's provision for our salvation. He gives up his perfect human life in behalf of mankind. And then he's resurrected back to heaven to become the chosen king of God's kingdom.

In future episodes, we'll see Jesus begin his earthly ministry. What would be his mission? One Sabbath day when he was in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah and applied those prophetic words to himself. Luke 4:18,19 quotes Jesus as he read, "Jehovah's Spirit is upon me because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and a recovery of sight to the blind, to send the crushed ones away free, to preach Jehovah's acceptable year." Then Jesus said, "Today, this scripture that you just heard is fulfilled."

Shortly after that, as reported at Luke 4:43, Jesus told his disciples what would be the theme of his preaching. He said, "I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God because for this I was sent." Why would Jesus say that he must declare the good news? On another occasion, he explained, "For the world to know that I love the Father, I am doing just as the Father has commanded me to do."

It was out of his deep love for Jehovah that Jesus felt a strong desire to tell others about his heavenly Father. Jesus also wanted to counteract the lies Satan had been promoting. During his short earthly ministry, Jesus set a zealous example in trying to help people put faith in the good news. Luke 8:1 reports that he traveled from city to city and from village to village preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God, and the twelve were with him. Because of that fine example, those who learned from Jesus
in the first century wasted no time in imitating his zeal. Acts 5:42 tells us that every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without let up teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus. And so we must also be eager to declare the same good news. Happily, though, as we preach, we can add the fact that Jesus is now ruling as our King in heaven.

What will help us to imitate Jesus' zeal for the ministry? Prayerful meditation. Jesus took time to pray and to ponder in private. He had observed that people were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd. Seeing people being maltreated and neglected stirred Jesus' compassion for them and the desire to help them. We also can compassionately reflect on how much the people in our territory need to hear the good news. And we can think about the fact that living as we are in the last days of this system of things, there's not much time left for people to respond to our preaching efforts.

Many Kingdom publishers find that praying and meditating, even for a few moments, right before sharing in the ministry, helps them to preach with greater zeal and boldness. It deepens their desire to serve Jehovah, sharpens their spiritual focus, and strengthens their determination to continue preaching regardless of the reaction they get. May today's program stir in you an even greater desire to proclaim the good news of salvation day after day.
(23:45) Now, please enjoy the continuation of episode one of "The Good News According to Jesus." Part two centers on the second chapters of both Luke's gospel and Matthew's. Let's watch the conclusion of episode one, "The True Light of the World."

Now in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered. This first registration took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all the people went to be registered, each one to his own city. Of course, Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem, because of his being a member of the house and family of David. He went to get registered with Mary, who had been given him in marriage as promised, and who was soon to give birth.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. [crying] [crying] And she gave birth to her son, the firstborn. And she wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the lodging place. There were also in the same region shepherds, living out of doors, and keeping watch in the night over their flocks. [thunder]

Suddenly, Jehovah's angel stood before them, and Jehovah's glory gleamed around them, and they became very fearful.

Angel: Do not be afraid, for look, I am declaring to you good news of a great joy that all the people will have. For today there was born to you in David's city a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is a
sign for you. You will find an infant wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger. Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God.

   Angels: Glory in the highest above to God, and on earth peace among men of good will.

   So, when the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us by all means go over to Bethlehem and see what has taken place, which Jehovah has made known to us. And they went quickly and found Mary as well as Joseph and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that they had been told concerning this young child. And all who heard were astonished at what the shepherds told them. But Mary began to preserve all these sayings, drawing conclusions in her heart. Then the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

   After eight days, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus. The name given by the angel before he was conceived. Also, when the time came for purifying them according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to Jehovah. Just as it is written in Jehovah's law, every firstborn male must be called holy to Jehovah.

   And they offered a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of Jehovah. A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

3.1. Simeon

   And look, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for Israel's consolation. And Holy Spirit was upon him. Furthermore, it had been divinely
revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of Jehovah. Under the power of the Spirit, he now came into the temple. And as the parents brought the young child Jesus in to do for him according to the customary practice of the law, he took the child into his arms. And praised God.

Simeon: Now, sovereign Lord, you are letting your slave go in peace. According to your declaration. Because I always have seen your means of salvation. That you have prepared in the sight of all the peoples. A light for removing the veil from the nations. And a glory of your people Israel.

Narrator: And the child's father and mother continued wondering at the things being spoken about him. Also, Simeon blessed them.

And said to Mary, the child's mother:

Simeon: Look, this child is appointed for the falling and the rising again of many in Israel. And for a sign to be spoken against. Yes, a long sword will be run through you. In order that the reasonings of many hearts may be revealed.

3.2. Anna the Prophetess

Narrator: Now there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of Asher's tribe. This woman was well along in years. And had lived with her husband for seven years after they were married. And she was a widow, now 84 years old. She was never missing from the temple. Rendering sacred service night and day with fasting and supplications. At that very hour, she came near. And began giving thanks to God. And speaking about the child to all who were waiting for Jerusalem's deliverance.
3.3. Herod the king

After Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king. Look, astrologers from the east came to Jerusalem. Saying, "Where is the one born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when we were in the east. And we have come to do obeisance to him." At hearing this, King Herod was agitated. And all Jerusalem with him.

On gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

Priest or Scribe: In Bethlehem of Judea. For this is how it has been written through the prophet. "And you, O Bethlehem of the land of Judea, are by no means the most insignificant city among the governors of Judea. For out of you will come a governing one who will shepherd my people Israel."

Narrator: Then Herod secretly summoned the astrologers and carefully ascertained from them the time of the stars appearing. When sending them to Bethlehem, he said:

Herod: "Go, make a careful search for the young child. And when you have found him, report back to me, so that I too may go and do obeisance to him."

Narrator: After they had heard the king, they went their way. And look! The star they had seen when they were in the east went ahead of them. Until it came to a stop above where the young child was. On seeing the star, they rejoiced with great joy. [knock on door] And when they went into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother. And falling down, they did obeisance to him. They also opened their treasures and presented him with gifts. Gold. And frankincense. And myrrh.
However, because they were given divine warning in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

### 3.4. Fled to Egypt

After they had departed, look! Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up. Take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt and stay there until I give you word. For Herod is about to search for the young child to kill him." We need to go. So Joseph got up and by night took along the young child and the child's mother and went into Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod.

### 3.5. Herod’s rage

This fulfilled what was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Then Herod, seeing that he had been outwitted by the astrologers, flew into a great rage. No! No! And he sent out and had all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its districts killed from two years of age and under, according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the astrologers. No!

Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, who said, "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and much wailing. It was Rachel weeping for her children, and she was unwilling to take comfort, because they are no more."

### 3.6. Return to Israel

When Herod had died, look, Jehovah's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. "Get up, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For those who were seeking the life of the young child are dead." So he got up and took the
young child and the child's mother and entered into the land of Israel.

But hearing that Archelaus ruled Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Moreover, being given divine warning in a dream, he withdrew into the territory of Galilee. And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. He will be called a Nazarene.

3.7. Passover in Jerusalem

Now his parents were accustomed to go from year to year to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival.

When the days of the festival were over and they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. And his parents did not notice it. Assuming that he was in the group traveling together, they went a day's journey. And then began to search for him among the relatives and acquaintances. But not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem and made a diligent search for him.

Well, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers. And listening to them and asking them questions. But all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers.

Now when his parents saw him, they were astounded.

Mary: Child, why did you treat us this way? Here your father and I have been frantically looking for you.

Jesus: Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the house of my father?
Narrator: However, they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down with them and returned to Nazareth. And he continued subject to them. Also, his mother carefully kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus went on progressing in wisdom and in physical growth and in favor with God and men. The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world.

[End of Video]

How we look forward to seeing future episodes.

4. Song 69

Please stand now if you're able to do so. And let us sing song number 69 together, which is entitled "Go Forward in Preaching the Kingdom." After the song, you may remain standing for some announcements. That's song number 69.
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1. Introduction

Jehovah gives us the privilege of honoring Him with our valuable things. Those who wish to give financial support to the Kingdom work can donate using any of the contribution boxes. Those making a contribution by check should make the check payable to “Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses”. If possible, however, please donate online at donate.jw.org. If you would like assistance in making an online donation or you wish to donate using your contactless credit or debit card or mobile wallet, please visit the donation information booth. The donation information booth is located in the main lobby.

Before leaving the assembly hall each day, it would be appreciated if you would pick up any trash around your seating area. You may be seated.

2. (Sym 1of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Geography

What was it like to live in Israel when Jesus was on earth? The upcoming seven-part symposium will examine the environment and culture of Jesus' day and draws lessons that we can apply. Each speaker will introduce the one to follow. Brother Gabriel Antoine, a regular pioneer in the South Warwick congregation, will deliver the first talk entitled, "Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Geography."

My dear brothers and sisters, do you not agree that our new drama helps us to learn valuable lessons about the Land of Jesus? When we study and meditate on the gospel accounts, they give us a glimpse of what life was like in the Land of Israel during the time
that Jesus walked the earth. At the same time, they stimulate our curiosity about a time in the Land that perhaps was quite different from our own. This symposium will help us to understand the environment and culture of Israel in Jesus' day as portrayed in the video, "The Good News According to Jesus."

2.1. Seven aspects of life in the Land of Jesus

If you have your program, please take a look at it, friends. If you're taking notes, as we go through this symposium, we're going to consider seven aspects of life in the Land of Jesus.

1. The first one that we're going to consider in this talk is geography.
2. The second one to follow will be animals.
3. And the third, food.
4. The fourth, home life.
5. The fifth, community.
6. The sixth, education.
7. And the seventh aspect, worship.

Now as we go through these symposiums, friends, and these seven aspects, we want to draw valuable lessons from each one. Now, many, if not all, the aspects of life in Israel were guided by Jehovah's Law. When the Israelites obeyed Jehovah and worshiped Him faithfully, they benefited.

2.2. Good land from Jehovah - Deut 8:7

How? Where one way they benefited is by receiving a beautiful inheritance from Jehovah. What inheritance? Well, I invite you to turn your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8. That is Deuteronomy, chapter 8. And here in this account, Moses was
preparing the nation of Israel to take possession of their inheritance.

And note what he says about this inheritance in Deuteronomy 8:7. There he said, "For Jehovah your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of streams of water, springs and fountains flowing in a valley plain and in a mountainous region." Now let's dissect this verse just a little.

Let's meditate a little bit on this verse. Why was this a good land? Well Deuteronomy 11:12 tells us that this was a land that Jehovah personally cared for. His eyes were constantly upon it. Why? Well, it's because this land was not just going to be the land for the nation of Israel. This was going to be the land of his only begotten son. Yes, the land of Jesus.

### 2.2.1. Illustration: Baby’s room

Now just to illustrate why this is important, when a couple is expecting a young child, they personally prepare and care for the baby's room, do they not? They beautify it with a specific color or wallpaper. Their eyes are constantly looking around the room, making sure the room is childproof for the child's safety. Do we expect anything less from our heavenly father when it's his only begotten son that's going to be living in this land? Well, of course not. Let's look back at this verse friends.

### 2.2.2. Geography

Now let's look at the geography of the land, how Jehovah beautifies it. There it says the land had streams of water, springs and fountains flowing in a valley plain and in a mountainous region. I'm meditating a little bit on these verses. We can see that this land
had rivers, lakes, seashores, mountains, forests and desert all in a relatively small area.

Now some might wonder, is this land still the same today? Well, surprisingly, although 2000 years have passed since Jesus' time, the basic features of the land remain the same. So if you were to visit the land of Jesus today, you can walk the same hills and valleys that Jesus walked. You can visit locations where he taught many of the people and performed many of his powerful miracles.

Our dear friends who are working on the video project, The Good News According to Jesus, are taking great care to portray the land accurately. How do we know? Well, as you watch the following video, know some aspects of the land where Jesus lived.

2.3. Video: Geography of the land where Jesus lived

At the heart of the Middle East lie the lands where Jesus walked. What were they like when he was there? And what lessons do they hold for our life today?

2.3.1. Herodium

The palace fortress of Herodium, south of Jerusalem, built by Herod the Great. Like many fortresses, it sits on a mountain, providing great visibility all around and an ideal looking spot to start our journey. To place ourselves on the map, we've enlisted the help of one of the local brothers who knows how to get the best view of this land.

Daniel, this view is amazing. What can we actually see from up here? Well, this is a great spot because you can see so many famous locations from the Bible that we've all heard about.
For example, we have Jerusalem just behind us, the Mount of Olives. This is where the Judean wilderness starts. And down there, you can see it from here, is the Dead Sea. So it really gives you an idea of the extent of the promised land. But more than anything, it connects us to the story of Jesus. Not just because this place is linked with Herod the Great, but because from here you have a great view of Bethlehem right there over the hill.

Wow, the birthplace of Jesus. That's an amazing thing to see.

But you know what strikes me looking at the terrain? Is it so hilly? People must have spent their lives just going up and down hills. Yes, for sure. Just think about it. We are 750 meters above sea level and Bethlehem is just a little bit higher than us, but the Dead Sea that is so close is minus 400 meters. It's the lowest place on earth. So when the Bible says that they went down to a place, that they went up to a place, it's something very literal. So it's not up in terms of north on a map, it's up in terms of sea level. Yes, and that's a very important lesson we can learn from the geography of this place.

From the Dead Sea in the south, close to where our journey has begun, to the peak of Mount Hermon in the north, the elevation changes by over 3,000 meters. The further you travel here, the more hills and mountains you have to climb. To understand the long, arduous journey Jesus' family would have taken to Jerusalem for the annual festivals, Daniel has brought me to another looking point, near Nazareth.

Yes, there were two main routes leading up towards Jerusalem, both of them passing right through here, this very valley. So just imagine them from Nazareth, just behind us, going down into the
valley, then slowly trekking up about 600 meters in elevation through Samaria before eventually reaching Jerusalem.

From what I've seen today, I can't imagine that was an easy journey. No, not at all. It doesn't stay nice and flat like this for long. Understanding this land gives more meaning to the journeys described in the Bible. Joseph and the heavily pregnant Mary humbly and obediently traveled up to Bethlehem.

Later, they made it their family's custom to go from year to year up to Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph overcame physical obstacles to share in true worship at the temple. But we don't have to come here to walk in their footsteps. We can do that in a sense by climbing our own hills and mountains for Jehovah, by overcoming whatever obstacles we encounter in order not to forsake our meeting together.

[End of Video]

2.4. Lessons learned

What valuable lessons can we gain from studying the geography of the land of Jesus? Learning about the geography of the land of Jesus help us to understand certain Bible expressions, illustrations, and account.

If you recall in the video, our tour guide Daniel mentioned that when someone in the Bible said that they were going down to a place or up to a place, that it was very literal. It was not up in terms of north on a map, but in terms of sea level or some might say land elevation. We can see this example when Jesus was teaching. He always mentioned details about places that his listeners were very familiar with.
2.4.1. Down from Jerusalem to Jericho - Luke 10:30,31

For example, the illustration of the good Samaritan. I invite you to turn your Bibles there please with me to the book of Luke 10:30,31. Now keeping in mind that Jesus is keeping in mind of those who are his listeners, who are his disciples listening to this illustration. And notice what he says there. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell victim to robbers who stripped him, beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. Now by coincidence, a priest was going down on that road.

Now what's the point? Well, if a traveler was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, indeed he would be going down, not up. Why? Because Jerusalem was at a higher elevation than Jericho. So you could see how Jesus set a fine example for us as teachers, keeping our listeners in mind, whether we're teaching from the platform, out in the ministry, or we're teaching our Bible students, we want to use expressions and terms, especially when using illustrations, that they're familiar with so that it can fully benefit from the information that we're teaching them.

2.4.2. Went up from Nazareth to Jerusalem - Luke 2:41,42

And what about the account in Luke 2:41,42? There it speaks of Joseph, Mary, and their family, how they went up from Nazareth to the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. Do you recall in the video what our brother said about their journey, what it was like? He said it was an arduous journey. I might add it was a 60 mile journey, which meant that the journey required strenuous effort, traveling through hilly mountainous terrain, taking several days. And no doubt it was difficult and tiring when traveling with little children.

Now what would motivate them to go through this difficult
journey? What would motivate us to do so? Is it not to exert
ourselves in pure worship of the God that we love? All of us are going through a difficult and tiring journey heading to the New World. Some of us have lost our loved ones along the way. Some of us are caring for sick, long loved ones along the way. Despite it all, we must remain resolute in service to Jehovah. Despite the many mountain-like obstacles that Satan and his world throws in our path, no doubt coming to this convention required effort and expense on your part.

My dear brothers and sisters, be assured, yes I repeat, be assured that your Heavenly Father Jehovah will reward you, yes he will bless you, for your faithful endurance and sacrifices.

3. (Sym 2of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Animals

(14:24) Let us now give our attention to Brother Jonathan Krieger, a member of the Wallkill Bethel family who will present the next part of this symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Animals.

What have you learned from an animal lately? Perhaps that your pet thinks that you don't feed it often enough? Or maybe a robin in the yard helped you appreciate that spring had finally come? Or maybe a deer on a little yellow sign helped you appreciate perhaps you should slow down? These are all fine lessons, but could we learn from some animals in Jesus' day?

3.1. Donkey

Well, let's consider a few animals and then let's consider some lessons that we can learn. Now please, imagine living during Jesus' time. Where it's a typical day, you're walking down the road and you're not far from an animal that you know rather well. Why is
that? Because you and just about everybody that you know has a donkey. And why wouldn't you have a donkey? They're just so practical. You could do everything with them. You could haul things, you could get work done, you could travel places. Jesus even rode one into Jerusalem and he fulfilled the prophecy as he did it.

But they were nothing fancy. They're very common. Donkeys were practically the basic pickup truck or minivan of the day.

3.2. Sheep and Goats

Now as you're traveling down the road with your trusty donkey, you see off to your side in the fields there's a lot of flocks of sheep and goats. You see the shepherds working hard there. In fact, you see your friend working hard as a shepherd with his flock. Now you notice your friend looks pretty tired. Why could that be? Well, please turn with me in your Bible to Luke 2:8. And we'll get a little better idea of why this is a good possibility. Luke 2:8. There were also in the same region shepherds living out of doors and keeping watch in the night over their flocks. So you see these shepherds, they worked very hard for these precious animals. And you appreciated their hard work because you, your family, your community, you depended and relied on the many useful and tasty things that these animals provided. You appreciated the cheese, the milk, the butter, the meat. Their clothes were no doubt made from wool from a sheep like many of ours are. Quite literally animals touched many aspects of your life.

But animals also touch an aspect of your life with regard to your worship of Jehovah. Why was that? Well, many of those sheep that you would have seen in the field could possibly be used as
sacrifices at the temple. But Jehovah realized that not everyone could afford a sheep.

### 3.3. Turtle doves or Pigeons

So what other kinds of animals could be offered? Well, there in Luke 2:24. And notice some others. Here it reads, "And they offered a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of Jehovah, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons." So they here, that's Joseph and Mary. What could they offer? Turtle doves or young pigeons? What was so special about these birds? And thinking about that donkey, could that donkey lead us to some sort of lesson? Well, I encourage you, please give your attention to the following videos. We see examples of these animals and their role in daily life as portrayed in the video The Good News According to Jesus.

### 3.4. Video: Animals

#### 3.4.1. Donkey

The donkey is sometimes viewed as a lowly animal, but throughout the history of the Israelite people, it was a part of daily life. Why? Their sharp hooves make it more sure-footed than a horse, which meant it was better suited to the steep slopes and rough mountainous terrain all around. The long ears that donkeys are famous for help to expel its internal heat quickly, allowing it to stay cool in hot environments. Donkeys have great memories too, enabling them to remember roots and people. There's far more to this lowly beast of burden than meets the eye.
Next we are searching for signs of another animal. One which helps us understand that to Jehovah there is more to us than meets the eye. This is a very well preserved columbarium, or better known as a dovecote. Different types have been found around Israel. This one is a series of man-made hollows carved into the limestone. A pair of doves were housed in each one. They were bred here. And judging by the amount of holes, raising doves was quite an industry.

Why were doves in such high demand? Well, they provided meat. Their dung was harvested as fertilizer. But there was also another use. After the birth of a child, a dove could be used as a sin offering, and a second one as the burnt offering by parents who could not afford a young ram.

No wonder then, the closer we get to Jerusalem and the Temple area, the more ancient dove coats have been excavated. Directly beside the Temple Mount itself, a first century fragment was found bearing the word 'sacrifice' next to an image of two birds.

Coins, merchant's weights, and even these shops from Jesus' era have also been excavated beside the Temple Mount. These finds led to the conclusion that these were the very streets where worshippers, even poor ones, could buy animals to offer as sacrifices to Jehovah.

This provision teaches us that Jehovah loves each one of us, and that he accepts our best, even if we feel it's insignificant. Our circumstances do not define our worth to him. Jehovah values our whole-souled service, even if it's limited by age, health, or other circumstances. As the scripture says, "Man sees what appears to the eyes, but Jehovah sees into the heart."
Now, let's consider three lessons that we can learn from animals in the land of Jesus.

### 3.5.1. Lesson 1: Jesus humbly rode on a donkey

Could you imagine walking along the road with that friendly-looking, long-eared donkey? When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he rode on a donkey like we saw in the video. But why was this remarkable? Is there a lesson that we can learn? Remember, donkeys were common. They were the nothing-flashy, everybody-had-one-or-used-one type of animal. Jesus knew because of his assignment, he was going to have a lot of attention on him. Others at the time loved having attention. They just wanted even more. Julius Caesar rode with a procession of forty elephants carrying lamps. People were accustomed to the fact that prominent people enjoyed making a big deal of themselves. Jesus humbly rode a donkey. Rather than draw more attention, he chose to draw less. So when we choose to deflect rather than attract attention, we humbly give glory to Jehovah.

### 3.5.2. Lesson 2: Jehovah appreciates poor people

Let's consider a second lesson. In the video, did you notice that there were a lot of doves raised and sold near the temple? Why would Jehovah make those doves so available? Well, as we read earlier in Luke 2:24, it was "according to the law of Jehovah" that Joseph and Mary could buy these turtle doves or young pigeons. So the study note helps us appreciate that Jehovah made this provision for poor people.
Is there a lesson here for us? Jehovah wants everyone to feel his smile of approval. As stated in the video, he loves each one of us. He accepts our best even if we feel it's insignificant. Our circumstances do not define our worth. Even if we are limited by our age, our health, or other circumstances, Jehovah is so happy when we offer our best from a heart full of love for him. He chooses to focus on what our sacrifice means. So let those doves remind you, Jehovah is reasonable. He knows you. As his word reminds us, "We see only according to our eyes, what Jehovah sees right here, into the heart."

3.5.3. Lesson 3: Jesus used illustrations based on animals

Now, a third lesson that we can learn from animals of Jesus' time comes from how Jesus used animals in his teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used eight animals in about twenty minutes.

What does that show us? Good illustrations come from everyday things. Jesus knew that, to his listeners, separating sheep and goats that were commonly kept in the same field was common, like us separating laundry kept in the same laundry basket. So when Jesus said, talking about separating sheep and goats, it was something his listeners could visualize. It helped them get the point. Jesus knew that, to his listeners, good shepherds were very attentive to their flocks, like a mother would be to a newborn. So when he described himself as the fine shepherd, people could understand he would treat them well.

So what's the point? Jesus used common things so his illustrations would be effective and easily understood. We want to follow his example because these illustrations, the lessons that we're learning, they resonate with us even two thousand years
later.
3.6. Review

And really, what were the lessons that we learned?

1. First, Jesus humbly rode a donkey. We humbly deflect attention rather than attracting.
2. Second, Jehovah is reasonable. Luke 2:24 reminded us he is happy when we offer our best, given from a heart full of love.
3. And third, effective illustrations come from everyday things. Jesus chose to use animals so his listeners would better understand.

So if later you're traveling down the road and you see a caution sign encouraging you to slow down because of an animal crossing, remember, when we're doing our Bible reading, pump the brakes a little and see what we can learn from the animals. But there's more that we can learn from the land of Jesus on a related topic.

4. (Sym 3of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Food

(27:15) So please give your attention to Brother Joel Owusu from the Glenmure Lake congregation as he handles the next part of this symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Food.

Mmm. Mmm, mmm, mmm. That smells so good. Have you ever said those words when you entered into a room? Many of us enjoy talking about food from the way that it is prepared, its aroma, the flavor. But what makes a meal memorable or enjoyable? Is it perhaps when you're eating alone? Or is it when you're sharing it with your friends and your family? A meal, when it is surrounded with joy, laughter, and meaningful, encouraging conversation, this can be more enjoyable than the actual food itself. Many times,
Jesus wanted to assist his listeners to grasp the point of what he was teaching or illustrating, so he referred to the topic of food.

But have you ever wondered, what was the food like? Well, I invite you to read along with me in our scriptures in Luke 11:3. Luke 11:3. There it says, "Give us each day our bread according to our daily needs." Here Jesus revealed that it was indeed appropriate to ask Jehovah for the necessities of life that would include bread. But Jesus wasn't highlighting the culinary experiences of baking bread or cooking a meal, but rather the gift from Jehovah of enjoying a simple meal such as bread with our loved ones. Bread was the main staple in Jesus' day. A typical evening meal would include a variety of grains such as wheat and barley, along with vegetables like cucumbers and onions, and fresh and dried fruit that were available in season, like grapes, pomegranates.

And if you chose, you could add right from the Sea of Galilee the fresh catch of the day. There you would have your choice of fish that you would prepare on a hot charcoal grill. There's something about grilled and charcoal food that when we smell it, ooh, our mouths just water with anticipation. When now your fish is about to hit the flame, hiss, and you start to drizzle it with freshly pressed olive oil, and you season it with only the best herbs and spices of the land.

Or you may be in the mood for a dry fish, where you could salt your fish, clean it, and allow it to age for about six to ten days to allow for maximum flavor. And you could wash it all down with a nice cool, fresh cup of water that you've gotten from your privately owned cistern, an underground hole used to store rainwater. Or you can grab a bucket and go to your community well. In either case, you had a fresh drink and a wonderful evening meal.
What would be next? You guessed it. It's dinner time. It's time to gather your loved ones for the evening meal. Mealtime was especially important for those in Jesus' day. They used these occasions to have spiritual as well as thoughtful conversations with each and every family member. They would talk about the highlights of the day as well as the struggles and make future plans together.

There was one meal, however, that the family really looked forward to, and this was the Passover. This took place during one time throughout the year where a special meal was prepared. The family would make a sacrifice to Jehovah that was within the family's means.

4.1. Video: Food

Please notice what it was like to prepare as well as enjoy meals as depicted in the following video, The Good News from the Land of Jesus. Please watch.

Eating together as a family was important in Jesus' day, and something found on practically every table was bread. In fact, it's been estimated that 50 to 70% of the diet in Jesus' day was made up of bread. No wonder the Hebrew and Greek expressions for "eat a meal" in the Bible literally mean "eat bread."

Of course, before you could eat it, you had to make it. And while it only needed a few simple ingredients, this was no easy task. To make the flour, the women of the house would need to grind the wheat or barley or other grains using a mill. Depending on the type of mill and how many were milling, it could take hours before you had enough flour to feed a family. After that, the flour might be sieved to remove bits of stone from the mill.

Contents
On top of all that, water had to be drawn up from the nearest well or cistern. This one is roughly six meters deep, but the one believed to be Jacob's Well was found to be at least 23 meters deep. You can see the grooves here, worn in this old stone. It's been worn down over the years by the rope pulling against it time after time. I imagine by the time a few buckets or jars were drawn, you might begin to feel a little worn down too.

Tired and ready to eat, I'm popping in to see some of my new friends and I've been promised some bread. Sister Jamila grew up milling her flour by hand too. Just like in Jesus Day, providing for our family's basic needs can take time and energy. But by coming together at meal times, families can be refreshed physically and spiritually. Breaking bread together draws us closer to each other and to Jehovah. That's another simple recipe that will always stand the test of time.

Mary and Joseph's life wasn't luxurious, but their family still enjoyed rich moments every day. They put more importance on the atmosphere at the table than the food that was on it. And so should we. As we learn from the proverb, better than a fattened bull where there is hatred is a dish of vegetables where there is love.

[End of Video]

4.2. Lessons

Could you see yourself living in Jesus Day? Do you think you would enjoy the work that went into preparing a meal? Let's discuss some of the aspects or highlights from our video and see three practical lessons that we could apply to us today.
4.2.1. Lesson 1: Work hard for our food - 2 Thess 3:10

The first lesson that we find can be found at 2 Thessalonians 3:10 where we see that if we do not want to work, neither should we eat.

A simple meal consisting of bread and water, it required a lot of work and many hours of preparation. Those in Jesus’ Day worked hard for their food and so should we. We have access to literally any and everything within a matter of seconds, but having these luxuries available to us is not a substitute, neither does it negate the value of hard work.

4.2.2. Lesson 2: Contentment - 1 Tim 6:8

The second lesson we learn can be found in the principle found at 1 Timothy 6:8 where it teaches us the value of being content. A meal consisting of bread and water, that was enough to nourish you.

But do you recall the example of Martha in the scriptures? Remember how she was distracted because she wanted to get things just right for her and her guests. But how did Jesus help her to regain focus? Jesus reminded her of the value of being content. He said that a few things, if not only one, is all that is needed.

The lesson; we do not want to miss out on the encouraging, meaningful, as well as spiritual conversations with our friends and family at the expense of an elaborate meal.

4.2.3. Lesson 3: Have spiritual conversation - Deut 6:7

The third lesson can be found at Deuteronomy 6:7 where Jehovah instructs families to speak of him when they enter their homes and we can include while having a meal. Those in the land of Jesus look forward to meal time. They cherish these moments
because they were able to have meaningful, thoughtful, spiritual conversations with each one.

We live in critical times. Each and every one of our families is under attack. We work demanding jobs. Many of us commute to and from work, leaving us tired and exhausted with little to no energy to do anything else. For those of us in school and our young ones, to deal with peers, teachers, it can be mentally as well as physically exhausting.

And how about just life itself? Can it seem overwhelming? It's like one thing after another. With all of these combining on the families, we might not be able to enjoy a meal with our family as much as we would like.

Could we make it a matter of prayer? Could we set it as a goal to share just one meal together with our families each day? Remember the benefits from those in the land of Jesus. The families grew strong and closer, the communities became united. Who of us would not want a strong family? Jehovah has given us so much to be thankful for, including a variety of food to enjoy.

So let's have the words at 1 Corinthians 10:31 be true in our case. Let's read that together. 1 Corinthians 10:31. It says, "Therefore, whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory." So let us not only enjoy the tasty meals, but also the opportunity that it gives each and every one of us to glorify Jehovah, our generous provider, with the ones that we love.
5. (Sym 4of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus
– Home Life

(38:27) And now Brother Joel Vazo, a member of the Wallkill Bethel family, will present the next part of our symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Home Life.

In first century Israel, the home was where the entire family would grow, learn, worship, and work together. Home life involved a wide range of activities. In Proverbs chapter 31 we find the description of the capable wife. Specifically in verse 15, it says that she provides food and other provisions.

5.1. Typical family day

Here is a sampling of what might have been a typical day for the mother and her daughters. How would they begin? Caring for basic household chores. Where would they be? Fill the oil lamps. Sweep the floors. Milking the family's goat. Then it would be time to make bread for the day. The daughters would first sift the grain to remove impurities, and then grind that grain to a coarse flour, and as we have just seen, using a stone hand mill.

Later in the morning, the mother and her daughters would head to the local marketplace. There they would buy supplies for that day. What might that be? Fresh vegetables, dried fish, that might be on the menu.

Then there was the visit to the well, because they would have to replenish the family's water supply for that day. Then the baking would begin. Then let's not forget the washing of clothes, probably
in a nearby stream. Then it's time to begin cooking the evening meal.

Indeed, the capable wife did, as verse 27 says, she watches over the activities of her household. Additionally, it was the culture of that time to show hospitality. So the family would be prepared to share that simple meal of bread, vegetables, curds, dried fish, and cool water with their guests.

What about the house itself? Houses were built of available materials according to a family's means. An important aspect of that is found in Deuteronomy 22:8, where it states a requirement for homes to have a parapet, or that small wall around the perimeter, obviously for safety reasons. And the father would make sure that it was done and that it was maintained.

Families worked, ate, and relaxed together on their rooftops or in their courtyards.

5.2. Video: Homelife in Jesus time

In the following video, notice how people lived as portrayed in the Good News according to Jesus.

The modern city of Nazareth. (Sea Level + 360 m). To go back in time here, we need to explore beneath the surface, but what we find is worth it. These are the remains of a Jewish house, dated to the first century. Very few have been found. This site gives a glimpse into the Nazareth that young Jesus knew. Somewhere in the streets near here, he and his siblings laughed and played.

But when they went back to their home, what was it like? Small houses consisted of just one or two rooms. The walls were made of either stones or mud bricks, and they could be coated in plaster.
Tree trunks supported the roof, which was made from reeds or branches, and then plastered.

This created the main living space, which was in use constantly. Here, the women and girls shared in doing such tasks as spinning, weaving, and preparing food. It was also where the family ate together.

Then at night, the whole family slept side by side on mats rolled out on the floor.

In a two-story home, they would sleep on the second floor. Tradesmen like Joseph often had open-fronted workshops beside their house.

The roof was accessed by a ladder or stairs. Depending on the season, they used it to eat together, relax together, and worship together.

The requirement in Jehovah's law that a parapet or small wall be built all around the rooftop kept everyone in the family safe from falling, while they used this much-needed extra living space.

Life was simple, and it's likely Mary and Joseph lived in a humble home.

But Jehovah chose them not for their material wealth, but for their spiritual qualities. The atmosphere of love, happiness, and peace within those walls had real value. It was a place where the entire family could live, learn, work, and worship together. A place where everyone felt safe, not just physically, but spiritually, morally, and emotionally too.

While we don't know where in Nazareth Mary and Joseph lived, we do know they loved God and spoke about Him and His laws.
when they sat in their house. By doing the same, we too can help our children thrive and turn any house into a loving home.

[End of Video]

5.3. Lessons

What do we learn from considering home life in Jesus' day?

● As Christians, we keep our homes in a safe condition because we also view life as sacred.
● Our families make it a priority to spend time together. Based on the thought here in Philippians 1:10, let's read that. Philippians 1:10, "That you may make sure of the more important things, so that you may be flawless and not stumbling others up to the day of Christ."

5.3.1. Home a safe haven

Make sure of the more important things. Priorities. That's what families endeavor to do. As in the first century, our homes should be places where all members of the family find refreshment and relief from the world around them. As was described in the video, first century homes were places of love, happiness, and peace.

And isn't it encouraging to see the same in our congregations, where our children feel safe and secure? One of our sisters stated, "When I was growing up, one of the most important things for me was that our home was a safe haven. No matter how bad the situation was at school, I knew that when I came home, everything would be all right."

5.3.2. Household chores important

No doubt Joseph and Mary's children benefited from being trained to help with household chores. That's the same with
Christian families in our day. Why is that so important? Why are chores so important? Because they contribute to a child's maturity. Helping out around the house helps a child develop confidence, self-discipline, strength of character, essential tools for learning.

Something else though about chores. They prepare children to serve others. Why? Because chores train them to put others' needs above their own. On the other hand, one of our brothers said this, "When nothing is expected of them, children learn that they are here to be served, and they grow up with a distorted view of what life will require of them and the way of responsibility and hard work."

Through their efforts at home, children come to realize not only that they are a valued part of the family, but also that they have a responsibility toward it. Certainly when parents create a happy, peaceful home environment, they help their children to thrive.

6. (Sym 5of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Community

(48:12) Brother Vito Tuosto, a Wallkill Bethel family member, will now present the next part of this symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Community.


But what made the land special was the community. How so? Two ways.
First, all members of the community were part of a nation dedicated to Jehovah.

And second, community life was regulated by God's law.

### 6.1. Lessons

Now with this background, let's place ourselves in the land of Jesus and see what lessons we can learn from community life of Jesus' day. Please go in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 22:4. Before reading it, observe the land. It's an agricultural community, meaning people raise crops for food and they use animals for work.

#### 6.1.1. Help one another - Deut 22:4

Now in such an environment, you will likely encounter what's recorded in verse 4. "If you see your brother's donkey or his bull fall down on the road, you must not deliberately ignore it. You should without fail help him raise the animal up."

Help him. With these two little words, Jehovah conveyed what he required from members of the community. They were to take an interest in one another. And when they saw a need, such as raising a donkey up, they gave a helping hand. What a blessing to live in a community of mutual helpers.

#### 6.1.2. Safety and mutual protection

God's law also promoted safety and mutual protection. For example, the owner of a bull had to ensure that the bull would not injure others. And if you saw someone dig a pit, they would cover it. Why? So that no animal or human would fall into it. Would not such laws make you feel safer in the community?
6.1.3. Help for the needy - Deut 14:28,29

Let's look at another law. Please go to Deuteronomy 14:28,29 and see what we can further learn about the community.

Looking at verse 28, we note every three years, a tenth of the produce of the land was set aside for whom?

Verse 29, "It was for the needy, the Levite, the widow, the fatherless child."

Now, stop and think. What's the lesson in this law? It's this. Within the community, Jehovah wanted the families and neighbors to be supportive of one another. And not just physically, but in other ways as well. How reassuring if you live there to know that the community was always there for you.


Another facet of community life is found in the account of Jesus' family traveling back to Nazareth after having observed the festival in Jerusalem. Luke 2:44, it tells us that Jesus' parents believed that Jesus would be safe traveling with a small community group of relatives and acquaintances.

Now, what does this tell us about the community? It testifies to the love, trust, and unity that existed among Jehovah's dedicated people.

6.2. Video: Community Life

To learn more about community values of Jesus' day, let's watch the video “Community Life” as Portrayed in The Good News According to Jesus. Please enjoy and benefit.
The Stepped Street, buried beneath Jerusalem for almost 2,000 years. During the great festivals, thousands of worshipers flocked to Jerusalem, walking together on these very steps as they made their way up to the temple, the city's beating heart. For centuries, those festivals promoted unity and love amongst the Israelites.

But did those things exist in the group the young Jesus and his family traveled with? To find out, let's consider what happened on another part of the journey. The way back home. To help understand that journey, we've enlisted the help of Daniel.

He's taking us to see one of the potential routes that Jesus and his family could have used to return to Nazareth, the one that crossed through the Judean wilderness. This location is fantastic because it really gives you a sense of that first leg of the journey. Over there in the distance is the Mount of Olives, so Jerusalem is just behind it. And right here is Jericho. The ancient route connecting the two was more than 20 kilometers long. So if they had taken this route, it might have been somewhere near here that they stopped for the night. Yes, and in any case, whatever route they took, you can be sure that after a day's journey, they would have covered a huge distance. Don't doubt that.

Seeing the type of distance Mary and Joseph would have traveled before even noticing that their son was missing adds to our understanding of what the Bible tells us. Throughout that long journey, they had assumed he was with the group or close community of relatives and friends that they had traveled with. All of this testifies to the unity and love that existed amongst these dedicated people.

Today, love for Jehovah and his Word form the foundation of our Christian community. Regardless of who we are or where we are
from, we are members belonging to one another. As we journey through life, we rejoice together. And sadly, at times, we weep together. But either way, we are together. Perhaps that's the lesson we need to remember. Mary and Joseph didn't have to walk alone, and neither do we.

[End of Video]

From the video we just saw and from God's law, we have learned lessons from community life in the land of Jesus.

6.3. Can the Lessons apply today?

Now this leads us to the question, how can the lessons be applied within the Christian congregation today? Well, to answer, let's first recall the lesson and then make application.

6.3.1. Have interest in one another

Lesson learned: As portrayed in the video and in God's law, community members took an interest in one another.

For the application, we can go to 1 Corinthians 12:25. The previous verses compare Christians to different parts of the human body, after which verse 25 states, "So that there should be no division in the body, but its members, all of us, should have mutual concern for one another." And it's not a superficial, shallow concern. Our concern is a deep, anxious interest we have for each other.

And how is this shown? It's demonstrated by doing all we can to promote the welfare and success of fellow believers. So let's abound in displaying mutual concern and make everyone in the congregation feel cared for and loved.
6.3.2. Support those in need

Another lesson learned: The community of Jesus Day supported the needy in their midst. Well it's no different today. We readily support our brothers and sisters when they're in need. And this goes beyond providing physical help. It includes giving mental, emotional, and spiritual support.

And what's our motivation for assisting? It's the love we have among ourselves. So count it a blessing to know that just as Joseph and Mary did not go through life alone, we are within the congregation that provides loving support for us always.

6.3.3. Pursue upbuilding things

Another lesson to apply: It's recorded at Romans 14:19. We can read it together. That's Romans 14:19. "So then, let us pursue the things making for peace."

And here's the application: The things that build one another up.

That's our goal. To pursue, to seek what's up building to all in the congregation. Now realistically it takes effort to encourage, to strengthen, to build up. But visualize the result. The congregation will flourish. Your children will flourish. You will flourish.

Along this line, for those of you who are parents, do you arrange for your children to have wholesome, good Christian association? They need it. It's essential for their up building.

6.3.4. Cultivate Love

And a final lesson to apply: As shown in the video, these festivals united the community in love and worship. Likewise today, we are united in our love for Jehovah, in our love for one another, and in our love for the work of declaring the good news. This love is at the
very foundation of our Christian community. So let's never let up in cultivating the most excellent of divine qualities, that of love.

Let's now leave the land of Jesus and focus on the community we live in. As Christians we're assets to the community. How so? Well, the good news we preach and teach. The high moral standards we live by. Our genuine display of love of neighbor. All of this contributes in a positive way to the community. And this doesn't go unnoticed. The evidence is there to show that neighbors and authorities often praise our contributions even though they do not share our beliefs.

6.4. Conclusion

Earlier we asked, how can lessons from community life of Jesus Day be applied within the Christian congregation today? Here's a concise answer. It's by having mutual concern for one another. By supporting our brothers and sisters when they're in need. And by pursuing the things that build one another up. When this is done, be assured friends, you will benefit, the congregation will benefit, and also our families will benefit. And above all, we give glory and honor to Jehovah by our good works.

So in view of this then, may this be our resolve to always bring honor to Jehovah. How? By showing love to everyone in our congregation and to those in our community.
(1:02:48) Brother Grant Matson, a member of the Wallkill Bethel family, will now present the next part of the symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Education.

It's been said that a good education is the best gift that a parent can give to their child. It's been called the key to success. Our Father Jehovah is the best teacher in the universe, so he no doubt knows the value of education. But what kind of education are we talking about? Is it the three Rs? Reading, writing, and arithmetic? That can't be because only one begins with R. So it has to be more. By definition, to educate means to train by formal instruction and supervised practice, especially in a skill, trade, or profession.

How then were children in the land of Jesus educated? Primarily it was the role of the parents. And just as all seeds need three things, they need water, they need oxygen, and they need the proper temperature to grow and to germinate, children also need three things. They need, number one, practical education. Number two, a moral education. And number three, a spiritual education.

In Bible times, this began early in childhood, but the benefits lasted a lifetime. Children were taught to be industrious workers. As we've already learned from the preceding parts, an example is found at Proverbs chapter 31. We find that even young girls were trained to do things around the home. They were taught household skills, crafts, agriculture. But also the description highlights that they did commercial things. Well what did that require? Certainly they had to understand how to read and how to write.
Well how would that take place? How would this fundamental facet of education be taught to children? Parents first would instruct their children by reciting the law. And then the child would repeat the law. When they learned a phrase, the parents would add another one. In time, as children learned these things, now reading was introduced by handing a copy or a written text being put in their hands.

7.1. Inculcate Jehovah’s law - Deut 6:6

But how did their education continue? They sat with their parents as they attended the local synagogue and the temple and listened to the law being read. So in this way, a child was educated in a practical way for their whole life ahead. Yes, this responsibility of the parents is highlighted for us in a beautiful passage. It's actually a command given by the grand instructor Jehovah to all parents. Let's read it together. It's found at Deuteronomy 6:6. And here notice the loving encouragement that all parents are given to fulfill their God-given responsibility. That's Deuteronomy 6:6. "These words that I am commanding you today must be on your heart. And you must inculcate them in your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up."

Now did you notice the word inculcate? It literally means to repeat them or impress them upon. This would take time to repeat, to make sure that the children understand. It took effort. Why was it worth the effort? Well, because the child would now be prepared to make good decisions. They would be able to distinguish good from bad, true from false, wise from foolish.

Yes, this well-rounded education in Bible times began in ancient Israel and continued right through the first century. Now a child's life
was formed so that their behavior would please Jehovah. They would do things thinking of godly principles and how to apply them in their own life. This education prepared them for what lies ahead.

But it wasn't all work and no play. Really their life was balanced as they were able to enjoy playtime. And this helped them to be physically, mentally, and emotionally balanced as they grew.

### 7.2. Video: Education

Now in the following video, please notice some of the aspects of education in first century Israel as portrayed in the Good News According to Jesus.

Tell Jericho - Sea Level -250m.

A tell is a mound created by the remains of past cities and civilizations. Each one has its own story to tell. But family heads also told those stories as they taught their children about Jehovah. I can imagine that as families walked on the road passing by this place, the kids loved to hear the one about the walls of Jericho and how Jehovah made them fall.

The scriptures were at the heart of education in ancient Israel. It started in the home and was built upon in the synagogue. The aim of the education prescribed by Jehovah wasn't to ensure a high social standing, but a high standing with him. Of course, parents also taught their children skills for daily life.

Tel Gezer - +225m

The father took time to teach the family trade to the boys, while the mother taught household skills to the girls.
There was one fundamental facet of education that could help a child in all areas of life, learning to read and write. And we're heading to the Israelite ruins at Tel Gezer to learn more.

### 7.2.1. Gezer Calendar

Around a hundred years ago amongst the rubble, a limestone tablet was found, no bigger than this replica here. Dated to the 10th century BCE, this became known as the Gezer calendar. It contained a simple list of the seasons, leading archaeologists to conclude that it was written by the hands of a youth, that it was once a school boys exercise. When pottery broke, the shards were often used to write on. This one shows rows of Hebrew letters, likely from a pupil's writing exercise.

### 7.2.2. Wax covered tablets

People also wrote on wax covered tablets. When a mistake was made, the wax could easily be smoothed over and erased, so a student could start again. All these findings harmonize with what we see in the Bible. Reading and writing were common among God's people, even well before Jesus' time. Living
in such a culture, Jesus too learned to read and write. This gave
him the ability to study God's Word, which deepened his knowledge and love for Jehovah.

Thousands of years later, it's the very same. In order to draw close to God, our children need to study his Word and help others do the same. To do that, they need to be able to speak, read and write as well as they can. Secular schools teach these skills, but if our young ones develop and polish them in the congregation, just like Jesus, they will go on progressing in wisdom and in favor with God and men.

[End of Video]

7.3. Lessons

What then do we learn from the way that Jehovah arranged for children to be educated? Just as Jehovah entrusted Jesus' education and religious training to Joseph and Mary, he entrusts education to parents today. Yes, parents, make it your goal to train your children with patience and love. It strengthens your family ties. Jehovah is deeply interested in your family.

7.3.1. Put the mind of Jehovah in your child - Eph 6:4

How do we know? Well, please turn with me to Ephesians 6:4. Here we see that families are encouraged by Jehovah God. It says, "And fathers," this is Ephesians 6:4, "do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and admonition of Jehovah."

There's no secret formula, is there? Rather, Jehovah's pleas when parents provide guidance for responsible living by doing what? Well, you notice by discipline and admonition. In other words, put the mind of Jehovah in your child.
How do we do this? Well, Jehovah's organization lovingly provides meetings. When our children attend with us and participate, this helps them to see things from Jehovah's perspective. And when they attend assemblies and conventions like this one, this enhances their training.

The video mentioned that your child will develop the skills and be polished by attending congregation meetings. And isn't that where we learn stories about Jehovah just like the falling of the walls of Jericho? Yes, as in Jesus' day, children also need playtime.

And parents, time travels quickly. Please don't squander the opportunity to enjoy being with your children. Enjoy recreation. Show them how much you want to be with them. And this results in a bond of love that will last because they'll grow to love you and to love Jehovah. And as the video illustrated, parents benefit today by applying these practical lessons on education.

7.4. Conclusion

So how do we summarize this part on education?

Learning to work helps children to gain self-respect and to care for themselves. That's practical education.

Learning about creation and history deepens a child's faith in their Creator and in the Bible. And when they learn about Jehovah, it helps them to forge an unbreakable bond with their Heavenly Father. That provides moral and spiritual education.

Now it's true, many parents work long hours because they want a better life for their children. Well, our Heavenly Father Jehovah, He's working hard as well. He's working tirelessly. He wants what's best for our family. Godly training improves our life and prepares us for a marvelous future. It is the best gift that you can give to your
child, and it's one that Jehovah will bless. So yes, a good education is a journey that lasts a lifetime.

Parents, when you and your children apply the lessons from the land of Jesus with regard to education, this journey will be one that your family will be able to enjoy for all eternity.

8. (Sym 7of7) Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Worship

(1:15:27) Next, we'll give our attention to Brother John Goosby, who will present the final part of the symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus – Worship.

Understanding builds appreciation. Do you agree? Thus far, this symposium has helped us to understand life in Israel in Jesus' day, and now we help to build appreciation for yet another lesson from the land of Jesus, worship. Worship was a fundamental part of life in Israel.

For example, it wasn't just a feeling, rather true worship involved action. So what arrangements for true worship existed in Jesus' day? We're just going to briefly discuss three.

8.1. (Arrangement 1of3) Parental training

And the first arrangement starts in the home, parental training. Now, as discussed in the preceding talk, faithful Jewish families would speak about the scriptures in many different settings. Deuteronomy 6:6,7 mentions how parents would inculcate the law on their children's hearts. And when would they do this? When they sat in the house, when they were on the road, when they'd lie down, and when they'd get up. So parents, they would put forth
effort to teach their children the scriptures, and children would put forth effort to learn the scriptures. And learn they did at home, but also in the local synagogue and at the temple.

8.2. (Arrangement 2of3) Public occasions for true worship

That leads us to the second arrangement. There were public occasions for true worship, such as the synagogue. Now, in Jesus' day, synagogues were centers of worship. And if you look at the glossary of Bible terms, it mentions that a synagogue was a place of assembly for scripture reading, instruction, preaching, and prayer. So Jesus and his family, they attended the synagogue locally. It was their custom.

8.3. (Arrangement 3of3) Festivals

Well what's that third arrangement for true worship? Festivals. Festivals were an essential part of true worship. And notice how festivals are described here in Deuteronomy 16:16. Deuteronomy, 16:16. And notice what Jehovah empowered Moses to write about festivals. Verse 16, he says, "Three times a year, all your males should appear before Jehovah your God in the place that he chooses, at the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of booths, and none of them should appear before Jehovah empty-handed."

So the time, the place, the method, the way they were to be conducted were all fixed by Jehovah. The law required that all adult males attend these three great annual festivals. But you might be looking, all your males. Women and children, they were not obligated to attend, but they were definitely warmly welcomed. So Joseph and Mary regularly attended, along with Jesus and his
siblings and relatives and acquaintances. These festivals were joyous occasions that would help all in attendance to keep their mind focused on Jehovah. They would broaden their knowledge of the land. They would increase their understanding of one another, and they would promote unity.

So there you have it. Three arrangements for true worship in the time of Jesus that involved action. Local training that began at home. The public occasions for worship, like the local synagogue, and then of course, the festivals.

8.4. Video: Worship

So as you watch the following video, note the blessings that people enjoyed as they worshiped Jehovah.

The Sea of Galilee. On the western shore lie the first century ruins of Magdala, including a synagogue from Jesus' day, one of only a few uncovered to date. Synagogues were built, as one inscription put it, "for the reading of the law and for teaching the commandments."

So what were they like inside? A synagogue consisted of a main assembly hall, with step benches lining the walls where the men and women who met together sat. A chest for keeping the sacred scriptures safe. Then a central space where a speaker or reader could stand next to a lector. These buildings were designed so that all in the community could come to listen and learn about their God, Jehovah.

Mary was one who did that. By truly listening and meditating on what she heard, she developed a close relationship with Jehovah. This allowed her to trust in his ability to do what sounded impossible.
8.4.1. Temple Mount

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, others worshipped at the temple. We could be forgiven for thinking of just one building when we hear the word temple, but that word encompassed a vast complex, which was sat here, upon Mount Moriah. History speaks of Herod the Great doubling the size of the temple area. Surrounded by colonnades, there were several open areas or courts, each one leading closer to the temple itself. This plaza still has the capacity to hold hundreds of thousands of people today, and much of the original retaining walls underneath it all are still in place.

Let's get a sense of scale. The stone further along this wall is estimated to be almost 14 metres long, 4 metres deep, and 4 metres high. All of that is estimated to come close to 600 tonnes. The temple area is colossal.

8.4.2. Anna

An aged and fasting widow may have felt small or even invisible in this place, yet despite the sad spiritual state which prevailed, Anna came day by day with fastings and supplications. Jehovah not only saw her, but he blessed her for her devotion.

Some 70 years later, after the destruction caused by the Roman army, you could have looked on from the Mount of Olives and seen the temple lying in ruins. The reputations of honest-hearted ones like Mary and Anna remain intact even to this day. Jehovah cherished their worship because it came from the heart, and he does the same for us today. Whether young or old, as Hebrews chapter 6 puts it, "He does not forget your work and the love you show for his name." Maybe that's the overall lesson from everything
we've seen so far in the land of Jesus. For Jehovah, it's all about the people, not the place.

[End of Video]

8.5. Lessons

What an informative and encouraging video. Did you see some of the blessings that people enjoyed as they worshiped Jehovah?

Did you see Mary? She frequented the local synagogue to listen and learn about Jehovah, and thus she built trust in him.

Did you see the widow Anna? She may have felt small or even invisible in that colossal temple in Jerusalem, but she came day by day with supplications, and Jehovah saw her, and he blessed her for her devotion.

8.5.1. Effort needed

What lessons do we learn? How did Joseph, Mary, Jesus, and his siblings benefit from participating in worship of Jehovah? To answer that, we have to talk about first, what did it take? Time, effort, money, all these things were necessary to travel together as a family to sometimes distant places, for example, for a festival.

What would it take for a family to travel to celebrate a festival in Jerusalem? As we mentioned there in the part about geography, they would have had to walk some 60 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and it was through mountainous terrain, and they weren't alone, right? They had relatives, they had acquaintances, they had food supplies, they also had a material gift that they were bringing with them.

But they received many blessings for their efforts to worship Jehovah. What were some of those blessings? Think about Joseph
and Mary. They had much to do with the spiritual progress of their children. They knew that there was no better investment for them to put spiritual training first in their children. That started at home, but also in the local synagogue, and of course at the festival.

What about Jesus and his siblings? They were helped to learn as well, learning different parts of the land, the geography, reflecting on the law, reflecting on Jehovah's goodness.

And again, these festivals were joyous occasions. Notice how they're described back in Deuteronomy 16:15. Deuteronomy 16:15. Festivals described here. It says, "Seven days you will celebrate the festival to Jehovah your God and the place that Jehovah chooses. For Jehovah your God will bless all your produce and all that you do, and you will become nothing but joyful." What a response to the efforts to praise Jehovah.

Festivals help people to focus on God rather than on personal pursuits. These gatherings, they help God's people to associate together, to make new friends, to promote unity. And what better blessings than here in verse 15 where it says that Jehovah will bless all your produce, all that you do, and the end result? You will become nothing but joyful. Beautiful. Jehovah cherished their worship because it came from the heart, and he does the same for us. So today too we invest time, money, effort, energy to attend our congregation meetings to be here at this convention today.

What did it take for you to be here today? Maybe you're under a heavy load. Maybe you took time away from work to be here. Maybe you're battling a chronic health issue. Maybe you're dealing with feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Whatever it is, Jehovah knows. And Jehovah knows what it took for you to be here, and he
wants you to focus on the blessings you receive that you enjoy while you worship him.

And remember, the blessings will always outweigh the challenges. So look around you, and not just today, but for the rest of the weekend. What will you see? Smiling faces? Yes. What will you hear? Timely spiritual food, joyful laughter. What will you feel? Love. Unity. Happiness.

Why? Because you're amongst God's people. Psalm 33:12 mentions it this way, "Happy is the nation whose God is Jehovah." So remember in our video, whether you're young or old, Jehovah does not forget your work and the love you show for his name.

Our brother said, "Maybe that's the overall lesson from everything we've seen so far in the land of Jesus." So learning about life in Israel and Jesus' day, it benefits us. Understanding builds appreciation.

**8.6. Review**

So how have we benefited from this symposium?

Well, we can better understand certain Bible expressions and illustrations, the geography, the animals, the food, the importance of meal time together.

We can more easily picture Bible accounts. The home life was a happy, peaceful environment, the community being an asset wherever we live.

And we can learn from the example set by faithful ones such as Joseph, Mary, Anna.
What about the education? What about worship? How we enjoy blessings as we exert ourselves for Jehovah? Seven lessons from the land of Jesus.

This symposium has also highlighted the accuracy of this feature Bible drama, "Good News According to Jesus."

We can look forward to many more lessons throughout this weekend. So may we be moved, as our theme for today highlights, “to declare the good news of a great joy that all the people will have” as we continue learning about Jesus and all that he taught and did.

[End of Talk]

9. Everlasting Good News, In What Sense?

(1:29:20) Thank you, brothers, for sharing those upbuilding lessons. We now come to the final talk of today's program. How are the angels involved in declaring the good news? How can we work along with them? Please give your full attention to Brother Ryan Barber, a member of the United States branch committee, as he presents the talk, "Everlasting Good News, In What Sense?"

Well, to begin, it's a privilege for me to be able to bring to you the loving greetings of the Governing Body and the entire United States Bethel family. They want you to know that they love you and they pray for you every day.

Now that we've reached the end of our first day of spiritual nourishment, how do you feel? Well, I agree with all of you. But I want you to think about what you've experienced. Here you came in this morning at 9:30 and you sat down. And you sat here for five hours listening to only good news. Isn't that an amazing gift from
Jehovah God? You know, we're not immune to the challenges of life. And you may have come in this morning with a heavy heart or just with life on your mind. But as you sat here, you benefited in a positive way from what you heard. Every talk, every talk and every video had a spiritual gift. And weren't we encouraged after waiting so long, hearing about the Good News According to Jesus drama, we finally were able to observe it. And what a drama that was. We were not only entertained. Our faith was strengthened by what Jehovah gave us. And it makes me wonder how many of you sat here today and in a little undertone or maybe in your heart said, “Thank you, Jehovah. Thank you for your goodness. Thank you for sharing your spiritual treasures with me”. You see, when our heart is filled with appreciation for the truth like that, something natural happens.

We have a fire within us to share it with other people, don't we? We can't hold back. And we may have thought this morning as we listened to these talks and watched the video, we may have thought of individuals that were anxious to share this with, individuals that are suffering because of the dire spiritual condition of the world. We may have been reminded of the fact that the world is inundated with bad news. That's all they hear. They hear things that are discouraging and even untrustworthy. You know, I think it's interesting, depending on the type of mobile device an individual has, they have up to 70 apps that expose them to what? Bad news. And how many of us during the day will have a breaking news banner show up on our phone only to look at it and realize that it's something discouraging or something that is not worthy to look at?

You know, one German historian and publicist that lived back in the late 1800s, 1700s, he had it right when he said this. Foolish is the man who never reads a newspaper and even more foolish is...
the man who believes what he reads just because it's in the newspaper. That was 200 years ago. And where are we at today? Well, things are even worse, aren't they? It's no wonder that the world has coined the phrase "fake news" because they just don't trust what they read or what they hear. They question the credibility.

Well, friends, when you think about the situation in the world, it makes us realize the privilege that we have as Jehovah's Witnesses to share not fake news but real good news. Now, there's your acronym to help you appreciate or remember the value of it. It's real and that it's reliable, encouraging, accurate, and long-lasting.

And you know, we're not the only ones excited about it. I invite you to turn your Bibles to Revelation 14:6,7. Revelation 14:6,7. It says, "I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. He was saying in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of judgment by Him has arrived.' So worship the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water." Well, John well describes the excitement of the angels over the good news, but also the deep concern that they have for the welfare of humankind.

Now, we know that the angels don't directly preach to people, but they do support us in our assignment as we carry it out and as we preach. Every time that we share the good news with someone, we can say that we're cooperating with the angels. We're giving people a chance to benefit from the truth found in God's word.

Well, to deepen our appreciation for this everlasting good news and for the privilege of declaring it, we're going to consider in detail
what we just read. In Revelation 14:6,7, it's going to help us to establish three things with regard to the message that we preach.

We'll establish the scope, the importance, and the impact of the message. And friends, as we consider this step by step, don't only pay attention to what the angels are doing, but evaluate your own personal ministry and how we can continue to cooperate with the angels.

9.1. Feature 1of3: Scope of the message

So let's look at the first feature of our message, and that is the scope. Please go back to Revelation 14:6. Were you able to identify or notice the scope of the message in the key expressions in verse 6? The angel is flying in mid-heaven, declaring in a loud voice, "Good news to those who dwell on the earth and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." Well, think about what that means. The angel is flying in mid-heaven, not somewhere in the distant reaches of space, but we might say just above the trees where the birds fly. Declaring good news in a loud voice, not to irritate but to stimulate those who dwell on the earth that are willing to listen. And as it says, it includes people from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

In other words, we can't imagine an angel flying around the world, around the globe, and showing any type of partiality, flying to one national border, maybe stopping and going the other direction, or maybe flying over or flying by or skipping any part of the globe. They're not partial. They're impartial. They're giving a witness to all.

And with what result? Well, when Jehovah wants the good news preached, that's what's taking place, isn't it? Acts 1:8, we see a fulfillment of that. A witness is being given to the most distant part
of the earth. We're part of that. We're part of the over 8 million
volunteer ministers preaching in 240 lands, publishing Bible study
aids in more than 1,000 languages, even reaching the deaf and the
blind.

9.1.1. Cooperate by preaching

Well the question is, how can we personally continue to
cooperate with the angels? The answer is easy, isn't it? Preach.
Preach to every person that we can. Don't limit yourself to
preaching in a formal setting. That's important, yes. But preach
where we find people. And please, don't lose your sense of
urgency. You may call to mind what Jesus said in Matthew 10:11.
There He said to search out those who are deserving. And that
implies that we would be determined and thorough in our ministry.
And as many of you have already done, you've adjusted the times
that you go out in the ministry. You study the habits of people in
your assigned territory. You flex to their time and convenient
location to be able to give them a witness. Keep up your good
work.

Look for opportunities to give a witness. And don't give up on your
family members. Don't give up on your workmates, your
schoolmates. Now you may say, "Well, I've already preached to
them and they didn't respond positively." Well that's okay. Keep
looking for opportunities. Don't give up. Some may change, even
though they initially show no interest.

9.1.2. Video: Simone and Susana

Well in the following video, observe how a publisher cooperated
with the angels by preaching the good news thoroughly. Enjoy this
video.
[Simone Canto - Brazil]

At a very young age, I lost both my father and my mother. I could not understand if God was a God of love, why had He taken my parents from me? I grew up attending Catholic school and I asked a lot of questions, but they never had answers for me.

[Susana Tanzini - Brazil]

I worked as a prison security officer. I got to know a lot of the people I worked with. And among them, Simone. She was a difficult person. She was confrontational, strong in her opinions on certain things, and wouldn't let it go.

I really enjoy witnessing informally, so I would pray constantly. And I'd ask Jehovah to give me courage, because courage doesn't come naturally. So, one day at work, I told her, "I really enjoy helping others learn more about the Bible, a book most of them already have at home."

She just turned to me and said, "No way. I don't talk about the Bible, so you can stop right there and don't bring it up again."

Simone: I didn't like Jehovah's Witnesses. I was prejudiced against them. Susana, well, she was different. Every day I was observing her. I would watch her. And she was so kind. Then I would think, I would start to question, you know, how can someone like Susana really be one of Jehovah's Witnesses? And then about three to four months later, Simone came to me and said, "Susana, look, I have to ask you for a favor. I came to ask you for that study."

Susana: I was taken aback. I almost didn't believe I had heard her correctly."
Simone: Jehovah took such good care of me. He explained to me why I had lost my parents when I was a child. And those answers that I'd always been searching for, I finally had them.

Susana: Jehovah pays attention, and He gives us courage to speak about Him.

Simone: Had she not talked to me about the truth, imagine how different my life would be.

Susana: It's His name that's at stake. So we can overcome our fear, regardless of the place, regardless of the moment or situation, and especially regardless of the type of person.

[End of Video]

Well who is your Simone? She was a difficult challenge for Susana, wasn't she? But Susana never gave up. Finally after months, it was the kindness of Susana that opened the door and made her receptive to the truth.

Friends, we don't know what will cause a person to change, so we don't give up in cooperating with the angels to reach their heart with the good news.

9.2. Feature 2 of 3: Importance of the message

Let's look at the second feature of the message we preach. That is the importance. Go back to Revelation 14:7. Were you able to identify the key expressions that highlights the importance of the message? The angel's message is, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of judgment by Him has arrived, so worship Jehovah." Well, the angel's message is very direct and clear, isn't it? We are now living in the hour of judgment by God proclaimed by the angel. And did you notice that people will be judged on the
basis of whether they fear God and give Him glory? So it
emphasizes to us that timing is critical. People need to act because
it means their life. If you think about that expression, "fear God," it
conveys the idea that Jehovah is looking for individuals that
respond by change, that the truth is reaching their heart. It's
transforming their lives. They begin to live by Jehovah's standards,
not their own. They begin to turn away from what is bad, and they
begin to give glory to Jehovah. They begin to trust Him. They begin
to follow the direction that He provides through His organization.

So how can we cooperate, continue to cooperate with the
angels? Well, help your Bible students apply what they learn. You
know, sometimes we hold back from addressing specific issues
because we feel that they're not ready to make a change.

But we learn a valuable lesson from Jesus. You remember at
Mark chapter 10, the question from the rich man? Jesus knew that
it was going to be very difficult for Him to make a lifestyle change,
but what did He do? Well, verse 21 says, "Jesus looked at him and
felt love for him and said, 'One thing is missing about you. Go sell
what you have.'" What an example for us. Out of love for that
individual, Jesus told the man what he needed to hear, not what he
wanted to hear. Well, it's true. It may take time for an individual to
make a change or to break an old habit, but the earlier we can
address it with our Bible students, the earlier they can address it
themselves.

You'll no doubt agree that our Enjoy Life Forever book has been a
powerful tool in being able to address issues. It provides direct,
soul-searching questions that get right to the heart. They help us to
evaluate if the truth is reaching the heart of our Bible student, if
they're applying what they've learned. So keep up your good work.
Let the love for your Bible student give you the courage to speak up and address the things that they need to hear.

9.2.1. Video: Help student apply scriptures

In the following video, see how a publisher cooperated with the angels by helping her student apply what she was learning.

[Raquel Rodrigues - Brazil]

I was a very challenging student. I was someone who loved to party, loud music, dancing. I would get to the party right when it started and I would stay until the very end.

[Marilda Eduardo - Brazil]

She had many changes to make. I was afraid to bring it up.

Raquel: I don't know what it was about that energy and that music. It was just made me feel alive, you know. I don't know. It was very powerful.

Marilda: I would say, "Oh, Jehovah, how can I tell her, 'Raquel, the way you were living is not Jehovah's way.'"

Raquel: I didn't think I would actually have to let go of anything. I thought I could do what I wanted and serve Jehovah too.

Matilda: So it took me a while to help her understand that there was no way around having to make major changes.

Raquel: I remember saying, "All right, that's it. No, I don't agree. This is not going to happen."

Matilda: Then I'd say, "That's it. She's not coming back."

Raquel: When I started to understand that to please Jehovah, I would have to give up some of those things, there was no satisfaction in any of them anymore. The hair, the makeup, the

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whole persona. Being there just didn't make sense anymore. I remember getting home and thinking, "Raquel, what are you doing with your life?" There was such a void, such a big void, but maybe feeling that emptiness was what I needed. It took me a while to understand that Jehovah's ways are superior and would only benefit me.

Marilda: You could see how the truth was impacting her life and she started making changes. It was wonderful.

Raquel: She helped me come to the conclusion that based on the Bible, no, this type of lifestyle, this type of partying, never will be conducive to the life I want to lead. But Jehovah and the angels, they didn't give up on me. They were able to find a little bit of good through it all. They helped me every day, no matter what I was going through, they were always there.

Matilda: At first I doubted that she would change because I was looking at the situation from my own point of view, how I was helping, what I was doing. But it's not me, it's Jehovah who brings about change. We're just tools that he uses to help others change.

Raquel: Honestly, if Marilda hadn't talked to me and made it clear what I needed to change, I don't think I ever would have changed.

Matilda: We should never doubt if Jehovah is drawing someone, that person can change. I was only able to help her because of Jehovah.

[End of Video]

Well who is your Raquel? Raquel loved her lifestyle, didn't she? It was hard for her to give up. But one thing is for sure, Marilda, Jehovah, and the angels didn't give up on her. And what a powerful comment from Raquel when she said, "If Marilda hadn't made it
clear what I needed to change, I don't think I would have ever changed."

What a powerful lesson for us. If you have a Bible student, address the needs so that they can draw close to Jehovah. Help them in a loving way to make progress. It means their life.

**9.3. Feature 3 of 3: Impact of the message**

Well let's examine the third and last feature of the message we preach, and it's the impact. If you would, go back one more time to Revelation 14:6,7. Were you able to identify the key expressions? To highlight the impact? You notice the angels' message is everlasting and a promise from the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water? Well, the angels' message is everlasting in the sense that it will never change. The good news that we have in the Bible is going to come true.

And isn't it interesting today? How often do you hear someone in the world use that word everlasting? It's not part of their vocabulary, is it? Why? It's because they expect change. They expect corruption. They expect disunity. They don't expect government to have the resources to really make change. In fact, you take it a little further, they realize that scientists struggle even to contain a single virus, let alone eliminate all sickness and death.

Governments are hindered by corruption. Religious leaders teach them lies. They don't have hope. Everlasting good news is what they need to hear. Why? Because we're talking about an everlasting kingdom or government that will never be corrupted, one that will bring about change. We can count on it because no promise of God will go unfulfilled.
So how can we continue to cooperate with the angels? Well, think deeply about how much people need to hear the good news. And don't let your love for people ever cool off. Sometimes we might feel we're in a little bit of an apathetic territory or one that is very challenging.

Well, that may be true to an extent, but when you talk to people, listen carefully when they express themselves. Try to imagine yourself in their distressing situation. And if there's anything that will increase our love for them, it's the question that we ask ourselves, what would I do if I were in their situation? What would I need? What would I want? And that will motivate us to continue on to help them.

9.4. Video: Giving hope

Well, in the following video, see how a publisher cooperated with the angels by giving hope to a woman who had given up on her own life.

[Ris Rodrigues - Brazil]

There was a time in my life when I dealt with depression and anxiety. All I kept thinking was, "I'm never going to make it past 20," basically.

[Suelen Oliveira - Brazil]

My congregation’s territory is, you know, more apathetic and at the same time mostly commercial, so it's definitely challenging. I sometimes thought to myself, "Seriously? There again?" It kind of felt like we were just checking things off a list.

Ris: I looked to the Catholic Church for help and found absolutely no answer there. So much so that the phrase that most affected me
from the day my grandfather died was, "It was God's will." I was like, "What did I do? What? Why is this happening?"

In my mind, I was being punished. This was incredibly painful for me. I just wanted to do something to make the pain go away.

Suelen: One day in business witnessing, I met a woman who showed some interest, so I decided to go back and we ended up studying the Bible for some time.

Ris: During that time, my mom, who owns a shop, had accepted a Bible study. So I would stay there to listen and learn, and that study started really affecting me instead of her.

Suelen: Every time I showed up, it was actually the woman's daughter who was there. So I would always greet her and I tried to get to know her better. So we decided to offer her a Bible study, and to my surprise, she accepted. She decided to study.

Ris: The thought I had before that I wouldn't live past 20 completely changed. What made all the difference for me was hearing about the hope of the resurrection. At that time, I thought I had no future. So that hope opened my eyes to a completely new way to live.

Suelen: You know, she changed her emotional state and her life. So for me, it was a huge privilege. It made me so happy. I felt like the angels had used me to reach her, which is incredible because really, we're nothing. It makes me so happy to see someone that I had a small part in helping become one of Jehovah's servants. I learned that any territory can be productive. I just need to keep digging. And if I dig a little deeper, who knows? I might just find what Jehovah's looking for.

Ris: I love Jehovah for not at any point giving up on me.
That was a beautiful experience of how the truth has a huge impact. It transforms lives, doesn't it? And the comment from our sister that any territory can be productive. I just need to keep digging. And who knows? I may find what Jehovah is looking for.

What a good example for us. Having a positive view of the territory and having the determination to help people will yield powerful results. So friends, never give up in offering the message of hope that can change people's lives.

9.5. Conclusion

Well, we've considered thoroughly Revelation 14:6,7, and it reminds us that our commission is very simple. Declare the everlasting good news.

And learning about the angel flying in mid-heaven reminded us of the scope, the importance, and the impact that our message can have on individuals. The message that Jehovah has entrusted with each one of us to share with others. And doesn't it deepen our appreciation for the privilege that we have to do so? And it reminded us, too, of the keen interest that the angels have in humankind and in our efforts to reach each one of them. It's a very sobering thought to think that the angels are supporting and protecting us as we carry out our assignment to preach.

Well, you may have had your own experience where you felt that the angels were directing things, and there are so many experiences that indicate that, that they're working right alongside us. I'd like to just share one.
9.5.1. Experience: Angels working in the supermarket

There was a sister working or looking for a way to give a witness, and she was in line at the grocery store, and the grocery conveyor belt stopped. And the customers all around became upset and began to complain and were very rude to the cashier, who actually was very kind to them in return.

Well, the sister thought in her mind, "This is my opportunity." So when she got up to the cashier, she said, "I want to commend you for being so kind and patient even though everyone else was so rude. You see, I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I notice things like that."

Well, what do you think the response was? The cashier said, "Now wait just a minute. You're one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" And she reached in her bag, and she pulled out a letter. She said, "I got a letter from one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I've been reading it over and over, and it's so encouraging."

Needless to say, a Bible study was started. But our sister walked away with the idea, "The angels are even working in the supermarkets now."

What a good example for us. And you no doubt have had similar experiences. But friends, every time we preach, we're giving someone a chance to respond to the good news and to benefit from what we've enjoyed from learning from the Bible.

So in conclusion, it's true that the availability of news is unprecedented today. There are so many news media outlets, but there is only one source of everlasting good news that offers people life and hope. May you and I continue to cooperate with the angels and with all of our millions of brothers and sisters who keep on
inviting people, as Revelation says, "Come and take life's water free and enjoy the blessings that God has in store."

[End of Talk]

Thank you, Brother Barber, for that motivating talk. We are determined to keep showing our love for people by telling them the everlasting good news.

10. Announcements

What can we look forward to on tomorrow's program?

We will watch part two of episode one of The Good News According to Jesus, and we will consider the power of the good news to change people's lives for the better. Tomorrow's scripture theme is taken from Psalm 96:2, which encourages us to proclaim the good news of His salvation day after day.

As a reminder, the program will begin at 9:20 A.M. Please remember to bring your lunch with you so that you can remain here on the premises and enjoy association with your brothers and sisters.

We want to express appreciation for your excellent efforts in carpooling. We maxed out the parking lot today and it worked successfully because of your obedient spirit. Tomorrow we expect even more in attendance and ask for your further assistance to carpool as you are able to. If you haven't made arrangements to carpool for tomorrow, please do so after the program. Ride sharing is a beautiful opportunity to review the program.

Thank you again. The attendance for this afternoon's session was 1,643.
10.1. Song 66

Our closing song reflects our convention theme. It is song number 66 entitled "Declare the Good News." After the song, Brother Barber will express our thanks to Jehovah. We invite all to stand and sing song number 66.
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1. Introduction

The School for Kingdom Evangelizers equips qualified pioneers to expand their ministry further. Could you attend this school? Before you answer, please give close attention to the following encouragement.

1.1. Video: SKE

[M. Stephen Lett - Governing Body]

Since its inception in 2014, the School for Kingdom Evangelizers has accomplished much good in the worldwide field. This two-month school is designed to train experienced pioneers who are willing to serve wherever they're needed. And while many have eagerly reached out for this opportunity, others hold back.

Why? Some might reason, "I'm content where I am. I have a good job that supports my pioneering. I'm needed in the congregation. I could be sent anywhere. I hate moving. I'm not smart enough. My circumstances don't allow it. They don't need me. There are plenty of others who can reach out." Can you relate to any of these feelings?

The governing body understands. It's not easy to uproot oneself and venture into the unknown. But before you dismiss applying for SKE, there's a beautiful reason why you should consider it.

What is it? To find out, we warmly invite you to come to the SKE meeting during the noon hour tomorrow. We hope you can make it.

[End of Video]

All who are in a position to expand their ministry are invited to attend. The applicants to the School for Kingdom Evangelizers. The
meeting will be held Sunday afternoon at 12:45 in the classroom section of the multipurpose room. The Apostle Peter called Jesus "the one to whom all the prophets bear witness." The following six-part symposium will highlight remarkable ways in which Jesus fulfilled Bible prophecy. Each speaker will introduce the one to follow.

2. (Sym 1of6) Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled - Preceded by a Messenger

Brother Richard Bellamy, a pioneer serving in the Walden congregation, will deliver the first talk entitled "Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled, Preceded by a Messenger." Brother Bellamy, you have our full attention.

The bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying. With these words, we come to understand that the reason why we should pay attention and examine Messianic prophecies. These words indicate that Jesus is the central figure in understanding Bible prophecy and the outworking of Jehovah God's purpose. From the first prophetic declaration in Genesis 3, verse 15, to the glorious visions of the book of Revelation, Bible prophecy can only be understood correctly when Jesus is taken into consideration in connection with the Messianic kingdom.

Examining these Messianic prophecies will help us to bolster our own faith. Yes, it will strengthen our faith in the fulfillment of future prophecies relating to Christ Jesus.

In this symposium, we will consider prophecies related to the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry. Each talk will answer three questions.
1. What was prophesied?

2. How was the prophecy fulfilled?

3. Why is the prophecy's fulfillment so remarkable?

The concluding talk will highlight the lessons we can learn and draw from these prophecies.

Let's examine one Messianic prophecy that the Messiah would be preceded by a messenger. Let's watch an excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus" and then we will identify the prophecies that were fulfilled.

2.1. Excerpt: The Good News According to Jesus

(04:59) Angel: And your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have joy and great gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth, for he will be great in the sight of Jehovah. But he must drink no wine or any alcoholic drink at all, and he will be filled with Holy Spirit even from before birth, and he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to Jehovah their God.

Also, he will go ahead of him with Elijah's spirit and power to turn back the hearts of fathers to children and the disobedient ones to the practical wisdom of righteous ones in order to get ready for Jehovah a prepared people.

[End of Video]

2.2. Prophecy

So according to the prophecy recorded in Malachi 3:1 and Malachi 4:5, the Messiah would be preceded by a messenger who would be like Elijah in being a forerunner to the Christ. Let's read these prophecies.
Malachi chapter 3:1. I invite you to turn there with me. It says, "Look, I am sending my messenger, and he will clear up a way before me. And suddenly the true Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant will come in, whom you take delight. Look, he will certainly come, says Jehovah of armies."

And then Malachi 4:5. "Look, I am sending to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awe-inspiring day of Jehovah." Yes, this messenger would actually prepare the way for the acceptance of the Messiah.

2.3. How fulfilled?

Now, how were those prophecies fulfilled? Well, Jesus provides us with the answer in the book of Matthew 11:10-14. Please turn there with me. That's Matthew 11:10-14. And here it says, "This is the one about whom it is written, 'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way ahead of you.' Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has not been raised up anyone greater than John the Baptist, but a lesser person in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come."

So Jesus very clearly identifies John the Baptist as that messenger, and that John would have the same type of spirit. He would carry out his ministry just as Elijah did. So although John was certainly not the resurrected prophet Elijah, he carried out his ministry with a similar zeal to that of Elijah.
2.4. Why remarkable?

Well, what makes this so remarkable? Well, there are a few things.

- One, the prophecies about John were written some 400 years before John was even born.
- The second point, John's birth was a miracle because both of his parents were well beyond childbearing years.
- And the third, an angel's confirmation of the role that John would play with regard to preparing the way for the Messiah.

3. (Sym 2of6) Messianic Promise Prophecy Fulfilled – Born to a Virgin

Well, Brother Gregory Duhon, a Walkill Bethel family member, will now present the next part of this symposium, "Messianic Promise Prophecy Fulfilled – Born to a Virgin."

What a remarkable feature this symposium is. We're unraveling messianic prophecy to reveal the fulfillment so that we understand them better. We can almost think of each talk in this symposium as being like a folded tapestry. We're slowly unfolding it, and by the end we get the complete picture that convinces us without doubt Jesus was the Messiah and is the light of the world.

3.1. Video: 2 aspects of prophecy

Let's watch another excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus" video and then identify two aspects of prophecy that we'll consider.

Angel: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. This one will be great and will be called

Contents
Son of the Most High, and 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 to his kingdom.

Mary: How is this to be, since I'm not having sexual relations with a man?

Angel: Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. And for that reason, the one who is born will be called Holy, God's Son.

3.2. Original Prophecy

So this portrayed the fulfillment of the prophecy. In fact, two things are mentioned here. But what was actually prophesied before the fulfillment?

3.2.1. Maiden of virgin will give birth - Isa 7:14

Well, let's go right to the original prophecy, and if you will, follow me at Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Jehovah himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman, and you see footnotes says the maiden, will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel." So the prophet Isaiah foretold that a maiden would give birth to the Messiah.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated for maiden here can refer to a virgin. So this is the first prophecy we're looking at now.

3.2.2. Messiah will inherit the throne of David - Isa 9

Secondly, a few chapters later in Isaiah chapter 9, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would inherit the throne of David and made that very clear. In fact, he says he would be on the throne of
David and on his kingdom from now on and forever, and sealed it with the zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this. So the precise things prophesied were that a virgin would become pregnant and give birth to the Messiah, and that this child would be born in the line of King David with legal rights to the throne.

### 3.3. Fulfilment

So how are the prophecies fulfilled?

#### 3.3.1. Jesus born to a virgin

Let's go to the historical account in Matthew 1:18. Matthew 1:18, and you might want to leave your Bibles open there. It says, "But this is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. During the time his mother Mary was promised in marriage to Joseph, she was found to be pregnant by Holy Spirit before they were united." So Mary was the virgin whom Isaiah had prophesied about. It's good to capture this wasn't a random Israelite woman picked on a whim. Jehovah didn't tell Gabriel, "Go find a lady in Israel who fits the bill and then describe this situation to her." Isaiah's prophecy didn't say a woman will become pregnant. It says the woman, and Mary was the maiden, the person who was carefully selected. She was a participant in this universally important event.

Now let's make the connection between the fulfillment we just read and the original prophecy. If you will, slide down to Matt 1:22,23. All of this actually came about to fulfill what was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet, that would be Isaiah, saying, note the quote, "Look, the virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which means when translated, with us is God." So here a direct quote, interesting side
note, this is the first direct quote Matthew makes from the Hebrew scriptures, an important quote at that.

So to recap, Mary was a virgin when she became pregnant. And that's clearly fact, even in the video, you can see her question how she could become pregnant since she was a virgin.

Well, how could it happen? Well, as we saw, the angel told her, "Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the most high will," interesting word, "overshadow you." So that's the first one, the fulfillment that Jesus was born to a virgin.

### 3.3.2. Jesus’ genealogy

The second one relates to Jesus' genealogy. Now, both Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David. Matthew chapter 1, which you may still have open, clearly shows Jesus' genealogy. It traces Joseph's genealogy, and that gave Jesus the legal heir to David's throne because the legal rights passed through the male, and Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph.

Now, Luke chapter 3, you find the genealogy of Mary as being related to the throne of David. Mary passed on to him the natural heirship of the throne because she was Jesus' natural physical mother. So the heirship rights of Jesus were doubly established through this arrangement.

### 3.4. Why remarkable?

So why were these fulfillments so remarkable? Well, Jesus' conception in itself was really a miracle, we know. Mary was a humble, faithful, but imperfect woman. She was a virgin, and now she was pregnant. Jehovah's power transferred the heavenly life of
Jesus into this woman. She bore the child to term and gave birth to the Messiah.

Think of, for modern comparison, in vitro fertilization. Life begins in a test tube, it's transferred into a woman, it grows into a baby, and the baby is born. Now, this is amazing science, admittedly, but some reports show the success rates can be as low as 5%.

Well, Mary's remarkable pregnancy had a 100% success rate. But how could this imperfect human produce perfect offspring? Well, the angel described it. Jehovah used his active force, or his Holy Spirit, to overshadow Mary. And this overshadowing shielded the child from any taint of sin, and thus Jesus was born perfect.

That Jesus was the descendant in David in itself wasn't a miracle, but the way that it was predicted and how it was, was. Think of this, many people today, they enjoy studying their genealogy, websites include words like ancestry, heritage, DNA. People want to know where they come from, they want to know their background. And it's remarkable that some people can trace a few hundred years back of their ancestry.

Now, if that's impressive, how impressive would it be if someone could predict between a thousand years, two men, a king and a baby, the king having died and the baby not born yet, if someone could accurately predict that? Well, that's what Isaiah's prophecy did between King David and the Messiah.

3.4.1. Records were available

But especially remarkable was the time in which Jesus was born, because at this unique period of time, the records were clearly available to prove his heirship and prove his genealogy. We know they were available because the Bible books contain detailed
genealogy. This was public domain. No one could argue that these were actually the facts to where he came from. And think of the opposition Jesus had in his life. If the facts for his genealogy weren't there, they would have argued and twisted and said he was not from the line of David, but they couldn't do it because the facts were there.

Now, those records were destroyed in 70 CE, so later on, no one born after that could ever try to claim they were the Messiah because there would be no way to prove it and there were no facts.

3.5. Review

So now, with these two prophecies we looked at, we've unraveled further evidence. As prophesied, Jesus was born to a virgin, a specific virgin, Mary. From both of his parents, it's foretold Jesus could prove valid heritage from the house of King David. Together, these two solidify his identity as the true Messiah.

4. (Sym 3of6) Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – Born in Bethlehem

(18:29) Brother Art Raymond, a regular pioneer in the South Warwick congregation, will now continue the symposium with "Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled, Born in Bethlehem."

4.1. Video excerpt: Jesus’ birth

Let us watch another excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," and then we will identify the prophecy that was fulfilled.

Now in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered. And all the people went to be registered, each one to his own city. Of course, Joseph also
went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her son, the firstborn. [music fades]

[End of Video]

4.2. Born in Bethlehem Eph'rat'hah

Over 700 years in advance, the prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Eph'rat'hah. Notice how Micah prophesied this at Micah 5:2. "O you, O Bethlehem, Eph'rat'hah, the one too little to be among the thousands of Judah, from you will come out from me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from ancient times, from long ago." Bethlehem was the hometown of King David.

4.3. Fulfillment

But how was this prophecy fulfilled? Caesar Augustus ordered the Israelites to be registered in their own region. Joseph, a descendant of King David, traveled with Mary to register in Bethlehem of Judah. Mary gave birth to Jesus while in Bethlehem, just as Micah had foretold 700 years earlier.

Notice how Luke penned these words at Luke 2:4-7. “Of course, Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem, because of his being a member of the house and family of David. He went to get registered with Mary, who had been given him in marriage as promised, and who was soon to give birth. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth, and she gave birth to her son, the firstborn. And she wrapped him in straps of cloth and laid him in
the manger, because there was no room for them in the lodging place.”

4.4. Why remarkable?

Why is this fulfillment so remarkable? Well, there were two towns named Bethlehem. The prophet prophesied which one he would be born in. It indicated the specific one where Jesus would be born. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth of Galilee, far from Judea. One reference says that they had a 90-mile journey.

Now think about that for a moment, especially our sisters who perhaps have given birth. Can you imagine being nine months pregnant, riding on a donkey 2,500 feet into the mountainous region, during the rainy season? No doubt during that journey, Mary had to make several stops. Discomfort? No doubt the journey would have caused an average woman to go right into birth just the thought of it. But yet she gave birth in the town that Micah foretold.

The fulfillment of this prophecy was no coincidence. To ensure that Jesus was born in Bethlehem Eph'ratthah, Jehovah must have motivated Caesar to register the people. We saw the video. It looked like it was his own idea, but it was Jehovah's putting this thought into his mind. Mary did not go into labor during the difficult journey until she reached Bethlehem. What a marvelous example of Jehovah's power to see to the prophecies that he inspired to have written for our day.

Well, you saw the baby in the video in the beginning. No doubt you said what I said when I first saw him. He's so cute. Look at him. He's so adorable. And one of our little ones were answering him back during the video. I thought it was the cutest thing. She sounds like she was trying to talk to him. But we saw also that the angels in
heaven were rejoicing when he was born. But that leads us to understand something else. Jehovah's enemy didn't like it. In fact, he sought to kill Jesus from the start. So now you have this beautiful baby, the Savior of the world, all those rejoicing who understands the prophecy. Now you have someone seeking to put him to death. How will we protect this beautiful child?

5. (Sym 4of6) Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – Protected as a Child

(24:50) Well, Brother Mark Turner, a member of the Walk Hill Bethel family, will now present the next part on this symposium, "Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – Protected as a Child."

5.1. Video excerpt: Fled to Egypt

So let's watch another excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," and then we'll identify the prophecies that were fulfilled.

Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.

Angel: Get up. Take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt and stay there until I give you word for Herod is about to search for the young child to kill him.

Narrator: So Joseph got up and by night took along the young child and the child's mother and went into Egypt. Then Herod, seeing that he had been outwitted by the astrologers, flew into a great rage. No! No!

And he sent out and had all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its districts killed from two years of age and under. According to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the astrologers.
5.2. Efforts to kill Jesus

So we're going to focus on two prophecies foretelling Satan's efforts to destroy the future Messiah and how Jehovah would protect him. So this talk will identify the two prophecies, explain how each was fulfilled, and then explain how the fulfillment of each prophecy was truly remarkable.

Now Jehovah well knew that his son would be most vulnerable as an infant. He also is keenly aware of Satan's tactics in the past and his desire to destroy Jesus as a child. In fact, centuries before Jesus was born, when the Jews were still slaves in Egypt, Jehovah watches Satan maneuver Pharaoh to order that all the Hebrew boys be killed after they were born. That was to stop the rapid growth of the Israelite people. Well, that plan failed and God's people were saved.

5.2.1. Tried to kill Jesus

By means of the prophets Jeremiah and Hosea, Jehovah foretold two remarkable things which would ultimately identify Jesus as the Messiah. First, he revealed in advance Satan's plan to kill the Messiah as a child. In Jeremiah 31:15, it was foretold that in the city of Ramah, sitting the territory of Benjamin about five miles north of Jerusalem, that Rachel would weep over her sons because they are no more. Now since Rachel was the mother of both Joseph and Benjamin, she well pictured all the mothers of Israel.

So Satan was going to try something similar to what he had done earlier in Egypt, that is attempt to kill Jesus by killing Rachel's children, Israel's mother's children at a future time, which would cause her inconsolable grief.
5.2.2. Jehovah saves Jesus

The second prophecy, Jehovah's means of saving his son, that's contained in Hosea 11:1. Please turn there with me. Hosea 11:1. And there it says, "When Israel was a boy, I loved him. And out of Egypt, I called my son." So Jehovah's means of saving his son's life, the future Messiah, had some connection to Israel's past deliverance, Jehovah's son then, when he brought his people out of Egypt in 1513 BCE.

So we have two very specific prophecies regarding the Messiah.

- First, Rachel or Israel's mothers weeping in Ramah over the loss of her sons.
- And the second prophecy that Jehovah would somehow save his son, the future Messiah, using Egypt.

5.3. Fulfilment

So how is each prophecy fulfilled? Well some months after Jesus was born, while they were living in the city of Bethlehem, astrologers from the east are led by a star to Jerusalem and to King Herod. Now when they come into King Herod, as we saw in the video, they ask, "Where is the one born King of the Jews?" And we saw his expression when he heard that question. So now Herod feigns interest in going to pay obeisance or going to pay his respects to this future king. So he tells the astrologers to go find out where Jesus is and then report back to him.

Now the astrologers do find Jesus and his parents, but they're warned in a divine dream to go home a different way and not to report back to Herod. Now wisely, they obey. Now as we saw in the video, when Herod saw that he'd been outwitted by the astrologers, he flew into a great rage. He ordered all the boys in Bethlehem and
its surrounding districts to be killed. All the boys from two years of age and under. Well here we see the prophecy have its tragic fulfillment that was recorded at Jeremiah 31:15. Rachel, Israel's mother, weeps and wails over her children who are no more.

Now our second prophecy said that Jehovah would call his son out of Egypt. How was that fulfilled? How did Jehovah both foil Satan's plan and fulfill this prophecy? Well think back to our video. We saw Joseph sleeping soundly when something very unexpected takes place. Before Herod finds out he's been tricked, Jehovah warns Joseph through a divine dream. He tells him to wake his family up and to take them immediately to Egypt. Well let's read what happened at Matthew 2:13-15. Matthew 2:13-15. It says, "After they had departed, look, Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, 'Get up, take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I give you word, for Herod is about to search for the young child to kill him.' So Joseph got up and by night took along the young child and the child's mother and went into Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod. This fulfilled what was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet saying, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"

5.4. Why remarkable?

(31:17) So now two very specific prophecies dealing with the same event. Why is the fulfillment of these prophecies so remarkable? Well Herod's actions made very little sense politically. If you think about it, how big a threat is a baby, even if that baby is to become a future king, to a powerful ruler who's almost 70 years old? So that doesn't make sense. We have to take a broader view of the situation, and we see we have more than just a mad king seeking to protect his power.
We come to the real issue. That's the ongoing battle between Jehovah God and Satan the devil. Now as much as Herod would have liked to eliminate any competition or threat to his power, who was the one who really wanted to see the Messianic seed destroyed? We know it was Satan that was behind this vicious plot. Centuries in advance, Jehovah anticipated this attack on his son the Messiah. He well knew that by having Jesus born as a human baby into a poor family, there would be a period of time where he would appear to be very vulnerable. In fact, from all appearances, he would be absolutely defenseless.

Now can you imagine the audacity, the arrogance of Satan to attempt to assassinate the human son of God as a baby no less? Can you also imagine, did Satan really think that Jehovah God, his heavenly father, almighty God, would not intervene to protect his child? Now Jehovah could have solved that problem any number of ways. He could simply have executed Herod the Great, like he did his grandson a few years later. He could have confused the astrologers. He could have had that star lead them out into the wilderness or back home.

Instead, he caused Jeremiah to prophesy that some future event would cause deep emotional pain to Rachel, or Israel's mothers, and for Hosea to foretell that somehow or other the Messiah would come out of Egypt. So while Herod did learn from the priests and the scribes where the Messiah would be born, he did not know the Messiah would be protected in Egypt. Now the remarkable fulfillment of both of these prophecies, these very specific prophecies, actually helped to identify Jesus as the Messiah. The fulfillment of these prophecies was not mere coincidence. They clearly involved actions from outside the human realm.
6. (Sym 5of6) Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – called A Nazarene

(33:40) Brother David Edwards, a regular pioneer, will now present the next part of the symposium from the Highland Congregation, "Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – called "A Nazarene."

6.1. Video excerpt:

To begin, let's watch another excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," and then we will identify the prophecy that was fulfilled.

When Herod had died, look, Jehovah's Angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. "Get up, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For those who were seeking the life of the young child are dead."

So he got up and took the young child and the child's mother and entered into the land of Israel. And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth, in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. “He will be called a Nazarene”.

[End of Video]

So we see there in the end of the video, the prophecy. The child will be called a Nazarene. So we're going to discuss those three points now, but now that we've already identified the prophecy, the first point is going to be what other significant detail was connected to this prophecy. A second point, how was the prophecy fulfilled? And then the third point, why was the fulfillment of this prophecy remarkable?
6.2. Like a sprout - Isa 11:1,2

So first off, what other detail was connected to this prophecy? Well, let's look to the scriptures for the answer to that question. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah. That's Isaiah 11:1,2. Isaiah 11:1,2. And it says, "A twig will grow out of the stump of Jesse, and a sprout from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah will settle upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of Jehovah." So the Messiah was prophesied to be likened to a sprout. Now, this is not the only time that this comparison has been made in prophecy.

Two times, Jeremiah wrote of the righteous sprout as an offshoot of David.

Three times, Zechariah described a king priest whose name is Sprout. That is the other detail in this prophecy, that the Messiah would be likened to a sprout.

6.3. Connected to Nazareth - Matt 22:23

So how does this sprout connect to the Nazareth that we just saw in the video? Well, our second point contains that connection. How was prophecy fulfilled? Let's turn to another scripture for that connection. Now please look in Matthew now. Matthew 2:23. That's Matthew 2:23. And it says, "And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth, in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. He will be called a Nazarene."

So the connection is actually in the meaning of the name. The name Nazareth probably means "sprout town." Evidently related to a Hebrew word that means "sprout." Now, sprout town might sound like a nice place at first. Maybe you love Brussels sprouts and that's...
your favorite place to eat. But when we step back and pay attention to why Nazareth is called sprout town, pay attention to who we're speaking of as coming from there, this is no compliment. In fact, it was said of Nazareth in John 1:46, when Philip was explaining to Nathaniel that Jesus was found and that he would be a Nazarene. The response? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Apparently Nazareth may have been seen of little importance. And yet even after Jesus was resurrected, he called himself the Nazarene. Prophecy fulfilled. The Messiah would be the sprout. He would be a Nazarene.

6.4. Why remarkable?

So to our third point, why is this prophecy fulfilled so remarkable? We know, the events leading up to Jesus being called a Nazarene cannot be coincidence. Jesus had no control over where he was born or where he was raised. It was foretold that the Messiah would be born as we heard in Bethlehem. But do we know him as Jesus the Bethlehemite? No. It was foretold that he would spend some time in Egypt. But do we know him as Jesus the Egyptian? No. So the fact that Jesus is known for Nazareth of the many places that he lived is significant, especially since it was such a lowly place.

When we think of rulers being compared to something that grows from the ground, usually, what do we usually see? Rulers and kingdoms and prophecy were compared often to strong, sturdy trees. When speaking of Pharaoh in the book of Ezekiel, when he fell, he wasn't compared to a mighty sunflower. No, he was called a mighty cedar.

And when comparing a righteous man to plant life, that one is likened to, in the book of Jeremiah, to a plant or to a tree planted by
streams of water whose foliage is luxuriant and whose fruit grows even in a drought. And yet the most important king is compared to a sprout. If we look again in the book of Isaiah, we see further about how this sprout was to be perceived early on. Isaiah chapter 53:2. We're going to see this first impression in Isaiah 53:2. It says, "He will come up like a twig before him, like a root out of parched land. No stately form does he have, nor any splendor. And when we see him, his appearance does not draw us to him."

Not stately, no splendor, no attraction. What a unique, remarkable prophecy to be fulfilled about the future king, our savior, leader, Messiah. The fulfillment of this prophecy disappointed any who expected Jesus to begin ruling immediately. Time would be needed for this sprout to become king, and not just any king, the king of God's kingdom.

Yes, this was truly a remarkable, remarkable prophecy that the Messiah, a powerful king, would begin as a sprout. That the Messiah would be called the Nazarene.

7. (Sym 6of6) Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled, Arrived at the Appointed Time

(40:21) Brother Eula Coulter, a Wallkill Bethel family member, will now present the final part of this symposium, "Messianic Prophecy Fulfilled – Arrived at the Appointed Time."
7.1. Video excerpt: Messiah arrived at the appointed time

Please enjoy watching another excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," and then we will identify the prophecy that was fulfilled.

Angel: And you are to name him Jesus. And 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 to his kingdom. He will save his people from their sins. The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world.

[End of Video]

Well, this video certainly builds anticipation for the prophecy featured in this talk, which is: “the Messiah would arrive at the appointed time”. Now, to determine an appointed time, we need to know a start time and also a duration of time that would lead up to the Messiah. Look for those clues in the prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:25. That's Daniel 9:25. “You should know and understand that from the issuing of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the leader, there will be seven weeks, also 62 weeks. She will be restored and rebuilt with a public square and moat, but in times of distress.” Well, did you underscore the starting point? That was when the word to rebuild Jerusalem was issued.

And the time period? Well, that was seven weeks and 62 weeks. And rather than a literal 69 weeks or 483 days, this time period is actually weeks of years, meaning each week represents seven years. Hence, the appointed time was exactly 483 years after the word was issued to rebuild Jerusalem.
So this raises an important question. Did this prophecy identify the time of Jesus' birth? Well, actually, no. As the prophecy would pinpoint when Jesus would arrive as the Messiah, who was an anointed one, and that would occur later. However, as we discussed earlier, Jesus' birth in his own right was miraculous, and the timing was important. Galatians 4:4 says that when the full limit of the time arrived, God sent his son who was born of a woman and who was under law.

Well, this was depicted in our opening video when the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to a son and name him Jesus. So yes, Jesus' birth was significant. It enabled him to grow to adulthood to become the Messiah at the foretold time.

7.2. Decree to rebuild Jerusalem

Well, how was this prophecy fulfilled? Well, for the answer, we need to first understand or know when the decree was issued to rebuild Jerusalem. And according to Nehemiah chapter 2, this occurred in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. Well, King Artaxerxes' first full year of reigning was in 474 BCE. So when we count down from there, 20 years, that takes us to 455 BCE. So that's our starting point, 455 BCE. Now, with those that are good with quick math, we can subtract 483 years from 455. And that takes us to 29 CE. What happened in 29 CE?

Open your Bibles, please, to Luke 3:1,2. "In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was district ruler of Galilee, Philip his brother was district ruler of the country of Iteria and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was district ruler of Abilene, in the days of chief priest Annas and of
Caiaphas, God’s declaration came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.

Well, these verses, naming no less than seven public officials, establishes the start of John the Baptist’s ministry with absolute certainty. It was in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, or in 29 CE. Now, scroll down some six months in John’s ministry to verses 21 and 22. "Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus too was baptized. As he was praying, the heaven opened up, and the Holy Spirit in bodily form, like a dove, came down upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved. I have approved you.'" Isn't that just beautiful? At Jesus' baptism, Jehovah proudly told all onlookers, "This is my Son. I love him, and I approve him." Well, this declaration, along with the outpouring of Holy Spirit, was clear evidence that Jesus was anointed as a Messiah in 29 CE. The Messiah arrived at the appointed time.

Well, why is the fulfillment of this prophecy so amazing? Well, the prophecy in Daniel was written more than five centuries in advance. Now, think about that. Five hundred years ahead of time. The Bible foretold the exact year that the Messiah would appear on this earth. That's phenomenal. Additionally, consider three other surrounding details of the prophecy that are also impressive. Go back, please, to Daniel 9:25, but the latter part of that verse. "She," Jerusalem, "will be restored and rebuilt with a public square and moat, but in times of distress."

There are two points here. Number one, it's one thing to rebuild a city, but would it be restored to its livelihood? Would it be restored to its former glory? Would worship to Jehovah be restored in Jerusalem? Well, true to prophecy, Jerusalem was restored for hundreds of years. In fact, Jesus worshipped there. Now, the
second point was that Jerusalem would be rebuilt in times of distress.

Well, Ezra chapter 4 chronicles the persecution, severe persecution from neighboring enemies that made the rebuilding unlikely. Yet it was rebuilt just as Jehovah had inspired.

7.3. Jesus death, Jerusalem destroyed - Dan 9:26

Now, a third impressive aspect takes us to verse 26 of Daniel 9. Daniel 9:26. "And after the 62 weeks, Messiah will be cut off with nothing for himself, and the people of a leader who is coming will destroy the city and the holy place, and its end will be by the flood. And until the end there will be war. What is decided upon is desolations." So it was prophesied that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed, again, after the Messiah was cut off in death.

Did it happen that way? It did. 37 years after Jesus died, this occurred when the Roman armies came in like a flood and decimated Jerusalem and its temple. Without question, these foretold events could not have happened by coincidence, nor could they have been predicted by humans.

So what should we all want to take away from this symposium, where we considered no less than six Messianic prophecies?

7.4. Video: Why multiple messianic prophecies?

In the following video, notice why it is significant that Jehovah inspired multiple Messianic prophecies.

Numerous Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, including prophecies about his birth. "And your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name him John."
7.4.1. Preceded by a messenger - Mal 3:1; 4:5. Matt 11:10-14

Mary: How is this to be, since I'm not having sexual relations with a man?

Angel: Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. And for that reason, the one who is born will be called Holy, God's Son.

Narrator: Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to David's city, which is called Bethlehem. Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up, take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt and stay there until I give you word. For Herod is about to search for the young child to kill him." So Joseph got up and by night took along the young child and the child's mother and went into Egypt.

7.4.2. Protected as a child - Hosea 11:1; Matt 2:13-15

And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth. In order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, he will be called a Nazarene.

7.4.3. Called a Nazarene - Isa 11:1,2; Matt 2:23

The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world.

7.4.4. Arrived at the appointed time - Dan 9:25; Luke 3:1,2,21,22

These are just a few examples of dozens of Messianic prophecies. The fulfillment of multiple prophecies reveals who the promised Messiah is.

[End of Video]
Well, did you hear that? Dozens of Messianic prophecies. Why so many? Well, think of this. One or two pieces of a puzzle, of a large puzzle, doesn't reveal so much, does it? But dozens of pieces certainly do. Similarly, dozens of prophecies point conclusively to one grand picture, clearly identifying the Messiah.

Additionally, by inspiring numerous prophecies, Jehovah helped ones who saw the fulfillment to recognize the momentous times in which they were living. This happened in the first century. Those disciples recognized the import. They recognized Jesus as the Messiah. And at the risk of their own lives, they put faith in Jehovah's anointed one.

**7.5. Today**

What about today? We live in momentous times. Many prophecies have already been filled, and we are now living during the time of Jesus' presence as King of God's kingdom. That's why each of us needs to be students of prophecy. Our faith will continue to be tested. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, and note how examining prophecies can impact us individually. 1 Thessalonians 1:5. "Because the good news we preach did not come to you with speech alone, but also with power, and with Holy Spirit, and strong conviction."

See, the good news of God's kingdom, it's wrapped up in messianic prophecies. Examining them exerts such power on us that it strengthens our faith. It expands the foundation of our faith, and it fires our zeal for the ministry with conviction, just like it did with our brothers in the first century.

So study hard, but never allow prophecies or our study of them to be mere academic. You see, fulfilled prophecy is extraordinary.
Jehovah God certainly displays His almighty power and matchless wisdom in foretelling detailed aspects long in advance, exactly on time. Additionally, the messianic prophecies that have already been fulfilled, well, they strengthen our faith, don't they? That the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, such as Jesus' thousand-year reign, that will come exactly as was foretold.

How thankful we are to know what we know about prophecy and to think how we think about it, and meditate on it, and to see how we see as to its fulfillment. May each of us, brothers and sisters, be determined to continue strengthening our faith and our leader, Jesus, by being a student of prophecy, and may that motivate, yes, inspire us to diligently and zealously proclaim God's kingdom good news.

[End of Talk]

8. Baptism: Continue to be Submissive to the Good News

(55:27) Thank you, brothers, for strengthening our faith in Jesus as the foretold Messiah. The time has now arrived for the baptism discourse. We invite all baptism candidates who have not yet already done so to please come to the front two rows in the center section of the auditorium. We warmly welcome all of you who are getting baptized today. Your decision shows that you've put faith in the good news and acted on the good news. How can you go on progressing spiritually in the days to come? Please listen closely to Brother Keith Bradley, pioneer serving in the Minnewaska congregation, as he answers that question in the baptism discourse entitled "Continue to be Submissive to the Good News."
A few years ago, a brother approached me with a very warm smile from ear to ear. He said, "Can I talk to you for a minute?" I said, "Sure." He said, "You know, I met someone, and I'm thinking about pursuing a relationship." I said, "Wow!"

I think we'll all agree there are few things that bring this wide range of emotions than the prospect of a long-lasting relationship. But of all the relationships that a human can have, the most wonderful, the most fulfilling, is the one you, dear candidates, are solidifying today, submitting to the good news through baptism. We warmly welcome you. So glad to have you. [applause]

But in all levels of relationships, it could be dating, it could be bosses at a secular work, at school, with a teacher, even law enforcement while driving. Appropriate submission is one of the keys to success. But this idea of submission, very distasteful to a lot of people. Some even carry themselves with an air about them. "Don't tell me what to do." Do we know people like that? Oh, yeah.

But do you know we are constantly under submission to something? I mean, to get here to this facility, did we decide the speed limit? No. We actually submitted. We yielded to the authority of someone else who made that decision. And you know, we saw its merit. So if we see the value of submission to a speed limit, how much more so is there tremendous value when we choose to be submissive to the good news? Let's notice a good result of that in God's Word. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 9:13, please. 2 Corinthians 9:13. The middle of the verse says, "They glorify God because you are submissive to the good news about the Christ."

So right there we learned submission glorifies. It honors Jehovah God. So when we properly submit, it could be when driving, it could be at our secular job to our employer, it could be at school, the
teachers and principals, dating, marriage. It can make Jehovah's name shine.

So how is it that you, dear Baptismal Candidates, can continue to submit to the good news? Well, we're going to consider three ways.

● Number one, maintain a good spiritual routine. That's number one.
● Number two, set spiritual goals. Very important.
● And number three, accept help from spiritually mature fellow worshippers. That's vital.

8.1. Way 1of3: Maintain a good spiritual routine

So let's talk about number one, maintain a good spiritual routine. Sometimes if individuals are dating, they often develop a nice routine to care for themselves physically. They make sure their hair is done. They make sure their clothes are okay. They eat right to fit into those clothes. They want to look their best. They gladly submit to that routine.

So to continue to be submissive to the good news, we need to continue a nice routine to care for ourselves spiritually. So what does that submission involve?

8.1.1. Reading and meditating on God’s word

Well, prayerfully reading God's word, doing so daily, and then meditating on what we learn. Even if we don't like reading, or we find it hard to do, do our best. Do the best that we can.

Think about it this way. Even a person who doesn't like reading, eagerly looks forward to reading text messages from a person they're interested in. They submit to phone alerts. They stop what they're doing if the alert goes off.
We hear from Jehovah when we read the Bible. What an excellent motive to keep trying. Ask Him for His help, and He'll happily assist so we can understand His word and actually continue to find the light in reading it.

8.1.2. Christian meetings

What are some other routines we need? Well, preparing for and attending our Christian meetings. I think most of us will agree. Before our meetings, we might be exhausted. But after the meetings, how do we feel? Don't we feel energized? That's not an accident. That's by design. So we encourage you continue to get and to give encouragement at meetings through your attendance, conversation, commenting. Keep that as part of your routine.

8.1.3. Preaching regularly

Anything else? Well, see if you can notice how often we should preach the good news. Let's read Acts 5:42. That's the book of Acts 5:42. And see if you can notice how often. Acts 5:42. "And every day in the temple and from house to house, they continued without let up teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ Jesus." Did we get that?

Well, let's also read Acts 17:17. Acts 17:17. Acts 17:17. "So he began to reason in the synagogue with the Jews and the other people who worshipped God, and every day in the marketplace with those who happened to be on hand." So we caught that point, that phrase, "every day."

So what are we trying to encourage? Preach regularly. Make that-continue to keep that as part of your routine. Some make it a goal to do some type of formal and informal witnessing every week. Continue to do that.
You know what we could also do? Make working with our “love people” brochure. Make that a regular part of what we do, working on a different point, perhaps on a regular basis. We could become an example in boldness, right? Being able to look beyond the appearance of someone.

Also, when it comes to patience, so we could try different approaches. And then, simplicity. And as we learn, not talking too much. Even if we're shy or we're reserved, continue to do the best that we can. We're going to feel good about persisting. Jehovah God will bless us for it.

So a good spiritual routine in all of these areas. Bible reading, meetings, the ministry. It can help us with our most precious relationship, the one with Jehovah, to make sure it always progresses. So that's the first thing. Keep a good spiritual routine.

8.2. Way 2of3: Set spiritual goals

So that brings us to number two to remain submissive to the good news. Set spiritual goals. Now think about this. Those that are interested in a relationship, they set goals. They have a goal of getting to know the other person better. I don't know anyone at all that says to themselves, "You know what? I don't know anything about that person. Maybe I should marry them first." Nobody does that.

You need to set a goal to get information. We need information about a person's likes and dislikes. We need details. We make sacrifices and adjustments to gain that information. Stay up late, get up early, carving out times on the weekdays, the weekends, to reach that goal.
8.2.1. Paul encouraged Timothy to set goal

Did you know the Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to set goals? Let's look at 1 Timothy 4:12-16. 1 Timothy, chapter 4. We're going to start with verse 12. "Never let anyone look down on your youth. Instead, become an example to the faithful ones in speaking, in conduct, in love, in faith, in chasteness. Until I come, continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift in you that was given you through a prophecy when the body of elders lay their hands on you. Ponder over these things. Be absorbed in them, so that your advancement may be plainly seen by all people. Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you."

As we know, these words were penned to Timothy when he was already a mature Christian. But did we notice some goals for him?

Look at verse 12. It talked about being an example when it comes to speech, love, chasteness, to encourage others.

Jump down to verse 15. "Ponder, be absorbed."

Look at verse 16. “Pay attention, persevere, solidify spirituality and teaching”. Never stop. That way he and others could benefit.

But then look at verse 13, this goal for Timothy. "Continue applying yourself." Part of that means, right, he had to put to use what he learned about things like public reading, exhortation, teaching, never take it lightly. Our study note mentions that he had to be thorough and to continue to do this.

8.2.2. Illustration: Ordering Gluten free food

Let's think about it this way. Suppose we're interested in someone and we learn that the individual cannot eat gluten, gluten-free. So
say we go to a restaurant and say, "You know what? Let me order the food." So you pick all these different dishes and then the one we're interested in leans over and says, "I don't think I can eat any of that food. I think it's got gluten in every single dish." And then we say, "Huh. Well, what are you going to eat?" We didn't apply ourself, right? We didn't take and use that knowledge.

Rather, wouldn't it go better if we go to a restaurant, order all these things, and we look to the person and say, "You can eat everything I picked out. Things will go much better, won't they?"

We have used that knowledge. We want to keep that pattern, right? Use it continually, thoroughly, right, to reach our goals.

Now, you dear baptismal candidates, you have set some goals already. You've applied yourself. You've applied what you learned, so much so you've actually qualified to get baptized. Excellent. Well done. Continue. Continue. This concept of setting and reaching spiritual goals should never stop. It shouldn't stop.

8.2.3. Some example goals

So what are some goals that can be set as baptism nears? Well, when praying, be able to tell Jehovah how you truly feel. Sometimes that can be difficult because we may have been in an environment where individuals were not really concerned with our thoughts and feelings. But Jehovah God is different. He wants to know everything about us. Tell Him freely. Continue to make that a goal.

What about this? To prepare and to give brief comments at each of our congregation meetings. So if we're privileged to answer first, we hit the bullseye, right? We answer the question, and then other expressions, highlights, secondary points, cited scriptures, et
cetera. Yes, we can praise Jehovah, and we can encourage others in about 30 seconds or less. We can do it. And you know what? We don't have to be perfect. That's the good thing. Nobody is perfect, so don't worry about sometimes we feel shy about, "Man, I can't speak quite as well as this other person." That's okay. It happens.

Because think about this. You know, in relationships, individuals get to the point where they have to express themselves, and sometimes they mess up, especially a man. He messes up a lot. But you know what? Keep trying, right? Keep trying, and that's what we do in the congregation. We keep trying. We keep doing the best that we can. Well, here's another one.

To continue to be conversational in the ministry and in using our digital tools. Remember that a conversational ministry is a good ministry. So don't give up in mastering this important facet of serving our God, Jehovah.

You know, what we may decide to do is on JW.org, type in the phrase, "The Kingdom, 100 years and counting." So, "The Kingdom, 100 years and counting." It'll bring us to a very encouraging video about faithful servants of Jehovah who have seen changes in the organization and in preaching over the years. That can encourage us as we continue to get used to and to using, developing conversations and using digital tools.

We had a beautiful chance to chat with some of you beforehand, so we know that this will apply because we can set goals to always be a better mate if we're married. If we're a child living at home, we can be a better child. Isn't that nice? If we're raising children, be a better parent. All of these efforts can do a lot to honor Jehovah and even to win over our unbelieving family members. It can be done.
Another goal we may decide to do is to help our brothers who are victims of disaster getting involved in the relief ministry. Jehovah, God, and Jesus put real value behind that type of work.

So, so far in our discussion, we've talked about two ways to submit to the good news.

- Number one, maintain a good spiritual routine.
- And number two, set and reach spiritual goals.

8.2.4. Interview: Dawn Walker & Sophie Bogues

So, now it's good if we have a nice interview with two of our baptized Christians in our organization about this. So, we're going to enjoy this. So, we're glad to have with us, first of all, Sister Dawn Walker. Sister Walker is in the Minnewaska congregation, and very soon she will have been baptized for 60 years. And we also have with us Sister Sophie Bogues, also from the Minnewaska congregation, and she's been baptized for about a year.

So, Sister Walker, if we could start with you first, please, and ask you this question. In what ways have you benefited from maintaining a good spiritual routine?

Walker: Well, I think a good spiritual routine has helped me to grow spiritually. It moved me to get baptized in the first place. And then later on, I was able to enjoy pioneering for about 16 years. But most of all, I think it has really helped me to maintain my spiritual balance when I came up across difficult situations or stressful situations.

Narrator: Oh, great. Could we ask you, please, what was one of those very difficult situations that you faced?

Walker: Well, one big one was when my husband passed away in 2011. I found myself having to make decisions, large decisions that...
I didn't have to make before. And what helped me a great deal was getting to become familiar with Hannah, who was a really good example. Because of her, it helped me to see the importance of really praying intensely to Jehovah and increasing my prayers to Jehovah. And I also made it a goal to be able to draw closer to the brothers and sisters in the congregation. They were very, very supportive and encouraging to me. So these things were a real lifeline for me.

Narrator: Oh, thank you, Sister Walker. Very nice expressions. Let me ask you this then. How have you been able to help new ones grow spiritually?

Walker: Well, I have been able to help several progress to baptism. But what I've really enjoyed is helping new ones be able to learn how to use the tools that Jehovah's Organization has provided, like JW Library, for example. And they were able to use it to prepare for meetings, for field service, give talks, and also to be able to use that app in order to be able to study personally and to do research.

Narrator: Excellent. Thank you, Sister Walker. And it's so comforting having a resident expert of the app in the congregation. Thank you so much. Well, Sophie, if we could now turn our attention to you, please, and ask you this question. How have you benefited from setting spiritual goals?

Sophie: Well, by setting realistic and small spiritual goals, it helped me to see clearly the path that I need to take to get to my more major goals, like getting baptized and thanks to Jehovah, now regular pioneering. Very nice.
Narrator: Now, you mentioned some small goals. What were some of those smaller goals?

Sophie: Well, for instance, I love reading, but I noticed that a lot of my time through the day could get spent lost in a book. So I decided that one time a day when I would normally read a fictional novel, I would instead read the Bible. And this helped me to develop a good routine of personal study and draw me closer to Jehovah.

Narrator: Excellent. Thank you, Sophie. Nice sacrifice there. Well, let me ask you this question, please. How have the elders or other mature Christians helped you to overcome obstacles to your spiritual growth?

Sophie: Well, sometimes it's very hard for me to feel that Jehovah can care about me, and these doubts have made me slow down my service to him in the past. But when the brothers and sisters just listen to me and they show that they care by sending me a text or a card, or even just taking the time to have a conversation with me, the love that they show me in turn helps me to feel Jehovah's love. I can get my insecurities under control, and I can keep going strong, giving my all for a God that I'm confident cares about me.

Narrator: Excellent. And you do an excellent job. Thank you, Sophie. Thank you both, dear sisters. Nice. [applause]

[End of Video]

8.3. Way 3 of 3: Accept help

Well, our dear candidates, what's the last step we can discuss that can help you to stay submissive to the good news? Well, as we just touched on, accept help from our Christian brothers and
sisters. The congregation is full of precious servants that can help us. We can think about it this way.

Sometimes if individuals are thinking about a relationship, we may get help from others just by observation. We might watch them as a couple and watch how they interact, how they communicate, how they treat each other, their lifestyle, their genuineness, and that can assist us. We may even just come right out and ask for advice on what do you do in your relationship? How do you do it? We may even go so far as to ask, "Well, what do you think of this person that I'm interested in? What's the point we're trying to make?"

We are dignified with making our own decisions. But when we face various situations in life, getting to know and seeking help from other brothers and sisters, mature ones, can assist. Particularly, we encourage you to continue to get to know the congregation elders. Those brothers want to provide help. You know your group overseer already? Continue to get to know that brother and his family if he has one. Use that as a starting point to get to know all of your congregation shepherds, no matter how many. Listening to their counsel can benefit us.

Look at Hebrews 13:17. Hebrews 13:17. Hebrews 13:17. It says, "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over you as to those who will render an account." Did we notice those phrases? Be submissive. They are keeping watch over us.

Think about it this way. When getting to know someone, individuals may wisely use a chaperone. Chaperones are not there to ruin the time of the couple, no, but to provide protection. So it wouldn't be wise to, let's say, pick up the chaperone, drive about 10
feet, and say, "You know what? I don't think I need you. Would you mind getting out and just stepping on the side of the road and just take off and leave them there?" We wouldn't do that, would we? You see, the elders can be a source to provide protection as well as loving guidance and assistance. Don't, in effect, leave them on the side of the road by ignoring their counsel and advice, especially if it's unsolicited. Get to know these brothers. Accept their help. In fact, benefit from these older men and all mature brothers and sisters that are in the congregation.

Now, we must admit that sometimes relationships with people is sometimes a maybe. So maybe they won't always be there. Sometimes the people we're in school with, we graduate, we never see them again. People on our jobs, right? We change jobs, people come and go. We don't see them. Sometimes even the person that we're interested in, we date them and it doesn't work out. And that's not bad because dating has served its purpose.

But our relationship with Jehovah, that is a definite, that is rock solid. Never, ever forget that because in our service to God, we are going to continue to go through a lot of emotions. We're going to have some fear. We're going to have some sadness. We're going to have some disappointment. But that relationship with Jehovah helps us keep all of that in the right perspective so that we are not overcome. And no matter what happens, we will always see our value and our worth to our Heavenly Father. Because you, dear friends, are precious. You can stay that way.

And as we serve Jehovah, we will also experience happiness. We'll also experience contentment. We will be able to have peace in a variety of situations. We encourage you, continue to read the good news, preach the good news, live the good news by being submissive to it. How? Keep that good spiritual routine. We also
talked about setting spiritual goals and accepting help from brothers and sisters. That way, we will continue to benefit now and on into the new world because we will have the most marvelous relationship of all intact. Our relationship with Jehovah.

8.4. Baptism Questions

And so now, we have reached an important part of our time together. I get to ask you some questions. Oh, this is exciting. So we invite you, dear Baptismal Candidates, to please stand. And we're going to ask you two questions. And in a loud voice, we'd like to hear your reply. Now, I'm going to say, "Your answer, please," and then you can respond loudly.

So here's the first question. Have you repented of your sins, dedicated yourself to Jehovah and accepted his way of salvation through Jesus Christ? Your answer, please. Oh, well done. Oh, I like that. You shook the rafters. We don't have rafters here. We got steel girders. I don't know. Construction. You shook the construction.

Our second question. Do you understand that your baptism identifies you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with Jehovah's organization? Your answer, please. Well done. Your clear, affirmative answers to these questions indicate that you are qualified for baptism as ordained ministers of Jehovah God. [applause] Very nice. It's now appropriate that we pray.

8.5. Song 24

So now we invite all in the audience to stand and join the baptismal candidates in singing song number 24. And then
afterward, our session chairman will provide some announcements. That's song number 24, "Come to Jehovah's Mountain."
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    9.1.8. Frederic Released from Prison
  9.2. Georgia Persecution - Marika Karamanian
    9.2.1. [Andre Carbonneau - World Headquarters Legal department]
    9.2.2. [Isaiah 54:17]
    9.2.3. Change of Government
    9.2.4. European Court decision
    9.2.5. [Col 1:6]
10. Song 35
1. Introduction

Now it's time for this afternoon's music video presentation. As you watch the video, reflect on the various ways in which Jehovah is glorified. Please listen quietly and enjoy the video.

1.1. Song 83

2. (Sym 1of4) Use the Good News to Defeat the Bad News, Harmful Gossip

(12:51) How did Jesus respond when he encountered negative news or discouraging situations? In the following 4 part symposium, note Jesus example and how we can imitate him. Each speaker will introduce the one to follow. Brother Eric Casebolt will present the first talk entitled "Use the Good News to Defeat the Bad News – Harmful Gossip."

So I have some good news and I have some bad news. Which would you like to hear first? I'll start with the good news. Most of us would like to hear only the good news and none of the bad news, if at all possible. Why is that? Simply put, we are surrounded by bad news in this system of things. But even people in Jesus' time were surrounded by bad news themselves. But yet Jesus proclaimed something special. Good news of something better for the future.

Please turn with me in your copy of the Bible to Isaiah chapter 52 and we'll read together verse 7. And we'll note this, Isaiah 52:7. It reads, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, The one proclaiming peace, The one bringing
good news of something better. The one proclaiming salvation. The one saying to Zion, 'Your God has become king.'"

Beautiful. What is the scripture speaking of? This is actually showing how Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy in an outstanding way by publishing the good news of something better. What was that? It's the coming kingdom of God. In modern times, we too have actually followed Jesus' zealous example by proclaiming the good news of God's established kingdom and the blessings it will bring. God's kingdom is what Jesus focused on. The good news gives hope and comfort. It gives honest-hearted ones hope because they learn that there's actually solid reasons for believing that better times are truly ahead.

Now, this hope greatly helps us to maintain a positive outlook and maintain our joy when we focus on the good news. See, the power of the good news actually enabled Jesus to endure his trials and it actually helped those who put faith in him to overcome their challenges as well.

This symposium will consider how we can imitate Jesus in counteracting negative news with the good news of the kingdom. Let's begin with the subject of how Jesus defeated harmful gossip with the good news. As all of us know, harmful gossip can come from anywhere. It can come from the community in general or it can actually come from people who know us very well. Now, sometimes maybe we're at work or at school, we might hear bad things being said about certain people. Or even at times people may say bad things against us. What if you're the victim of such harmful, slanderous accusation? Did you know that Jesus Christ himself and also John the Baptizer experienced such a unique challenge? Some people spoke negatively about John the Baptist. Please turn with me in your copy as you follow along at Matthew chapter 11.
Matthew 11:18. It says, "Likewise, John came neither eating nor drinking, but people say, 'He is a demon.'" Ouch. Can you imagine that being said about you or your close friend? What would you do? Would you bow up or get emotionally charged up or fired up because somebody had said this against you?

What did Jesus do? How did Jesus deal with false or bad information? Did he get fired up or emotionally charged up? No. He focused on the good news of the kingdom and he did not focus on the bad, the gossip.

Well, what can we learn from this? Notice what Jesus highlighted and this was his normal thing that he did. Please look at verse 11 and notice this. And this is worthy of imitation for us. It says, "Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has not been raised up anyone greater than John the Baptist, but a lesser person in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is." What a beautiful, beautiful lesson. It's actually a beautiful compliment.

Can you imagine having that compliment followed up with your name? Can you imagine Jesus Christ himself saying, "There has not been anyone raised up greater than you," and insert your name? What a beautiful thing that Jesus focused in on. Jesus defeated harmful gossip by focusing in on John's positive qualities and he then gave a witness about the kingdom.

What's the lesson for you and I? If a conversation takes a negative turn, steer it back towards the positive, something encouraging, something upbuilding, so that we can stay focused on the positive and not the bad news. By imitating Jesus in our encouraging and upbuilding speech and actual conduct and actions, we can actually counterattack and we can defeat the
effects of harmful gossip with the positive effects of the kingdom good news.

### 2.1. Video: Dealing with harmful gossip

In the following video, notice how one congregation imitated Jesus when Jehovah's Witnesses were the target of harmful gossip. Let's watch.

**[Augustine Kamadzi - Malawi]**

I received a phone call that a sister had passed away while giving birth. When people in the area heard that our sister had died, they got angry. They assumed that our sister had died because of having refused a blood transfusion. On the day of the burial, there was a difficult situation. Some family members did not want Jehovah's Witnesses to carry out the funeral ceremony. They just took the coffin away and headed to the cemetery without giving us a chance to deliver the talk. As soon as possible, we came up with an alternative plan since we saw the need for encouragement. We decided to go to the kingdom hall to have the talk there, which made it possible for the brothers and sisters to be strengthened by the kingdom hope.

The news of what happened on this day spread like wildfire. We were nervous when we thought of going out in the ministry, so we had to rely on Jehovah to go and preach to the same people who had reacted aggressively at the funeral. Without a doubt, Jehovah and his spirit helped us, and we were able to preach to these people. We were also relieved when the medical officials explained why our sister died, that it was not because she refused a blood transfusion. That really was an answer to our prayers.
At first, the husband of the deceased sister was the only witness in his family. But eventually, after all of this took place, two of his relatives became Jehovah’s Witnesses. Another interesting fact is that two chiefs who were present at the funeral attended the memorial. The wrong view some people had toward us changed, thanks to the power of the good news and the peaceable attitude of our brothers and sisters.

[End of Video]

Isn't that a wonderful example in a bad situation? What was the reaction of the congregation when gossip was spread about them? Did they focus on the bad news, the harmful gossip? No, they stayed positive and kept preaching about the kingdom message. And in time, did you notice that two honest-hearted ones were drawn towards Jehovah? And then two chiefs also attended the memorial? What a wonderful example. This congregation is truly one that imitated Jesus Christ.

See, when Jesus learned that people were saying bad things about him, he did not allow it to bother him. In fact, he let his life course speak for itself. Please turn with me to Matthew 11:19. And notice this. It says, "The Son of Man did come eating and drinking, but people say," notice this, "Look, a man who is a glutton and is given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners, all the same, wisdom is proved righteous by its works."

In other words, Jesus was saying simply this, "Look at my righteous works and my conduct, and you will see and you will know that these lies are all false." Beautiful point for us. There's a lesson in this. How so? By the way that we live, we can actually disprove any lies that are told about us.
Remember, how did Jesus deal with false information? He didn’t allow it to bother him. He let his life course speak for itself. He encouraged people to look at the facts, what he did and what he taught. And friends, there's a very valuable lesson in there for us that we do well to learn. At times, people may say things to us that are unfair and critical. They might do this that hurt our feelings. And we may long for justice, and we wish we could do something to undo the reputation. Yet, there is something that we can actually do. If someone spreads a lie about us, we can live our lives in such a way that no one will ever believe that lie.

Indeed, as Jesus' example shows, our personal record of upright Christian conduct can not only defeat, but it can conquer harmful gossip.

In conclusion, what can we take away from the first part of this symposium? Remember, friends, Jesus stayed laser-focused on the good news of the kingdom and not on the bad news. And when others spoke negatively about other fellow believers, actively steer the topic away to something up-building, something positive, just like Jesus did.

Our second point, if you are the victim of harmful gossip, defeat it by your good conduct. Like Jesus, if we do these things, we can actually defeat and conquer the bad news with the good news of the kingdom.
3. (Sym 2of4) Use the Good News to Defeat Bad News – a Troubled Conscience

(25:01) Brother Marcus West, a Wallkill Bethel family member, will now consider the next part of this symposium, "Use the Good News to Defeat Bad News – a Troubled Conscience."

What is one thing every human possesses internally that cannot be detected by an X-ray or the human eye? Well, it's our conscience. In fact, the Apostle Paul introduces the word "conscience" 26 times in the Greek Scriptures, even expressing how at one point or another, all of us have been accused by our own thoughts. And it's true, all of us have felt guilty about something. That's like having a built-in moral gauge and seeing that needle go from the green into the yellow.

Now, what's encouraging to know is when this happens, it can actually motivate us to avoid making that mistake again. But what if we have committed a serious wrongdoing? Well, it's now seeing that needle move from the yellow into the red, which can bring about excessive guilt.

Now, why is this dangerous? Well, excessive guilt can make us feel unworthy of Jehovah's love and can deeply damage our relationship with Him. Now, if you are ever in this position or have feelings such as these, is all hope lost? Well, absolutely not. And why do we know this? Because while on earth, Jesus helped others to defeat feelings of excessive guilt.

3.1. Peter

Now, one prime example of who he helped in this case was the Apostle Peter. Now, the crowing of a rooster signaled bad news for
Peter because it reminded him of Jesus' prediction and how he would disown his master three times. Now, in the book of Luke, it conveys Peter's deep emotion, for it says that afterward, he went out and wept bitterly. Would you say Peter's moral gauge was in the red at this point? It was certainly so. Yes, Peter must have felt like a huge failure, how he wasn't deserving of repentance, and what he did, he thought, was unforgivable. But was that the case? Was that how Jesus truly viewed him? Well, absolutely not.

In fact, we know this to be true because when Jesus was resurrected, he approached Peter privately. Now, we can only imagine how Peter must have felt to not only see Jesus again, but to finally say or have the opportunity to say to him simply, "I am so sorry."

Now, if you turn with me in your Bibles to John 21:15-17, and notice what Jesus was able to accomplish in this conversation. He was able to do two things. He dignified Peter and gave him an opportunity to affirm his love multiple times, saying, "Do you love me? Do you have affection for me?"

And then two, if you notice, Jesus reminded Peter of how he was still useful to him and his father by giving him an important assignment, telling him, "Feed my lambs. Shepherd my little sheep."

Now, what effect do you think this had on Peter? Well, how would you feel if those words were spoken to you? Well, no doubt Peter was now overwhelmed with relief. Yes, relief knowing that he was still trustworthy in the eyes of Jesus Christ. So what's the lesson? Well, Jesus forgives repented ones and shows confidence in them. And just like Peter, we can prove the depth of our love by accepting that important assignment of preaching the good news of God's
kingdom. Now, throughout Jesus' ministry, he encouraged repentant sinners to accept Jehovah's forgiveness and experience true peace.

For example, on one occasion, a woman came to Jesus with a very troubled conscience. But see, Jesus was able to identify her true repentance by her kind acts toward him, in which he was able to say to her, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." Yes, in just eight words, that woman walked away with not only a clean conscience, but now she had a renewed sense of purpose in her service to her Lord.

So what's the lesson? Well, by his teachings and actions, Jesus showed how much he and his Father loves us very much. And he wants just you and I to have a very close relationship with them.

3.2. Video: Learning from past mistakes

Now, in the following video, notice how one sister has learned from her past mistakes and moved ahead in Jehovah's service.

[Cheri Combs - USA]

The feeling of guilt is so heavy. Can I ever be part of Jehovah's organization and feel good? Can I feel clean? Because the guilt made me feel like I wasn't. I would pray to Jehovah and just plead with him. I would journal how I was feeling, and then I would do the personal study. And when I was having a bad day, a real down day, I would look and see, "Oh yeah, this is how Jehovah feels."

I felt a change in me when I studied about the ransom. Jesus died for everyone, even people who don't serve him. Then he died for me, too. Feeling guilty can make you want to isolate, but I knew that was dangerous, because there's no growth, there's no
encouragement from anyone. Reaching out and associating with the brothers and sisters really helped me not be so self-consumed.

When I was able to comment again at meetings, I started out small by saying one-word answers, and then maybe a longer answer or using a scripture. It gave me something to be proud of. Going in the ministry really helped me, because I was talking about the wonderful hope of the future that Jehovah gives, and it was building my faith along with helping others. When you help others, it makes you happy.

When I look back from where I was, feeling so guilty to where I am now, I really see the wisdom in Jehovah and his discipline. And it makes me feel proud. I'm very happy.

[End of Video]

Yes, how encouraging it is to know that if we ever have feelings of excessive guilt, well, like Sherry, we're not alone, and we're not hopeless. Yes, she knew the good news we preach includes the truth mentioned in 1 John 1:7,9, of how the blood of Jesus cleanses us from not just some, not even most, but it says all sin. And because of this, we too can do Jehovah's work, confident that we have his approval. And Jehovah has given you and I much work to do. And if we focus on how Jesus helped Peter, how Jehovah helped our dear sister in that beautiful video, then certainly he will help you accomplish your ministry.

3.3. Conclusion

So in summary, what can we truly benefit from this symposium's theme? Well, we should never become a prisoner of our past mistakes. It should be viewed as a lesson and not a life sentence.
Why? Because Jesus' ransom sacrifice has already been paid in full. Therefore, by learning from our past mistakes and focusing intently on preaching the good news of God's kingdom, yes, feelings of guilt can be conquered.

4. (Sym 3of4) Use the Good News to Defeat Bad News – Current Events

(33:35) Now, Brother Nathan Jones, who serves as a Patterson Bethel family member, will present the next part of our symposium, "Use the Good News to Defeat Bad News – Current Events."

During the First World War, governments on both sides banned newspapers from publishing the complete casualty lists. And if ever a soldier wrote home from the trenches and described the bad conditions at the front, the governments would redact or censor out their letters.

Why would they do that? The governments knew that bad news creates anxiety and discouragement. And when we look around today, there is no shortage of bad news, and it can have an effect on us today. The Bible describes that effect, if you turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 3. 2 Timothy 3:1. It says, "But know this, [so it's an assured thing, it's a guarantee], that in the last days, [the time period that we're in right now], critical times hard to deal with will be here." Now, that word "critical" means a crisis. Some reference works render it as a time of stress. So we have a global time of stress, and what is the effect that that has on us? It says it's hard to deal with. Now, that may be materially, physically, but for many of us, that hard to deal with is emotionally.
We might worry, "Are my children safe at school? Are there microplastics in my water? Is the economy going to crash?" We're bombarded with alerts on our phones, on the news, social media feeds, even our conversations with our brothers and sisters can sometimes focus on what? The bad news. This can make us start to feel anxious, and when we feel anxious, we lose focus and start to slow down in our worship.

4.1. Way 1 of 3: Limit exposure to bad news

So how do we regain that focus and defeat the bad news? Well, there's three ways that we can do that. The first way is to limit our exposure to the bad news. That doesn't mean that we ignore the bad news. We limit it.

4.1.1. Illustration: Bad milk

And now to illustrate, imagine you see a friend go to the fridge and pull out a carton of milk, and he sniffs it, and the milk is bad. It's sour, chunky. And then you see him keep going back to the fridge and sniffing the milk. And eventually he says to you, he says, "You know, I feel nauseous." What would you tell your friend? Stop sniffing the milk.

In the same way, do we need to rewatch senseless violence on the news for hours and hours? We know how it will make us feel. It's our first way, limit our exposure to bad news.

4.2. Way 2 of 3: Connect bad news to Bible prophecy

A second way is to connect the bad news to Bible prophecy. And for that, we have to turn to Jesus' words in Matthew 24. Turn with me to Matthew 24. Here on the Mount of Olives, he identified how we could locate the conclusion of the system of things, the last
days. In verse 6, Jesus says, "You're going to hear of wars and reports of wars." In this digital age, within minutes, even seconds of an outbreak of war or an attack, we get alerts on our phones. It's very true. But he said, "See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." And the list continues.

The parallel account in Luke 21 adds more details. But we might think, well, hasn't there always been these things? Well, true, but not to the extent and intensity. And Jesus helped identify the conclusion of the system of things with another prophecy in verse 14. He said, "And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

So it's these bad news, these events, at the same time as a global preaching campaign. Today, nearly 9 million people are preaching worldwide in over a thousand languages. It's unprecedented at the same time as these bad events.

4.2.1. Illustration: Birth pangs

So how should that make us feel? Well, verse 8 likens it to pangs of distress. We think of birth pangs. Think of a woman who's nine months pregnant, and she begins to feel birth pangs, pains of contraction. She's not suddenly shocked or surprised by these pains. She's been expecting this. And she's even excited about what's about to happen.

In the same way, when we connect the bad news to Bible prophecy, we identify the period of time we're living in, and we can
be excited about what's about to happen. Jesus' words are being fulfilled.

### 4.2.2. Video: Defeating the bad news

Now, in the following video, notice how one brother defeated the bad news.

[Julien Schulz - Germany]

Especially at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also as the war in Ukraine started, I watched a great deal of news reports, whether on TV, the computer, on my smartphone. When you watch the news, you see many pictures that simply haunt you. I noticed that this was not good for me, and it bothered me more and more. Besides, it was too time-consuming. After a while, you begin to realize that you are somehow consumed by your thoughts. I realized that it was not simply information that I was processing, but my feelings were stirred. And how easily you can lose focus. You don't notice it straight away. But I realized that for me, it was simply too much news.

The only solution was to be occupied with Jehovah's news. The news which is good for me. Jehovah's promises. What really helped me was to focus on strengthening my trust in Jehovah and concentrating more on the preaching work. It brought me closer to Jehovah and gave me inner peace and calm. Many people think their future depends on what they see in the news. However, it does us so much good to help others understand that their future depends on something completely different. That is Jehovah's kingdom. And as a result, a wonderful future awaits them.

[End of Video]
4.2.3. Review

So what did our brother do? Well, first of all, he reduced the time he spent watching the news. That was our first point. Limit our exposure to the bad news. Secondly, he increased his study habits and focused on Jehovah's promises. And that was our second point. Connect the bad news to Bible prophecy. And thirdly, he focused more on the preaching work.

4.3. Way 3 of 3: Preaching

And that's our third point to defeat the bad news. We preach. Action is one of the best cures for anxiety. And Jesus has given us this beautiful assignment to go out and preach.

When we spend hours watching the bad news, what are we focusing on? The problem. But when we go out and preach the good news of the kingdom, what are we focusing on? The solution.

Even if our territory is unresponsive, remember that we are praising Jehovah. We're part of fulfillment of Bible prophecy. We read in Matthew 24:14, and humble people are responding to this good news. We're not just focusing on the solution. We are part of the solution. We have good news to share, not bad, just like Jesus.

4.4. Conclusion

So in review, we can defeat the bad news in current events by one, limiting our exposure to the bad news. Stop sniffing the milk if we already know it's bad.

Two, connect bad news to Bible prophecy. Get excited about the future, what's to come.
Three, take action. Share the good news. Instead of focusing on what bad things might happen to us, we're able to focus on what Jehovah has done for us and what he's about to do.

The day is very close, brothers and sisters, when all of us will wake up and feel the opposite of anxious. We will feel peace from the good news.

5. (Sym 4of4) Use the Good News to Defeat the Bad News – Discouragement

(43:07) Now, Brother Bhatti Dugbe, who serves as a Patterson Bethel family member, will now consider the final part of this symposium, Use the Good News to Defeat the Bad News – Discouragement.

Have you ever performed a task or a job, and then in the end, you looked at that task or job and felt, "I could have done better." But what if after doing that task, and you stood there and found different ways that it could have went better, someone came up to you without having been prompted to do so, and they told you everything that was good about that project.

How do you think you would feel? Good? Of course you would feel good. Why would you feel good? Well, because you have been encouraged. Someone noticed that you did something right. Friends, don't we feel better when we are encouraged? Matter of fact, don't we do better when we are encouraged?

But here's the thing. We're not the only ones that need encouragement. 1 Peter 5:9 says that the same kind of sufferings, meaning the same things that happen to us for which we need encouragement, those same things are being experienced by the
entire association of brothers in the world. So if we feel bad because of bad news, how do you think our brothers and sisters feel? They feel bad too.

Now, when it comes to feeling discouraged, some of our brothers and sisters will come up to us directly and say, "I feel discouraged. Please encourage me."

But there are some who will not come up to us and ask. Maybe they're shy. Maybe they're embarrassed. Maybe they don't know how. Maybe they've been raised to not ask for encouragement, to be strong all the time. Well, if this is the case, what do we do? Well, the good thing is they have us. So, yes, we encourage them. We take the initiative to encourage them.

5.1. How Jesus encouraged - Matt 11:28-30

Jesus Christ, when he was on earth, he set a fine example of how to encourage and refresh the people around him. Those who were discouraged, he set an example of how to encourage them. And let us see his approach, and then we're going to see what we can learn from his approach. Let us read Matthew 11:28-30, and see how Jesus dealt with those who were discouraged around him. He says, "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for yourselves, for my yoke is kindly and my load is light." From this scripture, we see that Jesus invited those who carried huge burdens, and he refreshed them. He was approachable, but not only was he approachable, he was also inviting. Being available is one thing, but telling people that you're available is something completely different. He said, "Come to me."
Just to put it in context, the people who Jesus dealt with were discouraged. Now, why? Well, the religious leaders at the time imposed huge burdens on these people. Imagine this, a man had to wash his hand up to his elbow before he could be clean. Those people even referred to those common people as, using the Hebrew word, "amharets," meaning "people of the land." And that was not an endearing term. They used that term to be demeaning.

So, yes, because of the traditions and because of the heavy burdens these people dealt with, Jesus encouraged them, recognizing that they were also crushed, and he used his words to encourage them, and this left them feeling better.

5.1.1. Lesson

What can we learn from Jesus' example? Well, think about what our brothers and sisters are facing today. They're burdened down by the high cost of living. They're burdened down by anxiety, by sickness, by grief. They're burdened down by law. These burdens take a huge mental, physical, and emotional toll on our friends. And because they are suffering, we, too, deal with them compassionately if they ask us for encouragement. It takes a lot of courage for a person to be that vulnerable and come and say, "I need help."

Think about it this way. Have you ever had someone respond to you with tough love and harsh words when you were going through a rough time? Maybe they said they wanted to teach you a lesson. Maybe they wanted to toughen you up. How did that feel? Of course, that was not a good feeling. A person dealing with bad news can be like a candle whose flame is about to go out, barely hanging on. So we don't put out that flame, but rather we protect it so that it can keep going.
Another thing we can learn from Jesus' way of encouraging people was that he always highlighted what Jehovah was doing for people at the moment. For example, when he was helping people to cope with the anxieties that they dealt with, he reminded them that the birds were cared for, the flowers were cared for.

What do you think those examples did for those people? Well, of course, it reassured them that Jehovah would provide for them. Jesus Christ also took the initiative to show what God's kingdom would do for people in the future.

5.2. Jesus showed pity - Luke 7:13

Take, for instance, in Luke 7:13. The account says that Jesus caught sight of a dead man's mother, and he was moved with pity, and he raised the young man. What do you think that action did? Well, Jesus proved on a small scale what God's kingdom could do for mankind on a larger scale. But this account also showed that Jesus was attentive to people's needs. The account said he caught sight of the widow, and he was moved with pity. Let's imagine that for a second, the expression on his face that afternoon, the funeral procession, the grieving, the crying widow, the wailing. Maybe he was in the middle of a conversation. Did he stop the conversation to run across the street? Well, we don't know, but he was moved with pity, and he did whatever he could to help. He saw a need, and then he took care of it.

5.2.1. Lesson

Now, what can we learn from this? We take the initiative to help whenever we see that there is a need. Don't you agree, friends, that it feels better for somebody to do something for us when they
want to do it, when they're moved to do it, versus if they were being made to do it?

How can we be moved with pity? Well, could it be maybe we cook for a sick person? Maybe we clean for somebody who is incapacitated. Or maybe we listen to somebody who's going through a rough time. Of course, like Jesus, not only do we do things, but even our words can also be a source of encouragement to those who are dealing with bad news.

### 5.3. How we could use our words

Imagine how we could use our words. Let's say you had a single mother who was having a rough time. Could our words be used to commend her and tell her how much we appreciate the fact that her children are always neat and clean and at the meetings?

What about a struggling teenager? Could our words be used to thank them for just being at the meetings and paying attention? Yes, we use our words to lift those who are struggling.

### 5.4. Video: Benefits from encouragement

In the following video, let's pay attention to how one family benefited when a fellow believer took the initiative to offer encouragement.

[Phyllis Burch - USA]

My husband was full of life, full of energy, and he loved people. My husband became ill, and I needed a little more help family-wise, so we decided to move to Texas. We were actually ready to leave. We were ready to pull out. He noticed something that he needed to check with the vehicle that he was driving, and he was under the truck. It jumped and started to roll. I jumped out of the car and ran
around, and he wasn't breathing, and it immediately killed him. Everything was just in shambles. We had no landing spot because everything was packed on our truck.

Well, a sister came and asked us to stay with her. On the morning of the funeral, I dreaded thinking about what else we were to do for the rest of that day. When she brought us into the kitchen, it was just so bright and warm and cheery in comparison to the week we had just gone through. She had arranged to have a beautiful breakfast feast, and we prayed, and we read scriptures together. We had the morning text together, and we were able to focus on the resurrection hope.

I no longer dreaded the day. I felt like we were able to just go ahead and do what we needed to do because we had Jehovah's reassurance. The good news, the sister shared with me, it changed that dreaded feeling to being what Jehovah wanted us to feel. He wants us to focus on the hope. The way she helped us that morning helped us focus completely on that hope.

[End of Video]

5.5. Lesson

The sister in the video lost her husband suddenly, and because of that, she had to prepare for a funeral, she had to find a place to stay, and she had to grieve. She had to do all of that overnight. This shows, friends, that life can change suddenly. Therefore, when others need encouragement, we are there, and we're refreshing, and we'll provide whatever practical needs that we can, just like our sister in the video.

Now, remember how Jesus showed what God's kingdom could do by raising that widow's son? Now, we cannot raise someone from
the dead, but we can use the good news to raise hopes and strengthen the hopes of our friends, reminding our widows that soon they'll be able to see their husbands again, or reminding those who are sick that one day they will not even remember what a hospital room sounds like.

Yes, the good news will always win. There's no guarantee that any of us will get out of this system unscathed, but we can be sure that when bad news comes, the good news will always win. The good news comforts. The good news gives hope, and that hope provides stability for us as we navigate these bad news in these last days.

As mentioned at the beginning of this symposium, Jesus saw what bad news did to people, so he used his words and actions to defeat the bad news. Jesus also did practical things in his power to fulfill and take care of immediate needs of people. But above all, everything that Jesus said and did showed what God's kingdom would do for people in the future. Like Jesus, let us use the good news of the kingdom to defeat all bad news. [applause]

[End of Talk]

6. (Sym 1of3) Eager to Declare the Good News – Not the Work of the Apostles Only

(56:45) Thank you, brothers, for those encouraging talks. How did Jesus respond when he encountered negative news or discouraging situations? What will help us remain zealous and joyful in our ministry? The following symposium will consider three important things. Each speaker will introduce the one to follow. Please give your attention to Brother Paul Castellani, who will
present the first talk entitled "Eager to Declare the Good News – Not the Work of the Apostles Only."

Of which of the following scenarios would you be in eager anticipation? Sitting down to your favorite meal at a five-star restaurant or going to the dentist? I think we know the answer.

But what is it about a situation that affects our eagerness? Well, there could be a lot of factors, but isn't it true that many times it tends to be related to our attitude or our expectations? Well, more about that later.

But, you know, Jehovah wants us to be eager about something. To find out what that is, let's take a look at the example of the Apostle Paul. Please open your Bibles to Romans 1:15. There we read Romans 1:15, "So I am eager to declare the good news also to you there in Rome." So yes, Paul was known for his eagerness to declare the good news.

But what does the word "eager" really mean? Well, according to one dictionary, it's marked by enthusiastic or impatient desire or interest. So think about that. Enthusiastic or impatient desire. Does that mark your approach to the ministry? Well, let's be honest, with some of the challenges that we face today in these difficult last days, it really is true that we can become weighed down, and these things can affect our zeal for the ministry, our eagerness for it. And if you're anything like me, sometimes we need a little bit of an attitude adjustment, or we need to recalibrate our expectations. Well, that's what this symposium is designed to help us with.

In the first talk, we'll talk a little bit about our personal responsibility to preach and how that affects our eagerness, followed by viewing our ministry as worship, and finally, how
preparation for the ministry with a host of amazing tools that we have at our disposal can also assist us.

6.1. Responsibility to preach

But now as we talk about our first topic, responsibility to preach, of course we know that in the first century, Jesus was commissioned with this amazing privilege to begin the preaching of the good news of the kingdom. And we know he wasn't alone.

Mark 3:14 tells us that he formed a group of twelve apostles and then sent them out, which is really the meaning of the word "apostle," "one sent forth." But were they the only ones that had this responsibility to preach? To answer that question, please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 1:8. As we turn to that verse, we recognize this to be Paul's letter to the newly formed congregation there in Thessalonica.

6.1.1. Sounded out from you - 1 Thess 1:8

Notice what he says in verse 8. "The fact is, not only has the word of Jehovah sounded out from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has spread abroad in every place, so that we do not need to say anything."

Did you notice that interesting phrase, "sounded out from you"? Well, this indicates that really that whole congregation, and by extension all Christians, have this responsibility to preach. And that translates, interestingly, a Greek verb that really means a sound that spreads out from a source and reverberates in all directions. Maybe we can think of it as something like a loud clap of thunder that can be heard for miles around. So really, Paul was telling the Christians in that congregation that they were spreading the good news in those Roman provinces and even beyond.
What commendation that was. It would be like telling a local congregation here in Newburgh, "You've preached throughout Newburgh, throughout all of New York State, into New Jersey, and even the whole tri-state area." Well, certainly high commendation for one congregation.

But Jesus indicated later on that this good news would be expanded well beyond just those Roman provinces. We're familiar with the verses, Matthew 24:14, that the good news would be preached in all the inhabited earth. And then Matthew 28:20, that this work would continue under Jesus' direction until the conclusion of the system of things. So when we think about both the scale and scope and duration of this preaching work, it takes it right down to our day.

When we meditate on that, we realize that Jesus, some of his final words there in Matthew chapter 28, apply to each and every one of us really as much as they did to the apostles that heard them directly. What an amazing privilege for us. And doesn't that affect our attitude of the preaching work once we realize that personal responsibility?

6.1.2. Result of preaching - Rom 10:9,10

Well, what can we say, though, about expectations? Usually expectation is connected with some kind of result. Isn't that true? Well, let's turn together to Romans 10:9,10, and see if you can pick out some of the results or the blessings that come with declaring the good news. Romans 10:9 says, "For if you publicly declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation." Well, did you catch the
benefits there? First of all, we see a definite link between faith and
the exercise of faith and public declaration. So it takes faith to
preach, doesn't it? But then when we exercise that faith, just like a
muscle, and we continue preaching, our faith grows bigger. And
then we get even more urgency behind our message and are
happy to continue preaching all the more.

But more than that, in verse 9, it says, "If we do these things, that
we will be saved." Really, it means our lives. And even beyond that,
we know it's a message of salvation, as mentioned in verse 10, to
those who listen to us appreciatively. So when we meditate upon
those blessings, really regardless of the type of response we
receive, it really helps us with our expectations. We have an
expectation of good.

Even so, it doesn't mean that this work is always easy. In fact,
maybe that's one of the main reasons that Jesus assured us in that
verse we quoted, that he would be with us to help us until the
conclusion of the system of things. But we have help even beyond
that given to us by Jesus.

6.2. Angels assistance - Rev 14:6,7

Our closing talk in yesterday's program talked extensively about
Revelation 14:6,7, where we come to appreciate that the angels
assist us by leading us to those who want to hear.

Now, maybe that's something like a metal detector. Have you
ever seen people using those on the beach? You wonder what
they're looking for? Well, some years ago, a Florida man uncovered
a 385-year-old gold chalice valued at over a million dollars with a
metal detector.
Well, there's one thing about metal detectors, though. They don't work if you're not out searching with them. So, we have to be out on the beach, so to speak, either in the ministry or prepared to preach at any opportunity. Only then can the angels point us to where we need to start digging. And it's true, we may not find a treasure every single day, but just one human life is worth how much more than any physical treasure we could ever find.

6.3. Video: Motivated to preach

In the following dramatization, notice how a couple who are studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, armed with this appreciation that the angels are backing their work, are motivated to begin preaching. [music]

Can we do it? [music] [music] Good.

So that's the end of Lesson 22. Take a look at this week's goal.

Think of one person with whom you could share the good news. Think about what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.

Isn't that technically three goals? You'll do great.

Let's close with a prayer. [music]

[Students recall an occasion with husband's brother and his wife]

Friends: Joplin wants me to do this meditation seminar. You guys are into that, right?

Student: Well, we were.

Friends: But I'm like, I can't deal with that right now. With everything happening in the world, inflation is killing my business. I just have bigger problems to think about.

But what's bigger than inner peace?
Making payroll.

Your brother is a Neanderthal.

It's not my fault the world's a mess. What do you guys think?

[music]

[Back to the study]

Conductor: So, what did you say?

Student: We totally froze.

Conductor: It's a big step to share what you've learned.

Student: It's just for us. Our spirituality's always been, you know, personal.

We've never liked the idea of pushing our beliefs on others.

Conductor: I know we're not pushing, but--

We used to feel the same way.

I didn't think I could ever preach. I didn't even like the word "preach."

Student: How did you get over it?

Conductor: Well, the more we studied, the more we came to realize that when Jesus said, "Go and make disciples," he was talking to us. It's the work that Jesus gave each one of us personally.

Student: Sometimes it feels like it's too much for us.

Conductor: Well, it is too much for just us. But do you remember what Jesus promised next?

Student: I am with you.
Conductor: Exactly. And he knew that sometimes it would be hard. But we have some very powerful help. Here's some homework. Take a look at Revelation 14:6.

[Students doing their homework on Rev 14:6]

Student: "And I saw another angel flying amid heaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare to those who dwell on the earth." And this is a neat point in the research guide. It says that God's angels do not preach directly to people.

I'm so glad Blake got us to do this homework. I didn't realize "mid heaven" means "overhead." Help is so close.

Yeah. They're right there with us. [music]

[They started preaching to their brother]

[End of Video]

Jesus taught us to pray to beg the Master for more harvest workers. If that was true in the first century, how much more true is it now during our time at the end of this harvest period? So what a privilege each of us have to be one of those workers that Jesus taught us to pray for. And we can accomplish that work with eagerness if we meditate upon the fact that it's our personal responsibility to preach and always remember that lives are at stake, ours and those of the ones we preach to as well. If we do that, preaching will always be to us like a nourishing meal as it was to Jesus, and never like pulling teeth.
(1:10:51) But what else can help us to eagerly declare the good news? Brother Joshua Brady, who is currently serving as a Bethelite at Warwick, will now present the next part on the symposium, "Eager to Declare the Good News – An Act of Worship." [applause]

We might tend to think of worshipping Jehovah only includes when we talk to him by means of prayer, or we allow Jehovah to talk to us when we study his word, the Bible. But is talking to others about Jehovah considered worship? Well, yes. There are several scriptures where the Apostle Paul connects declaring the good news with worshiping Jehovah. We will discuss three of them.

7.1. Preaching is considered worship

The first scripture is found in Romans 1:9. That's Romans 1:9. It reads, "For God, to whom I render sacred service with my spirit, in connection with the good news about his Son, is my witness of how without ceasing I always mention you in my prayers." In the verse, Paul used the phrase "render sacred service." What is sacred service? Well, sacred service refers to the acts of worship that we offer to Jehovah. In this verse, Paul specifically connected declaring the good news with rendering sacred service. Therefore, preaching the good news is an act of worship that we offer to Jehovah.

Our second scripture is Hebrews 13:15. Declaring the good news is described by Paul in that verse as a sacrifice of praise that we offer to Jehovah. In ancient Israel, when an Israelite gave an animal
sacrifice to the Levites and priests at the altar, he and everyone who saw him knew he was performing an act of worship to Jehovah. Well, today, when we declare the good news, we sacrifice to Jehovah the fruit of our lips, which are the sincere words we speak in praise of Jehovah. And Jehovah views our expression of praise as worship offered to him by people who love him.

Note the third scripture where Paul connected preaching the good news with worshiping Jehovah. It is found at Romans 15:16. That's Romans 15:16. It reads, "For me to be a public servant of Christ Jesus to the nations, I am engaging in the holy work of the good news of God, so that these nations might be an acceptable offering sanctified with Holy Spirit." Paul here described preaching the good news as engaging in the holy work of the good news. The Greek verb translated engaging in the holy work occurs only once in this verse in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and it denotes being involved in a sacred work or duty.

A study note on that verse says that this expression is related to the term for temple. It relates to how sacrifices were offered as acts of worship at the temple in ancient Israel.

Paul again links preaching the good news with worshiping Jehovah. Paul valued the holy nature of preaching the good news. And when we remember that preaching the good news is an act of worship, we are motivated to declare the good news eagerly. To be eager means to have an urgent concern about something. We view preaching the good news as something that deserves our urgent concern, don't we not? It is not a task just to be checked off a list. It is an act of worship that shows how much we love Jehovah and respect his reputation.
But why do we not have to feel overwhelmed or nervous about this responsibility? The reason is because we have the best fellow worker, and he has developed the best method to make good new disciples. Our fellow worker and his method are described for us in 1 Corinthians 3:6,9. That's 1 Corinthians 3:6,9. It reads, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow". And verse 9 says, "For we are God's fellow workers."

These verses teach us that Jehovah God is our fellow worker, and his method to produce new disciples is the same today as it was when this verse was written. Like Paul and Apollos, we plant, water, and nurture seeds of Bible truth. But our fellow worker Jehovah brings about the spiritual growth of new disciples. He does the heavy lifting, so to speak. So we do not have to feel nervous or overwhelmed.

Our role is to prepare well for the ministry and to preach it eagerly. Doesn't this move us to please Jehovah by preaching the good news to as many as possible?

7.2. Video: Desire to please God

In the following dramatization, know how a young couple's desire to please God motivates them to speak. [music]

[Husband on a ladder working on a ceiling lamp]
Wife: You sure you have time for that before service?
Husband: Almost done.
Wife: Who taught you electrical?
Husband: The Internet. Hit it. [music]
[On switching on the switch, light came on briefly, then blacked out]

[At the meeting, conductor received a text from Adin that he couldn’t make it to the meetings.]

[Later, conductor helps to solve the problem with the lights]

Conductor: Try that. Let there be light.

Study: Amazing. Sorry about today. I know we haven't been out much lately. It's just our schedule. We work all week, plus meetings and family worship. And on the weekends, these house projects just kind of take over.

Conductor: You've got a lot on your plate.

Student: I know the ministry's important. Jesus gave us this work to do.

Conductor: Right. But do you think there's more to our preaching than just this work we need to do?

Student: Well, it's also how we show love for people.

Conductor: That's true, too. You know, there's a Bible example that really helped me. It's what it says right here.

[Later, student talks to his wife]

Husband: He encouraged me to meditate on how Paul described his ministry at Romans 15:16.

Wife: I am engaging in the holy work of the good news of God.

Husband: So to Paul, his ministry wasn't just work.

Wife: It was the holy work of the good news.
Husband: Exactly. His ministry wasn't something Paul did in addition to his worship. It was a part of his worship. It was one of the ways he showed how much he really loved Jehovah.

Wife: I like that. [music]

[End of Video]

What is the opposite of being eager? Being lukewarm. Lukewarm is defined as showing little or no interest or enthusiasm. What can make us lukewarm about preaching the good news? Well, we may preach in an unresponsive territory, face bans to our preaching work, or have difficult personal circumstances that make preaching, our act of worship, challenging. And we all love Jehovah, but perhaps some of us don't necessarily enjoy preaching. Perhaps talking to strangers is a little bit awkward for us, or we feel that we don't convey the message in the most appealing way. Well, if those challenges ever make you begin to feel lukewarm about preaching, remember two things.

First, remember who loves you. Jehovah loves you deeply, and he promises to help you deal successfully with any challenge that you may face that begins to interfere with your worship to him.

And second, remember whom you love. You love Jehovah deeply. In Matthew 22:37,38, Jesus reiterated how servants of Jehovah, lovers of Jehovah like you, love God with your whole heart, soul, and mind. This form of love involves commitment and actions, not just emotions and feelings. We choose to be committed to our worship to Jehovah. We act upon the love we have for Jehovah in favorable season and troublesome season we preach. So if we live in an area where the work is banned, we couple our eagerness to worship Jehovah with discretion. And when our personal circumstances make it difficult to preach, we are eager to
do what we can and to focus on that and not to focus on what we are unable to do. In all circumstances, we strive to give our best worship to Jehovah, and we make Jehovah happy when we preach the good news eagerly.

**7.3. Conclusion**

So what did we learn?

Well, first we learned that preaching is not a task that we check off a list. It's not something that's addition to the worship we give Jehovah. No, preaching is an act of worship to Jehovah.

And we also learned that if we ever start to become lukewarm towards this act of worship, we need to remember that Jehovah loves us and will help us to overcome this challenge.

And we need to remember how much we love Jehovah, and our love compels us to be committed and act upon this love by preaching the good news. And when we preach the good news, we guarantee that we will do so eagerly.

[End of Talk]

**8. (Sym 3of3) Eager to Declare the Good News – Be Ready with the Right Equipment**

(1:22:16) Brother Michael Kratroci, who serves as the rooming coordinator for this convention, will present the final part of this symposium entitled, "Eager to Declare the Good News – Be Ready with the Right Equipment."

If you're failing to plan, then you're really planning to fail. Does that make sense? That phrase makes sense? You've probably heard that. If you're failing to plan, you're planning to fail. A phrase
isn't meant to really mean that if you don't plan for something, that your intention is to fail. No, but it's really meant to help us appreciate the importance of planning when it comes to anything that we're doing. When it comes to our success, especially, the more we plan, typically, the better the outcome is for us.

And, friends, isn't this true when it comes to our ministry? The more we plan and prepare for the ministry, the more effective we typically are in the ministry. And the more effective we are in the ministry, the more joy we typically get out of the ministry. It all kind of works together.

In this last part of our symposium, we're going to discuss how being fully prepared for our ministry and being prepared to use the proper tools or equipment, we could say, can really help us to declare the good news most effectively. The Apostle Paul really stressed the importance for us, why we should be prepared to share the good news.

8.1. Feet shod - Eph 6:15

If you can, please turn in your Bibles to the sixth chapter of Ephesians. We're probably very familiar with this account. It's the account when Paul was speaking about this spiritual suit of armor that all Christians are encouraged to put on as part of our spiritual warfare. But we're going to focus in on verse 15 here. Paul talked about a very specific piece of armor that we want to discuss for a minute. Ephesians 6:15, he said that we should have our feet shod in readiness to declare the good news.

Our study notes beautiful here for this scripture, this term in readiness or being ready, we could say being prepared. In this context, it could be really understood to mean with the equipment.
So what was Paul talking about? Having our feet shod with equipment? Well, he was talking about none other than this extremely, extremely important piece of equipment for a soldier, his shoes, his footwear.

8.1.1. Why important

Why is footwear, why was that so important? Well, picture this soldier all geared up and he was going into battle. When he went out to battle, he wasn't going on to these beautiful turf fields like we see today, sports fields that you just want to curl up and roll around in like an overstuffed comforter on your bed. These fields were maybe dirt fields with rocks lined in them. They could have had tall, coarse grasses in those fields that would have been really irritating on a soldier's body if he came in contact with them. Perhaps they fought these battles on hills that were lined with trees. There were roots sticking out of the ground or branches falling everywhere. Could you imagine walking through an environment like that with the wrong shoes or no shoes at all? Maybe when you're hiking, have you gone through the forest on hiking trails without the right shoes? It would be very, very difficult for these soldiers.

8.1.2. Properly prepared footwear

So to be effective in their battle, they first of all needed to have the right footwear. They needed to wear it, but they needed to be prepared with it. They couldn't throw these shoes, sandals, boots on at the last second expecting to hold up. Laces needed to be tied tight, straps needed to be intact. Without the proper footwear, these soldiers would be so distracted in battle, they'd have very, very little chance for success.
8.2. Preparing for the ministry

So friends, when it comes to our ministry, we need to not only have the right equipment for our ministry, but we need to be prepared to use it, well prepared before we ever go out into the ministry. Being prepared can really help us.

It can help us to be more relaxed when we're speaking to people. It can help us to be less nervous when we're speaking. And it can really help us to listen to people that we're talking to, rather than being so distracted with thinking about what we're going to say next to them. It'll help us to empathize and talk to people.

Let's spend a few minutes and talk about some practical ways that we can prepare for our ministry.

8.3. Way 1of3: Love people

Here's our first. We need to have the right attitude toward people. Jesus really helped us when we look at the way he carried out his ministry. Jesus developed a deep and sincere love for people, a true, sincere desire to want to help them. Friends, if we develop the same love for people as we already obviously have, we naturally are going to be moved to speak up whenever the opportunity is to give a witness. We won't hold back at all when that opportunity is there. We'll seize that opportunity to give a witness.

8.4. Way 2of3: Familiar with teaching toolbox

Here's our second area of preparation. We need to be familiar and prepared to use our teaching toolbox effectively. Our teaching toolbox has everything contained in it to help us to teach people the truth effectively.
But think back to these soldiers. Do you think they prepared before every third or fourth time they went out to fight in a battle? They prepared before every time they went out. So likewise in our ministry, we too should prepare every time we feel that we're going to have a chance to engage in the ministry or even give a witness.

So how do we do so? How can we practically prepare? Here's a couple suggestions and thoughts that may have worked for some of you.

8.4.1. What's on people's minds?

Maybe you can ask ourselves some self-examining questions, such as, "Am I familiar with what might be on the minds of people on that particular day?" If we have that thought in mind, we really can empathize with people when we speak to them. Now, depending on who we're speaking to, there may be a lot of different things on people's minds.

Maybe we're coming across with young people we feel will be on a particular day. They'd be more concerned with what does the future hold for them. So can we be prepared along those lines?

How about older ones? Older ones may be a little bit more prepared with maybe health issues, family issues. It may be topics that may be challenging for us to speak about, the political scene of the world. Again, being familiar with these things can help us to be prepared to talk to people when we get into these conversations.

8.4.2. Prepare our devices

How can we be prepared with our physical tools or equipment for the ministry? Here's a couple thoughts.
If we're using an electronic device, can we quickly find what we need on our device? We don't want to get to the door and be swiping, swiping, and swiping. We'll lose our householder's interest.

Maybe we're working with physical tools, a brochure that day we want to highlight. Do we have that with us? Are we familiar with where to find specific things in our physical tools?

8.4.3. Home page of JW.ORG

And here's an interesting question, friends. Are we familiar with the current home page of JW.org and any new features that may have been uploaded to it? JW.org changes almost every day based on the needs of people in the field and what's on people's minds. So are we familiar every day with what's on our website? Being familiar with these incredible tools, friends, can help us to be more prepared, can help us to be more comfortable, and it can help us to be more eager to share the good news with others.

8.5. Way 3of3: Adaptable to new methods

Here's our third area of preparation we can consider. We should be willing to be adaptable to new methods and new direction to our preaching work. So again, a self-examining question, how are we doing with the new adjustments toward starting conversations rather than delivering memorized presentations in the ministry?

A possible suggestion, if you're not already, is for our family worship. With your partner, your mate, your friends that you're having over, your children, think about situations that you might find yourself in and try to start a conversation on those topics. See where it goes. If we have these practice sessions and we can think about different situations, when we actually get into them, we're
going to be much more prepared and comfortable to have those conversations.

8.6. Video: Couple demonstrates preparation

In the following video, let's notice how our couple in this symposium demonstrates these points for us in a nice practical way using our new brochure, "Love People, Make Disciples."

[Young man at the door]

Aiden: Here's the question. Do you think God hears our prayers? Is that something that you've wondered about?

[Woman with crying baby]

Ellie: Good morning. We're asking our neighbors a question. Do you think God hears our prayers? [Baby crying]

[Old man at the door]

Aiden: But does God hear our prayers? Have you ever wondered that? Psalm 65, 2 answers the question. It says...

[Householder disappears]

[In the car]

Aiden: I've got to try something different.

Ellie: A person will be more likely to listen to our message if he senses that we care about him.

Aiden: Do you think people sense that about us?

Or do they just see a guy trying to plow through a scripture and hand them something?
Ellie: Well, this is what I need to work on. Empathize with the person. Try to imagine how he feels. When I'm nervous, I'm thinking more about how I feel, not how they feel.

Aiden: Me too. I like this part. Be helpful. Acts of kindness can open the door to a conversation. So, it's not so much what we say, but finding a way to show who we are. Maybe we can try that this weekend.

[In the morning]

Ellie: Just preparing. Focus on whoever's behind the door instead of myself.

Aiden: I was thinking about family worship too. You know, we've always cared about people. We just have to let it show. Let's pray for Jehovah to help us do that.

Dear Father, Jehovah, we come to you now. [music]

[At the door]

Aiden: Good morning. Oh, I see you got your hands full. Yeah, hot water heater. I feel your pain. Ours broke last month. We'll let you get back to it.

Ross: Thank you. Last week, the roof, next the furnace.

Ellie: Our fixer-upper's full of surprises too.

Aiden: My name's Aiden. This is my wife, Ellie.

Ross: I'm Ross. Nice to meet you, Ross. About the hot water heater, I found some videos online that saved me hours. I can pull them up.

It's okay. I think I've got this. But thank you. So, what's this all about anyways?
Well, we live nearby, and we've been volunteering to share something that's really helped us as a family. [music]

[End of Video]

Friends, we encourage you, please, as you have been, remain eager to declare the good news.

8.7. Review

Our symposium is reminded of several ways that can help us to do that. Did you catch the three different ways?

First, we need to remember that each Christian has a personal responsibility to declare the good news. Recall 1 Thessalonians 1:8 was highlighted. Paul stressed to the Christians in Thessalonica that the word of Jehovah should sound out or reverberate from each and every one of them. Likewise, Jehovah's word should sound out from each of us also.

Our second key point, Jehovah views our participation in the ministry as an act of worship to him. Romans 1:9 was highlighted. Paul clearly connects the sharing of the good news with our worship to Jehovah.

And lastly, Ephesians 6:15 was highlighted. Paul emphasized the need to be ready to share, to be prepared to share the good news. We do this through developing the right mental attitude, having a deep, sincere love for people, a deep desire to help them, and to being prepared with our excellent tools that have been provided for us that can help us to be more effective and find more joy in the ministry.

Friends, we commend all of you for your hard work in your personal ministry, and we encourage all of us, please be
determined to imitate Jesus and his zealous disciples and remain eager to declare the good news. [applause]

[End of Talk]

9. How the Good News is Bearing Fruit and Increasing in All the World

(1:36:16) Thank you, brothers, for emphasizing why we declare the good news and how we can do so effectively. Around the earth, honest-hearted ones are embracing the kingdom good news. This is true even when circumstances make it difficult for them to do so. Please enjoy the experiences in the following video entitled "How ‘The Good News is Bearing Fruit and Increasing in All the World.’"

Every year, thousands of people accept the good news and transform their lives for the better. This is possible because Jehovah blesses the efforts of millions of kingdom publishers around the world.

9.1. Fredric Minta & Paulo Stefani

People like Fredric and Paulo. They face challenging territories, fierce persecution, and their own physical limitations. But nothing can hold back the good news. It keeps on increasing and bearing fruit, even in those who couldn't be further from Jehovah, just like I was.

9.1.1. [Fredric Minta - Ghana]

Growing up, I wasn't really religious. What interested me more was getting rich. In Africa, especially Ghana, many people are poor. I saw people leaving my community to work overseas, and after coming back, they had an amazing life, like they had everything. So
whenever I saw those kinds of people, I would just stare at them. I'd think, "Wow, if that were me, coming back home, I would be super happy." The truth is, I really began to envy them. I wanted to get a house, build my own house, and buy my own car. I wanted other people to look up to me and see that I was somebody important. I was completely selfish. I was greedy because I was only thinking about myself and how to get rich.

9.1.2. [Paulo Stefani - Italy]

Well, greed is what drives injustice. In Italy, around the end of the '60s and the early '70s, corruption and corruption were at all levels. So naturally, there were protests against the abuse of power. I was a young man at the time. I had a very strong sense of justice. So when I found out that Jehovah would establish a government, an administration that would eliminate all injustice, it gave me real peace. It was one of the things that helped me to draw closer to Jehovah. The brothers often spoke to me about Jehovah's love, but what drew me to Jehovah the most was his justice.

That was at first, but of course later on, I also learned other wonderful aspects of his personality. I was baptized, and it was really a great blessing to meet my wife, Paola. We always agreed that we wanted to spend our life together in the preaching work. Our first assignment in special full-time service was in a town in the Italian Alps.

The biggest challenge was how difficult it was to walk in the territory. It was something that worried me quite a bit because my left leg is affected by polio, and I wore a brace, and my crutches limited how much I could do. There were some very steep steps, and some of the roads were accessible only by foot. When I saw it, I began thinking, "Well, you know, can I even do this?" It was a real
workout. But I was happy to do it because I wanted to share the good news. And sometimes, the people who live there actually listen to you, so it was worth all the effort.

9.1.3. Fredric: Escaping to Europe for a better life

Fredric Minta: Every single day, I was imagining what my life would be like if I lived abroad. I was constantly thinking about what I would do when I got there. Sometimes, when I was asleep, I would dream that I was in Europe. But when I would wake up, I was still stuck in Africa. I would say, "I'm going back to sleep so I can keep dreaming." When I started my journey to Europe, I was around 19 years old. That was when I crossed the desert. After some time traveling, our driver told us, "The car's out of fuel." We were frightened because we were in the middle of the desert. We didn't know our way forward or our way back. It got to a point that we all were running out of food and water.

One night, a man who was traveling with us cried the whole night. And then, he died. So we decided we should bury him. But after that, we wondered who would be next. We spent 22 days in the desert. But nothing, not even that man's death, was going to stop me from reaching my goal. I was so determined to get rich, I didn't even care if it killed me. We crossed the sea in a tiny boat. I didn't even know how to swim. I was just praying that God would help us to arrive safely.

9.1.4. Paulo: Mountainous assignments in Italy

Paulo Stefani: There were days when I woke up with, I don't know, a pain in my back or other parts of my body. It wasn't easy because often we would receive assignments in mountainous areas of Italy. Or some that involved a lot of hiking. And I thought to
myself, "Well, what's this all about? I've got a bit of a problem." Why am I here in an assignment like this? But he said to me,

9.1.4.1. [2 Cor 12:8,10]

"My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you, for my power is being made perfect in weakness. For when I am weak, then I am powerful." What a beautiful verse. In the end, we're tools in Jehovah's hands. And to Jehovah, it doesn't matter if the tool has some dent or some kind of imperfection. What matters to Jehovah is that we allow him to use us. And in this way, we become useful tools who are able to carry out his purpose. What an incredible privilege it is. It's something marvelous.

9.1.5. Fredric: In Europe, Prosperous, arrested

Fredric Minta: I was so happy when I made it across the sea and finally arrived in Europe. But quickly, I became disappointed. I saw that money doesn't grow on trees, as they made me believe. Everything they told us back in Ghana, in the end, it wasn't true. It was all lies. They exaggerated about everything. I was barely making any money, so I started hanging around with some people who were selling drugs. That was when, eventually, I started to sell some drugs too. As time went by, my business grew because people were buying from me. Things were going well, and I was making money. I wanted to send this picture to my family in Ghana, for them to see that things were getting better for me. I bought a nice car. I was building my house. I was getting married. As a young man, that's all you need.

So I thought, when you have all these things, you're good to go. That's what life's all about. Until one day, everything changed. It was nighttime. I was asleep, and I heard someone knocking on my door. I thought, at this time of night? And it was the police, fully
armed. There was nothing I could do about the charges that were raised against me. They had proof of everything. They had proof of everything. I was placed in a cell far away from everyone else, so I couldn't even talk to anyone. There was no one to help me. I had no one, apart from my wife, who would visit when she could. I was hopeless.

9.1.6. Paulo: Legs weaker, Prison preaching

Paulo Stefani: Because of a series of accidents that have happened to me in the last few years, well, I guess my legs got even weaker. From that moment on, I've had to use the chair. I can't do what I used to. But when I focus on what Jehovah is asking me to do, my own problems become much smaller. And after a day in the ministry, you look back, and it gives you this incredible feeling as if you have been flying.

9.1.6.1. [Isa 40:31]

“But those hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not tire out.” I have the privilege of preaching in prisons. The fact that you can still share the good news, it gives you a sense of peace. And you feel privileged to have shared something with someone so meaningful with another person. And over time, you see them make changes, and they too begin to fly because they overcome the problems they're facing.

9.1.7. Frederic: Wanted to change for good

Frederic Minta: Well, it's wonderful. I began to understand what it really means to regret. So I wanted to change my life around for good. But who was going to help me? It was only God I could ask. I asked for a copy of the Bible, and they gave it to me. I was reading
it, and one day I read Psalm 103. And that psalm really touched my
heart.

9.1.7.1. [Psalm 103:12]

“As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us, He
has put our transgressions.” As a father shows mercy to his sons,
Jehovah has shown mercy to those who fear Him. For He well
knows how we are formed, remembering that we are dust. I came
to realize that everything I had done, all the sins I had committed,
God could actually forgive me for them. I was thinking, the sunset
on the water, it's kind of like the light of truth shining on our life.
Yeah, beautiful. The power of the good news. It's really... Yeah, my
life has been transformed. Like when a caterpillar changes into a
beautiful butterfly.

9.1.8. Frederic Released from Prison

Frederic Minta: You know, Paulo?

Paulo Stefani: Yeah?

Frederic Minta: I remember the first day I met you, when you
came to visit the prison. I was so happy. From that point, when we
started our Bible study, you have always been like a father to me.
And I will never forget all the hard work and sacrifices you made for
me.

Paulo Stefani: And Freddy, one thing that I really appreciated is
how you were able to help your family.

Frederic Minta: Yeah. Do you see this photo? Yeah. Paulo was
the one who went to the hospital and took this photo.

Frederic’s son Ruben: Really?

Frederic Minta: Yeah. And he brought it to me in prison.

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Frederic's son Ruben: I really need to thank him then.

Frederic Minta: Yeah. After I was released, I was looking forward to seeing you grow up and choose a different path than the one I took. You know, Ruben, when you were very small, just a little baby, I always took you with me to the meetings. Your mom wasn't a witness back then, but I never left you at home. Your mom would prepare your milk, I would take a few diapers and put everything in the bag. I'd pick you up and take you to the meeting. Little did I know that something so good would come from all that effort. I never thought that things would turn out this way, that one day you and I would be serving Jehovah together. Now I see that Jehovah was listening to all my prayers.

Paulo, you planted one seed. And now look, all my family, we're all happily serving Jehovah together. My wife, my daughter, her husband, my grandson, and my son, Ruben. I'm so grateful that Jehovah has done all of this for me.

Paulo Stefani: Fred, I really appreciate all your efforts. I have seen the power the Scriptures have on people. I've seen the power they had on you.

Frederic Minta: Yeah, little by little. Even now, I'm still making many changes. I'm a work in progress.

Paulo Stefani: Me too. Me too. I know how the good news is bearing fruit and increasing in my life. And it's having the same effect, even in lands where the kingdom preaching has been opposed.

9.2. Georgia Persecution - Marika Karamanian

(1:53:26) [Marika Karamanian]
My family came to settle in the country of Georgia. So growing up in a culture different to my own, I never felt like I really fit in. But I remember when I attended a meeting for the first time. It was an amazing feeling, because when I walked in, I was immediately accepted as if I were a member of the family. It was like being with old friends. They welcomed me with so much warmth and love. And then the persecution started in Georgia. I wasn't baptized then, but I could see with my own eyes exactly what Jesus had foretold, that his people would be persecuted. During a meeting, a religious group broke in and started to beat the brothers and sisters furiously. They lit a fire and burned the literature in front of us. The police did nothing. We felt defenseless and vulnerable. After the first attack, then there were more. We even faced aggression from householders. Despite the fact that there were so many attacks, what was really amazing was seeing how the brothers and sisters looked after each other.

[Marika visits Nino in her apartment]

Marika: Nino!

Nino: Marika, good to see you! Come in!

Marika: It's so good to see you too!

Nino was my Bible teacher. She helped me understand the truth.

You know what I remember? Back when I was an unbaptized publisher, we were preaching together. We had just started the ministry that day. On one of the floors in the building, I don't remember which floor, a woman rushed out with a mop. I know, I remember that. And she was trying to beat us with it. But do you remember? You protected me.
Nino: I was just thinking about that a couple of days ago.

Marika: Yeah. It was something that happened so often. It was a really difficult time. There was a moment when I thought I couldn't continue because I was afraid, but you know, then I felt such strong support from our brotherhood.

Nino: I was so happy to see your baptism day.

Marika: Yeah.

Nino: We were always like one big family.

Marika: Yeah, it's true.

9.2.1. [Andre Carbonneau - World Headquarters Legal department]

Our brothers needed courage. What was happening in Georgia was extreme. There was this breakaway group of fanatic Orthodox, and they had the full support of the church and the government.

Our assignment was to find some legal means to put an end to the campaign of violence that had started against the brothers. We went to court, and in one case, while they're just getting ready for the court hearing, the whole mob comes. And begins attacking those in attendance. The judge did nothing. In fact, they wanted to present this as a fight between extremist groups. It was ridiculous.

9.2.2. [Isaiah 54:17]

Marika: “No weapon formed against you will have any success, nor will condemn any tongue that rises up against you in the judgment.” Well, we are Jehovah's people. We are like a nation, and there is nothing, no force or power that will be able to stop us. And as we continue doing His will, Jehovah is always with us. Despite all those difficulties, everyone was so active, like pretty
much all the young ones in the hall were pioneering. We used to get together and share our experiences and encourage each other.

Nino: Do you remember, after we were huddled around the heater?

Marika: During that time, I remember also that we'd have to preach in casual clothes and not carry a service bag. We'd get a plastic shopping bag and put the literature inside it and then take it to service because we didn't want to draw attention to ourselves. And we had to have the meeting secretly. Just a few people would gather together.

But of course, the growth didn't stop. I saw for myself that the congregations were increasing, and a lot of people were learning the truth. In fact, despite the persecution, my sisters, my mother, my brother, even cousins and aunts got baptized.

Nino: Just from one person, now there are so many of you in the truth. You are enough to fill a congregation, one big family.

Andre Carbonneau: The truth was really just blossoming. And the Georgian people reacted very well to the preaching work. Satan could see the growth, and he had a ready tool to try to stop it. The police assisted the mob to attack conventions. And there were many, many, many attacks during that time period. You could not even have a convention. It was too dangerous. Pretty well every weekend, you had a mob attack on a congregation. Children as young as seven were attacked and beaten. It was just relentless.

Marika: You know, when they attacked our congregation, it was a terrifying moment. And I remember you had blood all over your face.
Nino: They dragged me into a crowd, and the women were pulling my hair. I had long hair then. I remember one tall man took off his belt and began hitting us on the head. I asked Jehovah, "How do I escape this?"

Marika: In that moment, you get this feeling of fear that you might not make it out alive.

Andre Carbonneau: We could never tell the brothers, you know, "Don't worry, you know, in the next couple of years it'll be over." We could not. It was hard for them, but they simply continued. It did not deter them at all. Our brothers behaved exceedingly well. A nationwide witness was being given. And so Satan's tactic to crush the brothers did the opposite.

Marika: People began to have so many questions about why we were being attacked. And of course, we were able to use this as an opportunity to share our beliefs and give a witness. When Jehovah stands by you, along with Jesus and all their armies, no opposer will be able to stop the work that Jehovah and Jesus are directing.

9.2.3. Change of Government

Andre Carbonneau: And then all of a sudden, there was a change in government, and the new government did not allow the mob attacks. They took the ringleaders and arrested them. But that's not a final solution, because another government could take another position. The ultimate goal was to get some decisions from the European Court that would have a lasting effect in the country. It's a lot of work to put that together. And over the next several years, our job was to gather evidence, prepare petitions, file them with the court, prepare the witnesses to testify, and eventually, along with
cases from other countries, we could bring it to the European Court.

9.2.4. European Court decision

Their decisions were very, very strong.

Marika: We were given freedom to preach, to have our meetings, and even conventions. And the special convention in 2018 was a huge victory for us.

Nino: When we met our brothers from other countries, they said that the whole world had been praying for us. And it suddenly dawned on us. We realized nothing can stop the good news.


Mark Noumair: We are the victors. We win. We courageously stay with Jehovah God and His people.

Marika: It was an amazing feeling being there. I just couldn't hide my joy.

Nino: Marica, who would have thought that everything would have turned out like this? From the persecution we faced to what we can do now.

Marika: I know. I thank Jehovah every day for that. I feel so grateful. And Nino, I just want to say thank you for all you've done to help me learn the truth.

Nino: Aw, thank you, Marika.

Marika: Where would we be without the good news? The good news transforms lives. It gives us meaning. Makes us better people. And even if it's difficult, if our health limits us, if persecutors try to stop us, if the changes our students need to make seem
impossible, Jehovah will help us to never give up in sharing the good news.

9.2.5. [Col 1:6]
The good news is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world.

[End of Video]

10. Song 35
Let us now stand and sing a song that highlights the benefits of using our time wisely. Song number 35 is entitled "Make Sure of the More Important Things." After the song, you may remain standing for some announcements. That's song number 35.
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1. Introduction

This morning's video presentation will now begin. As you watch, reflect on how the example of faithful ones can move us to give our best to Jehovah. Please listen and watch the video.

(10:06) Welcome. Welcome to this final day of our Declare the Good News Regional Convention. Today's theme is taken from Matthew 24:14, which concludes with the words, "And then the end will come." Today's program will encourage us to look ahead to the bright future we will enjoy after the kingdom preaching work has been accomplished.

1.1. Song 84

We invite you to stand as we sing together our opening song number 84 entitled "Reaching Out." After the song, Brother Lemuel Lacy will offer the opening prayer. Again, that's song number 84.

2. (Sym 1of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Zechariah

(13:47) You may be seated. This morning's symposium will consider seven individuals we saw portrayed in episode one of the Good News According to Jesus. They show outstanding faith. How can we imitate them today? Each speaker will introduce the one to follow. To begin, let's give our attention to Brother Joel Kostacek, serving as the convention committee overseer, as he presents the first talk entitled "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News, Zechariah."
Wasn't it exciting to see our drama and to see real-life examples and learn excellent lessons from them? Yeah, we saw these examples of faith, and their lives were completely changed by the good news. Now, this wasn't just entertainment for us. We actually are benefited by their example. This affects our behavior, which in turn affects our relationship with Jehovah.

We're told at Philippians 1:27, to behave in a manner that's worthy of the good news. Well, how do we do that? Well, we focus in on these examples of faith, and then we imitate them in our life. We're benefited. Well, in this symposium, we will consider the examples of seven individuals that were featured in episode one of "The Good News According to Jesus," and then we will identify practical examples that we can learn from each one of them.

2.1. Who was Zechariah?

So first of all, who was Zechariah? Well, let's let the Bible tell it to us. If you'd like to open up to Luke chapter 1 and follow along, we first of all see that Zechariah was a priest, and his wife's name was Elizabeth. But there's a description given of them in verses 6 and 7. If you'd like to read that, it says, "They both were righteous before God, walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah. But they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were well along in years." So here we see in verse 6, they were righteous. They had that excellent reputation, and Jehovah was going to bless them. But they had no child, so he was going to give them a very special gift of John the Baptist.

What an amazing example. Well, how did Zechariah set a good example for us? Well, Zechariah conscientiously cared for his assignments. He had that good reputation for doing so. But also,
and this is what we're going to focus on today, he responded well to counsel and discipline. He responded well to counsel and discipline. On the most important day of his priestly service, whenever he went into the temple, and he'd been waiting for this all of his life, he'd get one chance for this, and he was going to offer up incense, an angel appeared right before him. Do you remember what he said to that angel after the angel said, "You're going to have a son?" It wasn't the best response. He said, "How can I be sure of this? I'm old. My wife is old. It doesn't seem possible."

Well, because he doubted what the angel said, he lost the ability to speak for many months.

2.2. Video Excerpt: Zechariah’s positive response

In the following excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," note Zechariah's positive response to the discipline.

Angel: Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you are to name him John.

Zechariah: How can I be sure of this? For I'm old, and my wife is well along in years.

Angel: I am Gabriel, who stands near before God, and I was sent to speak with you and to declare this good news to you. But look, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their appointed time.

And they were going to name him after his father, Zechariah.

Elizabeth: No, but he will be called John.

Not one of your relatives is called by this name.
So he asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name."

At this, they were all amazed. Instantly, his mouth was opened, and his tongue was set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

[End of Video]

Like Zechariah, have you ever said something that you wish you could just take it right back? Wouldn't it be nice if we had an app on our phone that allowed us to edit the words that just came out of our mouth? Oh, that didn't sound too good. You know, let's see here. Delete, delete. Oh, we have to delete that one for sure. Looks much better. Send. That would be fantastic.

And no doubt, Zechariah beat himself up for a while for what he said. So I told an angel, good to see him shaking his head all the time, quietly, of course. But there Zechariah was. But it was his positive response to the discipline. That's what's most noteworthy here. He didn't become bitter by the discipline. And that's the whole point of this talk. He didn't become bitter.

How did he prove that? Well, right away, he didn't lose his faith. He didn't slow down in his service to Jehovah. He also named his son John like he was told to. But he also, whenever he got his voice back and he could speak, he praised Jehovah rather than complain about what he had lost. So he proved that he got the point. See, discipline didn't stunt him. It didn't hurt him. It helped him to grow.

2.3. Lesson today

How can we use this lesson today? Well, we all know that Jehovah does not use angels to give us counsel. He uses imperfect people. And that can be a real test to us.
2.4. Video: Receiving unexpected counsel

In the following dramatization, note how an experienced brother reacts when he receives some unexpected counsel.

[Brother at Kingdom Hall giving a public talk]

...conscious, keep your sight up, help justice and righteousness. If you open your Bible... I've been giving public talks for decades. ...and verses 15 and... And in all that time, I've never had something like this happen.

Thank you. Nice meeting you. You're a real nice meeting you too. Hope to see you soon. See you later.

Brother: Efrain.

Efrain: Yes.

Brother: You have a minute?

Efrain: Yes.

Brother: I wanted to talk to you about something.

Efrain: Okay.

Brother: Thanks so much for just taking a moment. I just wanted to bring to your attention...

Efrain: He counseled me about my teaching? I don't want to ignore his words, but the friends in the congregation love my talks. I think...

[Reflecting on his talk]

...conscious, keep your sight up, help justice and righteousness. If you open your Bible in Jeremiah chapter 22... Chapter 22, verses 15 and 16.
I'm just not sure how to feel about all of this. I watched the Good News according to Jesus again. This time, I paid special attention to the correction that Zachariah received.

I read the account again and I noticed he was described as being blameless. But that did not mean he was above correction. My brother gave me kind but direct counsel from God's Word. It's a privilege to teach in a congregation. And I want to give my very best to Jehovah. So I follow his guidance in every aspect of my life. And isn't that what we want, friends?

[At the Kingdom Hall]

Efrain: David, do you have a moment? Sure. I wanted to ask you, I'm working on a part for next week. I was hoping you'd listen to it and let me know what I can work on.

David: Of course. I'll be happy to.

Efrain: I'd really appreciate it.

David: Hey, by the way, will you and your wife still be able to join us for that gathering next week?

Efrain: Oh, absolutely. We're really looking forward to it.

David: Same here.

Efrain: All right. Good night.

[End of Video]

Now that was an excellent example of somebody who had a good attitude about the counsel. Now it wasn't easy for him at first, was it? It's always a little bit difficult. It could be painful. But he focused on the benefits of accepting the counsel, of changing necessary
things, instead of any embarrassment that he received at the same
time. Focus on the benefits.

So Zechariah, he also responded well to his discipline. He didn't
know that his faith was lacking the way that it was, did he? But his
discipline allowed him to grow, to change what he needed to
change, let his faith grow, and not doubt Jehovah or doubt
Jehovah's direction.

So how can we imitate Zechariah today? Well, first of all, with any
assignments that we receive, within the congregation or otherwise,
work hard at them. We take them seriously. We want that good
reputation like he had. But also, we should readily accept any
counsel or discipline that we're offered and let it take its effect. Let it
help us grow. See, we're in a huge family today. All of us here,
we're all brothers and sisters. And Jehovah's our God. So if that's
really the case, then what should we expect?

How should we view discipline? Let's let the Bible answer that
question for us. If you go to the book of Hebrews 12:5,6 to see the
proper view of discipline. Hebrews 12:5,6 says, “And you have
t entirely forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: My
son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, nor give up when
you are corrected by him; 6 for those whom Jehovah loves he
disciplines, in fact, he scourges everyone whom he receives as a
son.”

Yes, this is what takes place. We're warned in this scripture not
to do two different things.

First of all, we don't want to belittle the discipline as if it didn't
have much value or if it didn't apply to us. If we were to do that, we
could be turning away from a really nice suggestion and helpful advice from our God, Jehovah. And also, as stated, we don't want to give up when we're corrected as if too much is expected out of us. It's just too much, Jehovah expects too much, can't do it, not going to do it. That's not the right attitude to display.

Now, we do know that discipline is emotionally painful at times. However, if we focused only on the pain, then we would miss the point completely. See, Satan wants us to focus on the pain. Satan wants us to take it personal. Satan loves to see those wedges driven between the brothers. He loves to see people leave Jehovah and the congregation. It's his entertainment. We don't want to fall for that.

Because verse 6 clearly says there in Hebrews, for those whom Jehovah loves, he disciplines. It's an act of deep love from Jehovah God. Good parents train their children with loving discipline and counsel. What is the result? Well, we have obedient, humble children. And who doesn't like that?

We learned a lot from Zechariah's example today. He didn't become bitter from the discipline. He allowed it to help him grow, to build his obedience and his faith, even in his old age.

Yes, older brothers and sisters receive counsel and discipline too, viewing it as love from their Heavenly Father. So, no matter how long we have been serving Jehovah, may we imitate the wonderful example of obedience and faith of Zechariah.
(Sym 2of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Elizabeth

(28:16) Brother Shelton Edwards, a regular pioneer in the Glenmere Lake congregation, will now present the next part of the symposium, “Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Elizabeth”.

What do we know about Elizabeth? This week we have been able to consider the Bible book of Luke, chapter 1, where he mentions Elizabeth. But understandably, we know that there's not much really written about her. But, if we have noticed in our Bible drama, Elizabeth's life directly connected with Jehovah God's will and purposes, especially when it had to do with his son. So, now here we are, being encouraged to imitate her.

3.1. Who was Elizabeth?

So, who was Elizabeth? Well, as you may have noticed, mentioned in the Bible book of Luke, it talks about Elizabeth and her family. But in chapter 1 there, it's noticed on the family line that Elizabeth came from. One notable point is there in verse 5, it says she's from the daughters of Aaron. So, it's helping us to appreciate that Elizabeth came from a priestly family. And her husband, Zechariah, he himself was a priest.

So, now we have a spiritual sister who is married to a spiritual man, and as a result, they served Jehovah God faithfully. If you look at chapter 6, verse 6 in Luke 1, it says, "They both were righteous before God, walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah." So, a faithful
couple, a faithful sister who definitely supported her husband in his assignment.

Now, at this point, Elizabeth was well in her years. So, what about her children at this point? She had none. She was barren. Now, that is different from what we choose today, because today, many couples will decide not to have children for the sake of furthering their service in Jehovah God's organization. But Elizabeth, it says barren. So, this is not a choice that she was. She could not have children.

Now, why was this an issue? Because during that time, child rearing was expected. It was the norm. When Elizabeth married her husband, especially in the priestly family, no doubt they planned and expected to have children. But yet, Elizabeth did not allow this to bother her. It was disappointing. Yes, it was. But yet, among this highly esteemed privilege of having children, Elizabeth continued in her service to Jehovah God. It did not interfere with her worship, as we can see by her example. Elizabeth showed faith, which we're speaking of today, but also patience. And by her displaying this faith and patience, she was rewarded miraculously by giving birth to a son, and that son, John the Baptist. The son, as we learned with Zechariah, was to have a special privileged position in Jehovah God's organization. And Elizabeth, in her old age, was able to give birth to such a son.

Now, we don't want to forget that she was well along in years. So childbearing and giving birth to a child was not easy for her. But she didn't let that take away her joy, the discomfort, the situation that would be troubling for her. Elizabeth joyfully accepted this special privilege that Jehovah God had given her in her old age.
And we think about Mary, her relative. Now, Mary, just the same, was able to give birth to a son, but Mary's son was to be the Messiah. And Elizabeth was not jealous of her. She didn't show an attitude toward her privilege. She was like, "Well, let's focus on me and my baby." No, she rejoiced with Mary, who was giving birth to the Messiah.

3.2. Video Excerpt: How Elizabeth encouraged Mary

Let's look at the following excerpt from the Good News According to Jesus and note how Elizabeth encouraged Mary.

Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruitage of your womb. So how is it that this privilege is mine, to have the mother of my Lord come to me? For look, as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Happy too is she who believed, for there will be a complete fulfillment of those things spoken to her from Jehovah.

[End of Video]

Did you notice how Elizabeth expressed her faith that Jehovah's promises to Mary would be fulfilled? Mary didn't walk in the door and say, "I'm pregnant." The spiritual woman that Elizabeth was recognized. She recognized God's Spirit being within her. And as a result, she expressed that to Mary. And notice how Mary, when she expressed it, Mary looked down like... And so Mary's countenance began to lift. When she embraced her, at first Mary's hands were down, but she brought her hands up. Why? Because Elizabeth encouraged her in her assignments. She encouraged her as a result of the faith and the confidence that she had in Jehovah God.
3.3. Video: Being positive and encouraging

In the following dramatization, we're going to think about now how can we today apply these points. In the following dramatization, note how a sister remains positive and encourages others in the congregation, especially young ones.

All my life, I wanted to be a pioneer. God has decided to adjust the hour requirements for pioneers. The requirement will now be 600 hours per year. That is an average... I was grateful for the adjustment, but I still didn't feel like I had the right circumstances.

[Sound of falling]

Hello. Mom, are you okay? You okay? I was determined to care for Mama, no matter how hard it got at times.

My aunt and uncle would come by to help, so that I could attend the meetings. All right, bye, bye.

[At the meetings]

We'll be able to make sure you contribute to the path of joy, and we'll wrap up the meeting with a very nice... I'm happy to announce that Sister Chloe O'Malley is now serving as a regular pioneer.

When others much younger than me started pioneering, I was happy for them. But I never thought it would happen for me. I took comfort in Elizabeth's example. Life must have been hard for Elizabeth, but she didn't let disappointment define her. Jehovah viewed her as righteous and blameless. That's how I wanted Him to see me too.

I want to do service with you. Are you free this Friday? So I continued to do as much in the ministry as my circumstances allowed. I also found joy in helping those who could pioneer. I had
to focus on what I could do. But like Elizabeth, I got an unexpected blessing.

My aunt and uncle wanted to devote more time to helping me with Mama, grateful for what I had done all those years. Jehovah had turned His attention to me. He paved a way for me to be able to pioneer, even though I thought that it would never be possible.

Hey, I just wanted to say, you've always been someone I've looked up to. Thank you for everything you've done for me.

[End of Video]

Did you notice how our sister remained positive? She made sure that she meditated on Bible examples that were very similar to hers, Elizabeth. At the same time she did more, she focused on the ministry, being engaged in the ministry regularly and encouraging others who are in the ministry, as well as providing some practical support. So she maintained her integrity. She continued in her service and she encouraged others. So how can we imitate this example? How can we imitate Mary?

3.4. Cope with disappointments

Well, the first idea, the first point is to make sure that realizing that with Jehovah's help, we can cope successfully with disappointments. Many of us here, most of us here, we have a goal, we have a purpose. And it may not be realized. Cope with the disappointment well. Meditate and think about the blessings and the privileges that you already have. Yes, the privileges that you already have. Meditate upon those. And then, as a result of continuing your service just as Elizabeth did, she did not allow anything to interfere with her worship. Our sister did not allow anything to interfere with her worship. And it's the same as us.
We're not going to allow disappointments. Do not allow anything to interfere with your worship. And as a result, an unexpected blessing may come, just as it did with Elizabeth.

3.5. How can we imitate Elizabeth?

And second, how can we imitate Elizabeth? Let's turn in our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 5:11. It says, "Therefore, keep encouraging one another and building one another up, just as in fact you are doing." So here it says to keep encouraging one another, to build one another up. So this encouragement that we may receive, the blessings we have, we're going to continue to encourage and encourage one another. And as a result, in imitating this, we not only strengthen our faith, but we will strengthen the faith of those ones that we are around within the congregation. By means of doing these things, we can really focus on the examples that we have here in Elizabeth.

So take time to meditate on the faith that Elizabeth showed for the good news. And imitate her. Jehovah treasures our efforts to serve him and to help others do the same, as we continue to serve blamelessly in our worship to Jehovah God.

4. (Sym 3of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Mary

(41:33) Brother Jonathan Collinmore, a Patterson Bethel family member, will now present the next part of this symposium, "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Mary."
Her life may have seemed unremarkable with everything mapped out already and planned ahead. Get married, this nice man Joseph, not wealthy but a faithful man, raise a family. And then, changes.

Let's read about it. Luke 1:28. "And coming in, the angel said to her, 'Greetings, you highly favored one. Jehovah is with you.'" So first, an angelic visit. And whether she thought she was remarkable or not, Jehovah puts it on record, she's highly favored.

Then what? Verse 35. "In answer, the angel said to her, 'Holy Spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason, the one who was born will be called holy, God's Son.'" What an assignment. Reassurance and then an assignment.

That is where we find Mary. Jehovah viewed her as highly favored and gave her the privilege of being the Messiah's mother.

4.1. How was Mary a good example for us?

So how did she set a good example for us? Well, she trusted in Jehovah. Now think about why she trusted in Jehovah. She may have had valid concerns, given what he told her. What did he not say? Gabriel did not say he was going to tell her family that she was going to be pregnant by this means. What would they think when they found out from Mary? What would Joseph think? Would he believe that she'd been faithful to him and that this pregnancy was as a result of an operation of God's Holy Spirit? Valid concerns.

We don't know the multitude of questions that may have gone through her mind upon receiving this news, but what we do know is her answer. Notice what we're told in verse 38. "Then Mary said, 'Look, Jehovah's slave girl, may it happen to me according to your
declaration.' At that, the angel departed from her." Her words, so full of simple humility and obedience.

What was she saying? In Bible times, the slave girl was the lowest in the household. Her life literally depended on the master of the household. Whatever he said, her life was in his hands. Mary, in this answer, is saying, "I'm in Jehovah's hands. Do with me whatever you will." Simple humility and obedience.

How could she do that? She trusted Jehovah. Her trust in Jehovah revealed the strength of her friendship with him. Let's review that as a reminder.

4.2. Video: Mary's relationship with Jehovah

In the following excerpt from the Good News According to Jesus, note how Mary gave evidence of her relationship with Jehovah.

My soul magnifies Jehovah, and my spirit cannot keep from being overjoyed at God, my Saviour, because He has looked upon the low position of His slave girl. For look, from now on, all generations will declare me happy, because the Powerful One has done great deeds for me, and holy is His name.

[End of Video]

The passage in Scripture that she quoted is taken from Luke 1:46-49. And if you follow along in the copy of the Bible, you'll notice she made very heavy reference to the Scriptures. She knew them well. She took time to meditate. Think about it. She didn't have JW Library. She didn't have a printed edition of the New World Translation. She didn't have cross-references and study notes.

How was she able to quote over 20 different references? According to the study note in verse 46, Mary's words of praise that
follow in verses 46 through 55, contain well over 20 references to or allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Many of her expressions echo words of the prayer of Hannah, Samuel's mother, who also received a blessing from Jehovah in the matter of childbirth. Further in the note, it says, "Other examples of expressions included or alluded to," and it gives 14 specific verses she quoted in just a matter of a few sentences.

How could she do that? Meditation. She knew God's Word well. She paid close attention to and remembered what she heard, so that she could then, later on as we saw in the film, draw conclusions in her heart, in this instance and in others.

4.3. Video: Married sister cares for her relationship with Jehovah

In the following grammatization, note how a married sister cares for her relationship with Jehovah.

Do you mind going out with Sister Davis? And Sister Fernandez, do you mind going out with Sister Garcia? Very good. So how about we conclude with a prayer?

You ready? Actually, no. It's okay. I have paternal visits and I could drive too.

Oh, okay. Sorry I'm a mess this morning. I was up late again. I want everything to be perfect for the gathering next week.

You do so much to build others up. But are you taking the time to build yourself up?

You know, that's a good question.

You know who helped me? Mary.
Gonzales?

Jesus' mother.

Oh. I took Rose's suggestion, and as a family we watched the Good News According to Jesus again.

But I focused on Mary's example. She never missed an opportunity to learn about Jehovah and deepen her personal relationship with Him. When she spoke with Elizabeth, her words showed the depth of her faith and love for God.

I'm so glad we watched that again. I really appreciated how Mary magnified Jehovah with everything she had. And He loved her for it.

Yeah, you could really see why He chose her.

She knew the scriptures so well. But it's not just that. She was deep. She understood them. I used to be like that.

What are you talking about?

I need to do more to feed myself spiritually.

What can I do to help?

You do so well at caring for our family's spiritual needs. I appreciate that so much. But I need to start setting aside some personal time to deepen my relationship with Jehovah.

[Going out for field service]

I have territory, and I can drive.

That sounds good.

[End of Video]
4.4. How can we imitate Mary?

So how can we imitate Mary? Continue strengthening your relationship with Jehovah, your friendship with Him.

How? Psalm 77:12. "And I will meditate on all your activity and ponder over your dealings." Mary did that. She was deep. How? Because she was able to build confidence in Jehovah. How? She meditated on what He had done in the past for Hannah and others. So that when an assignment came to her, an assignment that had never been conceived of before, she didn't hesitate to accept it.

Reflect on how God has helped you in the past and others. And don't just think about it. Remember it. Put it in your mind and in your heart. That gives us confidence. And really, that is what we need. How can you have confidence in someone if all you know is passing information like their name? You need to really get to know them so that you can have confidence in them.

That's what Mary did with Jehovah. And as we saw in our video, a special note to our dear Christian women. Whether married or single, we love you very much. We appreciate you. But consider this example of Mary as a reminder of the need to care for your personal spiritual health, no matter your circumstances in life. Mary had her own relationship with Jehovah before Joseph came into the picture. And of course, her spirituality added to her as a wife and later a mother. Many sisters today can relate and imitate her example.

4.4.1. Experience: Emiko

Notice what one sister named Emiko says, "When I was single, I had my personal spiritual routine. But after getting married, I
realized that because my husband prayed for us and took the lead in worship, my faith had become dependent on what he did. I came to see that I needed to carry my own load regarding my relationship with Jehovah." She says, "So now I set aside time to be alone with my God, praying, reading the scriptures, and meditating on his thoughts."

Dear sisters, whether married or single, can you imitate Mary's example more fully? We know you can. Sometimes Jehovah asks us whether we're married, single, male, or female. Jehovah may ask us to do something that seems difficult, even impossible, unthinkable to our eyes. However, his word gives us ample reasons to trust him, to have confidence in him, to place ourself in his hands, just like a slave girl in her master. If we do that, meditating prayerfully on God's experiences with his people in the past and how he's helped us, and then meditating on what we see happening even now, our confidence will be sure. And in the same way that Jehovah helped Mary, you can trust that he will help you to accomplish anything he asks of you.

5. (Sym 4of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Joseph

(54:18) Brother Andrew Kruk, a member of the Wallkill Bethel family, will now present the next part of this symposium, "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Joseph."

Have you ever felt betrayed by someone very close to you? Perhaps the closest one to you? The man we're going to talk about next felt that way. His name? Joseph. The God-fearing carpenter
from Nazareth who was engaged to the daughter of Heli, named Mary.

How many of you are fathers in our audience this morning? Okay. So how did you feel the first time your wife told you that you were going to be a father? Were you excited? Were you happy? Were you proud? Is that how Joseph felt when he first learned that Mary was pregnant? Was it good news to him?

Let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew 1:19. Joseph thought he knew Mary. She was a spiritual woman from a spiritual family. But in just a few more weeks, it would be obvious to everyone that she was pregnant. And Joseph knew the child was not his. Joseph cared deeply about Mary, even though it seemed she had been unfaithful to him.

Although he felt betrayed, verse 19 says, he did not want to make her a public spectacle. He intended to divorce her secretly. Why a divorce when the two were only engaged? According to Jewish custom, engaged couples were viewed as already married. But Mary was not yet his wife. Thankfully, Joseph found out there was no scandal after all. According to verses 20 and 21, an angel spoke to Joseph in a dream, explaining that Mary was pregnant by means of Jehovah's Holy Spirit. The angel added that the son she bore would save his people from their sins. He further reassured Joseph, "Do not be afraid to take Mary, your wife, home."

So what a turn his life had now taken. Imagine his thoughts now. The good news is, I can marry Mary. And I'm going to be a father. I'm told it's a boy. And wait a minute, I'm going to adopt the son of the Most High. We are going to raise the Messiah together. How are we going to raise and care for this unique child? What evidence do we have that Joseph was an excellent father?
5.1. Video excerpt: How Joseph cared for his family

In the following video excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," note how Joseph cared for his family.

Being given divine warning in a dream, Joseph withdrew into the territory of Galilee. And he came and settled in a city named Nazareth in order to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets. He will be called a Nazarene.

[End of Video]

Joseph set a good example. He feared God. He loved Mary and Jesus. And he was quick to obey direction from Jehovah. Early in their marriage, Joseph told Mary about his dream in which an angel gave him a message from God. King Herod wanted their little son dead. To protect their family, they had to leave right away and go to Egypt until they were told to return. Egypt was a long distance away, and they'd face a foreign people, a foreign language, foreign customs.

How would they adapt to so much change? Obeying was not easy, but by doing so, Joseph protected his family. Joseph and Mary trusted in Jehovah and slipped out of Bethlehem at night.

Joseph worked hard to care for the material needs of his family. As a carpenter, he would cut down timber, haul it, season it, and use it to build houses, boats, small bridges, carts, wheels, yokes, and all kinds of farm implements. It was hard physical work. Joseph's family eventually grew to include at least six children in addition to Jesus. Joseph also provided for the spiritual needs of his family. Joseph and Mary had a custom. Besides regularly bringing their family to the local synagogue, they would go from year to year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Although
males were required to attend, Joseph took the whole family with him so that they could enjoy it together as a group, as a family. They may have needed two weeks to make that journey, celebrate the occasion, and then return home. Joseph was not just invested in his carpentry business. He was invested in his family spiritually. He provided for them in every way.

5.2. Video: Father caring for spiritual and material needs

In the following dramatization, note what helps a father to put primary emphasis on his family's spiritual needs while also providing for their material needs.

Wife: Hey.

Husband: Hey, babe. We need to talk.

Wife: Okay.

Husband: My boss called me in right at the end of the day. He said that I need to start traveling for two weeks out of the month. What did you tell him? I told him I would think about it. I only have till the end of the week to decide. I can't lose this job.

[Later, with a brother]

Brother: They've really put you in a dark spot.

Husband: It feels impossible.

Brother: What does Jehovah want you to do?

Husband: He wants me to provide for my family, but...

Brother: What does that really mean?

[Later when driving with his family]
Husband: What does it mean? It's not just money. What would happen if I spend all this time away?

[Imagines scene between wife and son]

Mother: I told you a bunch of times to do the one-two wireless.

Son: Too bad.

Mother: Too bad you weren't supposed to play today. Turn off the game. No, turn off the game.

[Mother at the meeting with son]

Mother: As we look at verses 21 to 21, see how many times David actually...

Son: We don't have to study this.

Mother: I know you're not going to play video games until we finish.

Son: What is there to get? This is simple stuff. I don't know.

[Husband back to the present]

Husband: I was fractured. What kind of husband and father do I want to be?

Joseph worked hard without sacrificing time with his family.

He invested in them spiritually.

I need to provide for my family in every way. I can't do that if I'm not here. I can't do that if I'm not here. We sat down as a family and discussed ways that we could simplify knowing that I might lose my job. We weren't sure how Jehovah was going to take care of us but we were ready to trust him.

[End of Video]
The husband in the video got some good direction. He meditated on Joseph's example. If you are a family head, be quick to seek out and follow Bible-based direction. This is how we can benefit from imitating Joseph.


On at least three occasions, Joseph received instructions from God regarding his family. And each time, he obeyed promptly, even when it meant making big changes. By following God's direction, Joseph protected Mary. He cared for her and provided for her. Imagine how Joseph's actions must have deepened Mary's love and respect for Joseph.

How can we benefit from imitating Joseph? Following Bible-based advice will make you a better husband or family head. Just as we saw in the video, what does Jehovah want us to do? Having faith in the good news means providing for our family. But what does that really mean? What kind of husband or family head do we want to be?

5.3. Joseph had time to be with his family

Joseph worked hard without sacrificing time with his family. And as a result, think of what he was able to do. He had time. Time to be with Mary. He had time to look at the stars with Jesus. Time to watch Jesus grow up and become a master carpenter. Time to laugh and share feelings. Time for meals and family worship. Joseph invested in his family materially and spiritually. And we can
imitate him by providing for our family in every way. We can only do that if we are present in every way.

A sister who has been married for over 20 years said, "When my husband seeks and applies Jehovah's direction, I respect him more and I feel secure. I have confidence in his decisions."

We don't have angelic visions, but we do have clear direction from Jehovah. Do your best to follow it promptly. You can be confident that Jehovah is more than able to take care of you and your family. Fathers and single-parent family heads, having faith in the good news means putting the spiritual interests of your family to the forefront. If, like Joseph, you humbly and modestly follow Jehovah's direction, your family will have faith in the good news and will bring praise to God.

6. (Sym 5of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Simeon and Anna

(1:07:28) Brother Woodworth Mills will now present the next part of this symposium, "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Simeon and Anna." [applause]

Who were Simeon and Anna?

6.1. Simeon

Simeon was a righteous and devout man waiting for Israel's consolation. We've been practicing in talks this morning how to imagine the Bible character that is being portrayed. We have to build a picture in our mind of these two. Simeon, righteous. It means he was following God's law. It means he was doing according to what was prescribed for worship at that time. But not
mechanically. It says he was devout. A beautiful word describing a man whose heart is in his worship.

Is that the way we are with our worship of Jehovah? Following what is prescribed for us, the little details, but doing it from our hearts, devout, full of meaning.

6.2. Anna

And what about Anna? She was the daughter of Phanuel. But the Bible tells us she was constantly at the temple from morning till afternoon waiting for the sacrifice. She was fasting indicating sacrifice on her part in connection with her worship. And the words that are used indicates that she had her heart in what she was doing. She was 84 years old. Grandma, we have so many of you at the kingdom halls by your faithful example. The congregation is watching us, our faithfulness in worship. And remember, she was there in the morning and she was there in the evening. Fasting indicates how much she was willing to devote to Jehovah. It was these two beautiful characters that the Bible described. They showed faith in the messianic promises despite the problems of old age. Remember, she's 84. And living at a time of spiritual darkness, violence, and oppression.

6.3. Video excerpt: Reaction when seeing Jesus

Now, how did Simeon and Anna each set a good example? As you watch the following video excerpt from the Good News According to Jesus, note Simeon's reaction and that of Anna when Jehovah God rewarded the faith and endurance of these two aged servants by allowing them to see the infant Jesus.

There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout. It had been divinely revealed to him by the
Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of Jehovah.

Simeon: Now, Sovereign Lord, my eyes have seen your means of salvation, a light for removing the veil from the nations, and a glory of your people Israel.

Narrator: Now there was a prophetess, Anna. She was never missing from the temple.

In that very hour, she came near and began giving thanks to God and speaking about the child to all who were waiting for Jerusalem's deliverance.

[End of Video]

Simeon and Anna did not let their problems overshadow their love for Jehovah and for people. They expressed deep gratitude to Jehovah. Simeon showed concern for the well-being of Joseph and Mary. He wished them Jehovah's blessing in fulfilling their responsibility as Jesus' parents. He warned Mary of the pain she would experience and she would have to endure, but he also assured her that Jesus' death would not be in vain. His prophetic words would likely help Mary to endure when her son was put to death. Anna enthusiastically shared the good news with others, telling about the Messiah.

6.4. Video: An older sister encourages others

Now note in the dramatization that follows, note how an older sister encourages others despite enduring her own trials.

Brother: Perla, I'm so sorry I'm running late.

Perla: No problem, my dear, no problem.
Brother Davis, could you take John and the Garcias with you? Thank you.

Brother: Lucha, are you still taking Perla on some return visits?
Lucha: Yes, that's the plan.
Brother: Great.

[Later in the car]
Lucha: I don't know why I'm always the one having to clean up someone else's mess. It's really frustrating, you know? Sometimes it's just too much.

But what am I supposed to think? I'm not a doctor.

Perla: That is a lot of anxiety. It's too much to carry on your own. Remember 1 Peter 5:7? Throw all your anxiety on Jehovah. But Lucha, how much anxiety do you want to keep? And how much do you want to give to Jehovah?

Lucha: Thank you, Perla. I really needed your advice this morning, but I feel like I spent the whole time talking about myself. How are you?

Perla: I have my struggle, but I'm grateful I went out with you today, my dear.

Lucha: Me too, and I'm so glad we got that return visit home.
Yes. So I'll see you at the meeting tomorrow night?
Perla: I'll see you at the meeting tomorrow night.

[Perla reviewing the video]

Anna was never missing from the Temple. Night and day she was there, ready to encourage others. As a result, Jehovah blessed her, and her account was recorded for us. The brothers and sisters may
not always know the struggles I have, but Jehovah does, and I am so thankful to be part of His family.

[At the Kingdom Hall]
Lucha: Perla, it's so good to see you.
Perla: Good to see you.
Brother: Perla, you're always the first one here.
Perla: There is no place I'd rather be.

[End of Video]
So now, dear brothers and sisters, how can we imitate Simeon and Anna? Be resolved not to let your trials and problems dominate your thoughts and speech.

6.5. Have a grateful outlook - 1 Cor 16:34
Cultivate a grateful outlook, as we read in 1 Chronicles 16:34. Let's go there in the Bible. [Pause] You've got it? “Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his loyal love endures forever.” Maintain a strong love for Jehovah and for people. Zealously preach the good news about Jehovah and Jesus. Show personal interest in your brothers, especially when they face trials. By imitating Simeon and Anna, we personally can face trials with confidence and help others to do the same.

7. (Sym 6of6) Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Jesus
(1:19:40) Brother Josiah Naaman, Warwick family Bethelite, will now present the final part of this symposium, "Imitate Those Who Had Faith in the Good News – Jesus."
I don't know how you follow up, our dear brother, Morris.

A popular topic in the media nowadays is, "Who is the greatest of all time?" in some particular area. Their intent is to try to identify who's the one that's achieved some unparalleled success in their respective field. But when we're talking about this group of people who have shown exemplary faith in the good news, I'm sure all of us would agree, no one is greater than Jesus. He is the greatest example of those who've shown faith.

Now, how do we know that? Well, first, because no human has sacrificed anything more, anything greater than what Jesus has. Just think about what his life was like in his pre-human existence. He was a powerful angel, he's up in the heavens, in Jehovah's personal presence, had a very responsible position. But then, as an expression of his faith, he emptied himself, gave it all up, and accepted the assignment to come down here to the earth.

The second reason why we can say he's the greatest example of faith is what he did when he came to do that assignment here on the earth. Once he got down here, Satan and this world tried everything they could to try to prevent Jesus from accomplishing God's will, but they couldn't overcome his faith. He refused to allow them to influence his thinking, his goals, or any of his actions. In fact, he was so resolute in his faith that he could truthfully say at the end of his life, "I have conquered the world." He conquered it by not becoming like it.

Well, of course, that's the example that we want to imitate, it's that entire life course that Jesus led when he was here on the earth. However, for the purpose of this talk, we'd like to focus our attention on just one portion of Jesus' life here on earth, and that is as a young person.
7.1. Jesus example as a Youth

How did Jesus set a good example as a youth? Well, let's open our Bibles to the account that's recorded in Luke chapter 2. That's Luke 2:46,47. And this is when Jesus is 12 years old. So let's read it. Well, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and asking them questions. But all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers.

So here Jesus is in the midst of these teachers. Now, these were the prominent religious leaders of that time, a group of very well-educated men. Now, to some people, to be in the midst of them, they would find that intimidating. But how does 12-year-old Jesus react? He's not intimidated. He's asking them questions. And these were not just the type of questions maybe to, like, satisfy his curiosity. No, the Greek word that's translated "asking questions" actually shows that it could refer to those that are used in a judicial examination.

So these were thought-provoking questions. And no doubt these were the type of questions that would have caused those prominent teachers to stand up and take notice of Jesus. The result was that everyone around him, including those prominent religious leaders, were in amazement at his understanding and his answers.

Yes, at a very young age, Jesus' faith moved him to take a courageous stand and speak up for the truth. But what enabled Jesus to build such a strong faith as a youth?
7.2. Video excerpt: How Jesus took in knowledge as a youth

Well, as you watch the following excerpt from "The Good News According to Jesus," note how Jesus, as a child, took in knowledge of Jehovah and drew close to him.

[End of Video]

So what was it that helped Jesus to build up his faith? Now right off the bat, some might say, "Well, of course he had faith. He was perfect." Actually, it doesn't work that way. Adam and Eve, they were created perfect, but they didn't have faith. Or Satan and the demons, they were created perfect, but they certainly don't have faith. Likewise, the fact that Jesus had faith as a youth was not simply the result of him being perfect.

It was the result of choices he made. What choices? Well, consider two.

7.3. Choice 1of2: Jesus submitted to his parents

First, Jesus chose to be submissive to his parents, and as a result, he benefited from the training that they gave him. And isn't that what we just saw in our little video clip, as we saw Joseph and Mary maintaining a good spiritual routine for their family? They were going to the meetings together at the synagogue. They were going to Jerusalem for the Passover. They celebrated the Passover together as a family. Throughout it all, Jesus went along. He participated. He was engaged. You could tell that he was enjoying being trained by his family.
7.4. Choice 2of2: Jesus chose to do personal study of the scriptures

The second choice that Jesus made was as a youth, he chose to do his own personal study of the Scriptures. The evidence of that is in the account that we just read in Luke chapter 2, where it said that the people were in amazement at his understanding and his answers. See, that understanding, that depth of knowledge that he gained from the Scriptures, didn't happen automatically. He had to work for it. He acquired it because he did his own personal study of the Scriptures. So in those two ways, obeying his parents and doing his own personal study, Jesus set a good example for young people.

7.5. Video: Building faith equips young ones to reject bad

But how will imitating Jesus in these ways benefit you young ones today? Well, in the following dramatization, note how building faith can equip young ones to reject what is bad.

Wait, she said what?

Yeah, man, it was weird.

Thanks, boys. We'll be ready to eat soon.

That means we got an hour. Let's get a game in.

All right. Wait, so I thought you said she had a girlfriend. Yeah, she does, but she likes boys and girls. Oh.

But she said it's not that big of a deal, though. Wait, so then what'd you tell her?

Nothing. I ghosted her. You can't just avoid her.
Come on, you gotta stand up for your beliefs. Yeah, and say what? You know, you're cute and whatever, but the Bible told me I can't hook up with you.

Come on, man. I know what I'm supposed to say and everything, but if I say it, everyone's just gonna think I'm, like, close-minded or something.

And why do you care what they think?

I mean, sometimes it's just like I don't even know what I believe or why I believe it.

But isn't it worth trying to figure it out?

Is that even possible?

That's what Jesus did. The religious teachers back then, they were teaching things that were completely different than what the Scriptures taught. But Jesus, even as a kid, he wasn't confused or intimidated by them. He knew the truth, and he wasn't afraid to take a stand for it. I had to ask Jehovah to help me believe the truth like that.

And has he helped you?

Well, so far, every time I've had a question, I've found answers. Let me actually share with you an interesting article I found.

Joaquin showed me that the things I struggle with, the questions I thought were complicated, have clear answers in God's Word. The world is so confused about what's right and what's wrong. Maybe that's why it seems they're so unhappy. But Jehovah's standards are always better for us. And he gives us friends we can learn from. Friends who help us draw close to him.

[End of Video]
So have you ever had to deal with any of those issues? Homosexuality, hooking up? When your peers talk about it, do they say these things are no big deal? We live in a world that confuses what is bad with what is good. And they're trying to convince us that their distorted view of sex is good. And when you're surrounded by this viewpoint, it can start to get kind of confusing, right?

Perhaps you can sympathize with the comment that our brother made in that video. "Sometimes I don't even know what I believe or why I believe it."

See, how do you know what's propaganda versus what's really just normal behavior? The key is to imitate Jesus. How do we do that? In two ways.

7.6. Imitate Jesus 1of2: Know the truth.

Let's open our Bibles to the first way. It's identified in John 8:31,32. John 8:31. “Then Jesus went on to say to the Jews who had believed him: ‘If you remain in my word you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’”. Jesus gave us this simple rule to combat propaganda. Know the truth. Think deeply about Jehovah, just like Jesus did. Remember what our young brother said in the video? He said Jesus wasn't confused or intimidated by religious leaders. He knew the truth. And he wasn't afraid to take a stand for it. Make sure that you know the truth. That you understand what you believe and why you believe it.

See, Satan doesn't want you to think like that. He doesn't want you to think clearly and to reason things out. It's because he knows that propaganda is more effective when people don't think critically. Don't be content to just passively accept whatever you hear from
Too many people today are just floating down the stream of public opinion, just allowing it to take them wherever it's going to lead. You can be different. You can choose to push against that current. Use your thinking ability to make the truth your own.

7.7. Imitate Jesus 2of2: Maintain a close friendship with Jehovah through prayer

The second way that you can imitate Jesus and protect yourself is maintain a close friendship with Jehovah God through prayer. Recall in the video what our young brother said? I had to ask Jehovah to make me believe the truth like that. You can do the same thing. Speak directly to Jehovah about what you're dealing with right now with your peers. And don't just report the facts, but express yourself to him, your emotions. Tell him how you're really feeling about whatever it is that's happening around you. Ask him to give you the strength and the motivation to do what you know is right. And he'll respond. He'll draw close to you, and he'll strengthen you to make the right decisions in your life.

7.8. Review

So in review, how can you identify Satan's propaganda and protect yourself?

1. One, know the truth. Know what you believe and why you believe it.
2. And two, maintain a close friendship with Jehovah God through prayer.

Well, understandably for you young ones, surviving in the midst of Satan's old world is not easy. But you can take comfort in knowing that Jesus can sympathize with you. He understands the pressures that you face. And not only can he sympathize with you, he's also
confident in you. He knows that if you imitate his example, you too will conquer the world. You'll conquer it by not becoming like it.

Well, we certainly have enjoyed this symposium. So how can we imitate those who had faith in the good news?

From Zachariah, readily accept any counsel or discipline you receive and learn from it.

From Elizabeth, look for opportunities to support others in their worship.

From Mary, trust that Jehovah will help you to accomplish anything that he asks you to do.

From Joseph, be quick to follow Jehovah's direction.

From Simeon and Anna, cultivate gratitude and maintain your love for Jehovah and for people.

And finally, from Jesus, you young ones, strengthen both your faith in God's word and your friendship with Jehovah God.

Well, may each one of us continue to do our best as we strive side by side in our faith of the good news by imitating these good examples.

[End of Talk]

8. Song 65

Thank you, brothers, for drawing attention to ways we can show our faith today. Well, let us now stand and sing together song number 65, entitled "Move Ahead." After the song, you may remain standing during the announcements. Again, that's song 65.
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1. Introduction
At Luke 6:38, Jesus instructed his listeners to practice giving. At our conventions, we have the opportunity to give financial support to the kingdom work. Those who wish to donate can use any of the contribution boxes. Those making a contribution by check should make the check payable to Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. If possible, however, please donate online at donate.jw.org. If you would like assistance in making an online donation or you wish to donate using your contactless credit or debit card or mobile wallet, please visit the donation information booth. The donation information booth is located in the lobby.

2. (Sym 1of2) Keep preaching the good news wherever you are
Please be seated. What opportunities do we have to share the good news with others? How can we take full advantage of such occasions? Please note the suggestions in the following two-part symposium. Brother Michael Edwards will present the first talk and then introduce the speaker to follow.

The theme of the opening talk is "Keep preaching the good news wherever you are." The theme of our convention is "Declare the Good News." In line with that, the theme for today's session highlights the importance of us and gives us the direction to proclaim that good news day after day. Now when we hear the phrase "day after day," that implies continuous effort. But what does it mean for us to proclaim the good news with continuous effort? To get the answer to that, I invite you to turn with us to our first scripture, 2 Timothy 4:5. In this verse here, we'll see some
ingredients that will help us with the recipe of knowing what it means for us to continuously proclaim the good news. 2 Timothy 4:5 and it reads, "You though keep your senses in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry." So in order for us to fully accomplish our ministry, this verse highlights three things that we need to do, three things that we're instructed to do.

- First, to keep our senses or to stay alert.
- Number two, to endure hardships and living in these last days, all of us are enduring hardships.
- And number three, do the work of an evangelizer.

Now if we focus just on that last point, what does it mean to do the work of an evangelizer and how does that tie in with us proclaiming the good news day after day? Well in the Christian Greek scriptures, the terms for evangelizing usually refer to preaching to unbelievers. So while it is important for us to continue encouraging, building up, supporting our brothers and sisters related to us in the faith, to proclaim the good news day after day, to evangelize, involves us actively looking for opportunities to discuss the good news with those not currently serving Jehovah.

Now in this two-part symposium, we will discuss how we can keep preaching zealously, one, wherever we are, and two, wherever God directs us. So at this point, we'll focus our attention on how we can be zealous in preaching wherever we are.

Now if each of us were to honestly assess our individual situations, we may find that while we do have an active share in the preaching work, maybe engaging in it on a regular basis weekly, some of our zeal may be lacking. But what has contributed to us
maybe losing some of that zeal for our preaching work that we had at first?

Well the truth is, as we find ourselves living in the tail end of these last days, we can see clearly Satan's influence growing in the earth. And with Satan's influence growing in the earth, obviously that's going to have an impact on individuals, an impact on the way they respond to our preaching work.

Did this surprise us though? Well in Matthew chapter 24, speaking specifically of the sign of the last days, Jesus foretold that such conditions would exist. His words were, "The love of the greater number will cool off." We clearly see that, don't we friends? Belief in God, respect for the Bible, those things used to be very important to many in the world today. The love of those things has greatly cooled off.

Despite this though, despite the fact that individuals may not respond to us the way that we would like to see or the way that they need to, our preaching work is not in vain. Why can we confidently say that? Why can we say that despite the response that our efforts are not in vain? Well in that same chapter, Matthew chapter 24, Jesus goes on to give another outstanding feature of that sign of the last days. And he said that sign would be the global preaching work. So when we think about the preaching work, was Jesus here specifically talking about disciple making? Actually, no. He said, "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." In Jesus' words here, well it reflects that the kingdom preaching work itself would be an important feature of the sign. Regardless of how people respond to the sign, they know what we're doing. They know we're out there
preaching, trying to give a witness. And thus, we're sharing and helping that prophecy be fulfilled.

Another reason to keep our zeal is that those who were once not interested may have a change in circumstances. They may become interested at a later time. So keeping these things in mind, as well as the fact that we have to know our role, our part. Jehovah God, He is the master of the harvest. He helps us keep our perspective. And He understands what we need to do, and we need to understand what we need to do as well.

Our assignment is to keep planting and to keep watering. Jehovah is the one responsible for growth. How encouraging it should be for us to remind ourselves that Jehovah, He rewards us for our efforts, not our results. When we remind ourselves of these things, it helps us to remain positive about those we preach to and about our preaching work itself.

Now, when we think about the fact that we're encouraged to preach the good news wherever we are, it's clear that that direction is telling us that our preaching work goes beyond the territory we may be in when we're in the formal preaching work. We can look for opportunities to preach at almost any time, almost anywhere.

**2.1. Jesus preached anytime, anywhere - John 4:3-7**

Where can we look to for an example of this being done? Well, nowhere else do we need to look, obviously, than in the Bible, but to Jesus Christ Himself, the superlative example of how we should conduct ourselves when preaching. Jesus Himself set a perfect example of this, and if we look to John 4:3-7, as we look through this passage, we'll see Jesus setting an example of preaching really anywhere. It says there, speaking of Jesus, "He left Judea
and departed again for Galilee, but it was necessary for him to go through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. In fact, Jacob's well was there." Now Jesus, tired out as he was from the journey, was sitting at the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

Well, what an example Jesus set. We see here that Jesus was looking for an opportunity to give a witness, to preach. He took the initiative. He was not in the formal preaching work. He was looking to relax, but he looked for opportunities to give a witness.

Well, what should this mean for us looking at his example? Friends, we too should look for every opportunity to informally start a conversation with a goal of giving a witness if the situation lends itself to that. We can look for opportunities to speak with someone while we're waiting at an appointment. While traveling, could we try to start a conversation with a fellow passenger? Our dear elderly and infirm friends have much success trying to start conversations with caregivers.

2.2. Experience: Parents of children’s classmates

One sister considers her special territory to be the parents of her children's classmates. Whenever she introduces herself, she makes a simple but heartfelt statement that the Bible has been a valuable aid in the raising of her children. And then she moves on to some other topic of conversation. But having broken the ice, bringing the Bible into the conversation, even just briefly, she finds it much easier to bring that topic up at a later date. Well, what have
been the results of her efforts? By using this method, she has helped 12 individuals to baptism.

Friends, informal witnessing brings results. It's very effective in trying to share the good news. So to this point, we've talked a little bit about what we can do to continually look for opportunities to preach or to give a witness to individuals. But now let's watch a video and see these suggestions put into action.

2.3. Video: Showing interest to start a conversation

In the following dramatization, note how a sister uses guidance from the brochure, "Love People, Make Disciples," to show interest in someone and to start a conversation.

[In the field service car group]

Well, the angels know we showed up. No one? Nope. You? No. I wish we could keep going. We have a bunch to do this afternoon. Us too.

But I'll keep my eyes open, and I'll try to start a conversation forever. Oh, yeah.


OK, ready? Yeah. So you'll get the paint while I try to find the parts for the shower.

So I'm supposed to stay home all day waiting for you to get back?

[At the park. Ellie sits next to a woman on the bench. Woman gets up and moves away.]

Elba: So that's my fault? Oh, yeah. I'm out here meeting men. What is wrong with you?
Sister: Oh, miss, your phone.

[As woman bends to retrieve her phone, the dog breaks free of the leash]

[Sister managed to catch the runaway dog]

Woman: I'm so sorry.

Sister: That's OK. It's OK. He's just making friends, aren't you, senior? Are you OK? Men. You wouldn't know it, but I handle fluff better.

Ellie: Well, men and dogs are different despite what you hear. I'm Ellie.

Elba: Elba. My husband and I moved here a couple of years ago. You?

Ellie: Same. We moved for Robert's job.

Elba: What did he do? He's a super artist.

[End of Video]

What a beautiful example. Our sister looked for opportunities to start a conversation. And the first time, it didn't go so well. But she didn't chase the person down. She didn't force the conversation.

She continued to look for opportunities and another opportunity presented itself. And what did she do? She started a conversation and it was very natural. Friends, that's what we want to do in our informal ministry. Look for opportunities to start conversations and let them develop naturally.

Friends, we do not want to let our hands rest when it comes to our preaching work, as we do not know which seeds of truth that we scatter will sprout.
3. (Sym 2of2) Keep Preaching the Good News – Wherever God Directs You

(14:16) Brother Jose Centrone Jr. will now present the final part of the symposium, Keep Preaching the Good News – Wherever God Directs You.

Have you ever been out in the ministry and wondered, is this where Jehovah wants me to be? Or have you thought about serving where the need is great and wondered, is this where Jehovah wants me to go? And please open your Bibles with me to Acts chapter 16. Let's see how Jehovah guided the preaching work of Paul and his companions.

Please join me in reading Acts 16:6. “Moreover, they traveled through Phrygia and the country of Galatia because they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in the province of Asia. Further, when they came down to Messia, they made efforts to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. So they passed by Messia and came down to Troas. And during the night a vision appeared to Paul, a Macedonian man was standing there urging him and saying, ‘Step over into Macedonia and help us.’ As soon as he had seen the vision, we tried to go into Macedonia drawing the conclusion that God had summoned us to declare the good news to them.”

Did you catch the way Jehovah directed the preaching work? How many times did Jehovah stop them? Well, at least twice. In verse 6, the Holy Spirit stops them going east into Asia. In verse 7, the Spirit of Jesus stops them again going north into Bithynia. We don't know how the Spirit stopped them, but there was no question in the minds of Paul, Silas, and Timothy that Jehovah was guiding
the preaching work. Now I have to be honest with myself. Had I been traveling hundreds and hundreds of miles and stopped abruptly twice along the way, I would have given up and reason, "Well, Jehovah is not blessing this. Let's just go home."

But not these men. They kept going. How did they know that Jehovah wanted them to keep going? Well, look at verse 10. It says, "They drew the conclusion that God had summoned them." They didn't jump to conclusions. So how do we do that? Well, by being sensitive to Jehovah's direction, putting aside our desires, our agenda, and allowing Holy Spirit to take over. So that's exactly what these men did. And so they step into Macedonia, where they would find honest-hearted people.

Well, some of us might be thinking, "Well, Paul's direction was obvious, not rocket science to figure that one out. Had I been given a vision like that, I too would have stepped over into Macedonia." No questions asked. True.

Although we don't receive amazing visions like this today from Jehovah, Jehovah does give us something special. You know what that is? The opportunity to ask for His guidance. And isn't that what a loving parent does?

I remember my dad trying to teach me this point when I was five years old. Growing up in New York City, I loved going with him to the grocery store. And one day, thinking I was tough stuff, I decided to let go of his hand, wander about, eventually I got lost. And instead of calling for him, I set out to find him on my own. The place was packed. I walked up and down every single aisle. I didn't know which way to go. The minutes felt like hours. And just when I was about to give up, I heard his deep voice calling, "I'm over here by
the cereal aisle." And as I moved through the crowd, I got closer to his voice, and there he was, standing by the cereal boxes.

Now, wouldn't it have been easier had I just called out for dad to come help me? Oh, has something ever happened to you like this in the ministry? Where you're so focused on finding honest-hearted people, we forget to ask for help. Do we sometimes maybe get caught up in the moment and forget that Jehovah, Jesus, the angels, and Holy Spirit is readily available to guide us along the way? Well, if this has ever happened to you, what might help us?

### 3.1. Ask for Jehovah’s help

Well, the May 2021 Watchtower gave us this tip. It said, "Each time," not sometimes, but each time you're in the ministry, ask for Jehovah's help, and be specific. He will direct you to honest-hearted people. Another area in which we seek Jehovah's direction is when we want to expand our ministry or, as some say, serving where the need is greater. In the vision that we just read, Jehovah did not use the vision of an angel to speak to Paul. He used the vision of a man, a Macedonian man, to speak to Paul. Well, Jehovah can do the same thing for us today. He can use mature Christians to motivate us.

If you're thinking about moving to serve where the need is great, the July 2022 Meeting Workbook recommends speak to your elders, get advice from other need-greaters, read their stories in our publications, do research on the place you're considering, and if possible, visit the place. Talk to the locals.

Now, what if you're still unsure? What if you've done all these things and it's unclear to you where that Jehovah really wants you to go, or if you should go this way or that way or the other, what
should you do? In such cases, it may simply have to do with what the broadcast song says to do. You know which one.

You've got to step on over and leave your worries behind, because when you step on over, what happens? You'll be blessed if you try. In the case of the Apostle Paul, he knew how to preach. He knew what to preach, but what he didn't know was where to preach. And it wasn't until Paul got out there and tried it that Jehovah intervened and helped him. So what does this mean for us? Don't wait passively.

The January 15, 2012 Watchtower stated, "A driver can only direct his car to turn left if it is moving." Likewise, it may only be after we take steps to reach our goal that Jehovah's Spirit will guide us, and Jehovah will bless our efforts. It might be uncomfortable at first, it may take several tries, but not all stress is bad stress. Many of us here in the audience have done it, have served where the need is great, moved to other congregations, learned a new language, and we are still alive to talk about it.

3.2. Video: Guided by spirit

In the following video, notice how these friends were guided by something they could not see. Enjoy. [Music]

Honestly, it's been really eye-opening. We didn't know the Bible was so practical. We love what we're learning. And I feel like we finally have something we're doing together. But we have a question.

Shoot.

So we're with my folks, and they start talking about how bad the world is getting. And we just kind of, I don't know...
Gross.

Exactly. Yeah, we've been there. And then today we watched this video about evangelizer school. Is that what did it for you?

No, we haven't been.

Oh, we thought you went because you two are like walking Bible dictionaries. No, really. We all learn to witness the same way. Study, the meetings, and a little prep. We'll help you.

That would be great. Thanks. We need all the help we can get.

[Later, in their car]

Walking Bible dictionaries? [Laughter]

Please don't sketch that. I'll try.

You know, it's not as crazy as it sounds. SKE. I know we're not pioneering yet, but eventually... Why not? Think how far we've come. We thought we'd never speak up about the truth. But we did. And it took a while to shift our priorities. But the ministry is part of our life now. And did we ever imagine starting Bible studies? Every time we thought we couldn't, Jehovah showed us that we could. Why not set the goal and see where he takes us?

Hey, Blake. Uh-huh. Wow.

Might be a trip down to the same territory. Are you interested?

Yeah.

We are. Friday night to make plans. Oh, we'll definitely pray about it. Okay, see ya. [Music]

[Wife sketched picture of a car with a puddle in front of it.]

[They later encountered such a puddle on a muddy road.]
This is it. Hold on. [Music]

[They drove safely through the puddle on the country road. Angel flying in mid-heaven.]

[End of Video]

In the video, did you notice the angel flying in mid-heaven? Just because they couldn't see him doesn't mean he wasn't there. Did they allow the unknown to stop them? No. Did they allow the uncertainty to paralyze them? Not at all.

Just like Jesus and the first century Christians, we are determined to declare the good news without let up. In other words, without stopping, without giving up. We cannot and will not allow our own thinking and our own insecurities to get in the way of the work. So preach wherever you are. Preach wherever Jehovah directs, and that way we can live up to the name. We are Jehovah's Witnesses. Our name doesn't just describe what we do. It describes who we are.

So the next time you're thinking about which direction you might go or what form of service you'll be in, don't worry. Stay calm. Pray. Keep preaching the good news. And go wherever Jehovah directs.

4. What Will You Do for the Sake of the Good News?

(26:16) Thank you, brothers, for those energizing talks. Are you a young person who loves Jehovah? Are you eager to do all you can in his service? If so, you will want to pay special attention to Brother Stephen Bell as he delivers the final talk of the day entitled, "What Will You Do for the Sake of the Good News?"
Young ones, would you like the best life ever on this side of Armageddon? Would you like exciting assignments? Would you like to wake up in the morning and jump out of bed and run to your assignment because you know you're touching the lives of others and you are working with the best people on earth? If so, do not look for a career in this world. The work environment today is toxic. Most are just biding their time to retire and get away from secular work.

But now, on the other hand, you can be like Paul, as noted in 1 Corinthians 9:23. 1 Corinthians 9:23, what does Paul say? He says, "But I do all things for the sake of the good news in order to share it with others." Paul did everything he could for the good news. Well, many young ones are adjusting their lives to be able to share the good news with. Like Paul, do not let them leave you behind. Those of you in your teenage years or even earlier, what will you do for the sake of the good news?

During this talk, we will discuss four points.

1. What skills and qualities do you need to become effective ministers in the good news?
2. What qualities do young sisters need?
3. How can young brothers progress?
4. And finally, what doors of activity are open to our young ones today?

And parents, you're involved in this conversation also. Many parents in the world have saved four years to send their child to college. How much time and effort will you invest in preparing your child for the best life? Full-time service.
So, if you were to prepare a list of skills and qualities needed for the full-time service, what would be on your list? Here are five that we will discuss, and you can start working on right now.

4.1. **Skill 1 of 5: Learn to read and write well**

Number one, learn to read and write well. You ever seen a young brother get up on stage in the Kingdom Hall, and he does a Bible reading, and it is so beautiful you want to clap afterwards? I'm sure we've all had that. You are impressed.

Well, just imagine how a householder would be impressed. When a young brother and sister goes from door to door, and they open their Bible, and they read a scripture with meaning, that has to impress people, particularly since they themselves probably could not do the same thing.

So, pay attention in school when these topics are discussed on learning to read and write. You're going to need them in the full-time service.

4.2. **Skill 2 of 5: Learn a trade or skill for financial support**

Number two, learn a trade or develop a skill to support yourself in the ministry. Again, be like Paul. He knew how to make tents with his hands to support his ministry. He did not rely on his past higher education. He had a skill to support himself in his travels. So, maybe you already are in the full-time service, and you have a secular job. If so, stay focused on that job. If you're punctual, finish what you start.

Why? Because the work that you're doing is supporting the most important thing in your life, your service to Jehovah. Keep a simple
It would be easy to put unnecessary things on a credit card and then have so much debt you had to leave the full-time service. Credit on a credit card, can quickly become your master. Be a slave of Christ, not of a credit card.

It'd be so discouraging that you get this beautiful invitation of disaster relief. It's going to be exciting, and then you realize, I can't go because I'm in too much debt. A fancy car is a poor replacement for the joy of serving Jehovah fully as a young person.

And lastly on this point, do not get distracted with higher education. The training that we get in Jehovah's organization makes our young ones well equipped. They've learned how to express themselves with poise. They can have a meaningful conversation with a human being rather than just a cell phone. So, of course, the universities want our children. Of course, school counselors are going to push you to go to college. You're desirable to them because of your training by Jehovah's organization, but do not let them trick you into thinking that higher education is going to make you happy.

4.3. Skill 3of5: Develop good communication skills

Number three, develop good communication skills. This is not just that you can talk to others, but it's also that you can listen. Being a good listener is a lost art. Listening means you have an interest of others. So it's going to help you in things such as informal witnessing. Informal witnessing is taking an interest in somebody, asking them a question, and then listening. Most people in this world do not have anyone who's willing to listen to them.
So why not just practice this skill of listening? Next time you go into a kingdom hall, sit down next to that older brother or sister, ask them how they came in the truth, and then just listen.

**4.4. Skill 4 of 5: Cultivate humility**

Point four, cultivate humility. Jehovah cannot use us if we're not humble, and Jehovah's organization cannot use us. Imagine if you were building a kingdom hall and you ignored the direction of how to build it because we thought we knew better, you could have a lopsided kingdom hall. So when direction is given by Jehovah's organization, listen, accept it, and apply it.

In the preaching activity, people are going to know if you are proud or humble. Humility is going to draw ones to Jehovah's organization just like the smell of food draws us to a meal.

**4.5. Skill 5 of 5: Cultivate modesty**

And number five, cultivate modesty so you're an example to others. We show we're modest when we do not demand our own rights. People can watch us and tell if we're modest by our actions and by our dress and grooming.

Well, there you have it, young ones, five things you can work on right now to prepare for a life in the full-time service.

**4.6. Young sisters**

Number two, while all five of those original skills is for brothers and sisters, we're now going to focus our attention primarily on young sisters. And to begin with, our sisters, they carry a heavy load in the preaching work. No wonder Psalm 68:11 calls them a large army, Jehovah's army. And we have mature pioneer sisters who set the example. So young sisters, if you want to be in the
full-time service, make arrangements to work with these mature pioneer sisters and learn from them.

Well, young sisters, if you have the goal in the full-time service, what qualities do you need or skills? Here's a few.

**4.6.1. Managing finances**

Learn to manage your finances in your home well. One mother had her teenage daughter run the finances for the family for a month. She was given a budget, had to pay the bills, do the shopping and plan the meals. Then she had to help her mother prepare the meals. That was a brave mother. But a smart one. That sister entered the full-time service and she is still there today.

In another family, the parents had their teenage daughter prepare a meal every single week. And then they gave her a trade to assist her. That young girl is loving life in the full-time service. She's a pioneer and works with LDC.

Now, in both of these cases, this training did not happen by chance. Christian parents were training their young daughters to prepare them for the full-time service. So, young sisters, with the aid of your parents, can you learn to manage your finances and future household even at a young age?

**4.6.2. Follow Lydia**

Second, follow the example of Lydia. You probably remember Paul visited Flipi. Lydia got baptized and then she made the Apostles and others come to her home. Her example of humility was so outstanding that Jehovah had it recorded in the Bible. How can you young sisters show the same hospitality? Can you work with your parents to invite others over from your congregation for a
meal? Is there an older sister in your congregation that you could take an interest in, befriend them, and show them hospitality?

4.6.3. Choice of a mate

Lastly, there is something that can either help you greatly in the full-time service or could actually pull you out of the full-time service. So, if you're a young sister and you're contemplating marriage, carefully consider how your choice of a mate could greatly affect your full-time service.

For example, you fall in love with that brother. He's got the hair, groomed beard nowadays. Yeah, he's got a great job and the smile. But now what? Now what do you do?

Here is a list of questions young sisters that you may want to ask. Does he have the same goals for the full-time service as you do? As you stand back and watch him, is he putting spiritual things first? You may want to observe him for a while before you get serious. Have you talked to his elders in his congregation before getting involved? What do they say about his spirituality? Have you worked with him in the ministry and can he handle the word of God skillfully? His comments at meetings are going to reveal something about his spirituality one way or another. As you listen to them, what do they speak to you about his spirituality?

Here is a very important question. Does he show respect for women? How does he treat sisters in the congregation? Is he kind to his mother? And does he help her around the house? If he does not treat women well, he likely will not treat you well.

Now, when do you ask yourselves these questions? Early on, maybe even before you show that he finds out you have interest in
him, do not wait. Well, we've discussed several ways our young sisters can prepare for the full-time ministry.

4.7. **Video: What helped young sisters become effective ministers**

In the following video, note what helped three young sisters to become effective ministers.

4.7.1. **[Happiness Mabho - South Africa]**

I was raised by my mother in a small village. At a very young age, my mother taught me how to read and write. She used various charts and publications. After the meetings, my mother would share what she enjoyed at the meetings and would ask us what we enjoyed. So, it was important for me to listen carefully at the meetings and take notes because I also had to tell her what I'd enjoyed. As I was getting a better understanding of what I was reading, that stirred in me a desire to comment and prepare to comment at the meetings in my own words. Commenting at the meetings made me feel part of the congregation and made me enjoy the meetings even more. Also, that made me want to do more for Jehovah.

4.7.2. **[Keziah Fernando - India]**

Like most teenagers, I enjoy texting. But I learned that I can show personal interests better by having face-to-face conversations. As I worked on doing that, my communication skills improved. In addition, the training in our organization helped me to find a job to support pioneering.

When I was asked to be a tutor for a couple's son, I told them that I hadn't taken any courses for it, but that we were taught how to...
teach well at the weekly meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. They said, "Oh, we really like the way you talk. Please start tutoring our son tomorrow."

### 4.7.3. [Ramona Welsch - Albania]

I come from Germany. I was born in Coburg. I went to the meetings. I went in the ministry. But my heart wasn't there. Since I was so focused on my own feelings, it was hard for me to show personal interests in others.

My roommate often took me along in her studies. She cried together with them when they cried. She was more than just a Bible teacher to them. She was really a friend. I learned to love people more. As a result of a more intense relationship with Jehovah and a deeper love for people in the ministry, the ministry brings me more joy.

[End of Video]

### 4.8. Young Brothers

Well, young brothers, it's your turn. How can you train yourself to be an effective minister?

#### 4.8.1. Cultivate discernment and thinking ability

First, cultivate discernment and thinking ability. Now, what does that mean? It means that you can look at a situation and immediately determine if it's something you should or should not do. One way to develop thinking ability is identify principles and live by them.

For example, the principle that Proverbs 22:3 says, "The shrewd one sees the danger and conceals himself." Can you apply that in your life? When invited to non-witness parties or associate with
non-witnesses after school or after work, can you be shrewd? Can you see the danger that holds and conceal yourself by not attending? If so, you are developing discernment.

Young brothers, you can earn a reputation for treating ones kindly, including sisters. For example, when you walk into the Kingdom Hall, do you immediately go to the young brothers in the corner and check out the MBA scores from the playoffs from last night? Or, can you go talk to that older brother and sister and find out how they're doing and do they need help?

Our dressing and grooming will also affect our reputation. As ones notice our dressing and grooming, what do they think? Do they worry that we're falling out of the truth? Or, do they look at us and say, "He is going to be a great pioneer or ministerial servant." Our dress and grooming shouts to everyone around us what's really on our heart and mind.

Next, are you developing qualities needed to be a ministerial servant or elder? Here's three things you can do.

4.8.2. Quality 1of3: Focus on serving others

When we're young, we often only think about the position. For example, I want to be a ministerial servant, and that way I can give a talk and everybody's going to see me on stage. However, rather than focus on the position, focus on how you can serve others. Jesus was a perfect example of that. He didn't have to go around telling everybody, "By the way, I'm God's son." No, he showed humility and he took an interest in others. He was the second highest personage in the universe, but he washed the feet of others. So having responsibility is not about being in the limelight, but it means serving others.
Humility and serving others, young brothers, will make you stand out. When elders are considering others for further responsibility in the congregation, your name will just jump out at them, not just because you gave a good talk, but because you're humble. You love brothers and sisters, and you show it by helping others.

Now, if you want to be used in a greater way, it may be as simple as asking the elders how you can be used. Why not ask an elder to work with them in the ministry? You will learn more about the elder, and the elder will learn more about you.

4.8.3. Quality 2 of 3: Take an interest in older ones

Well, let's get to our second point. Take an interest in older ones. Having an older one as a friend is like having a precious heirloom. Their value is priceless, but you have to take care of it. So why not ask your parents or an elder in the congregation if there's an older one in the congregation that can use your help? Do older ones need their lawn mowed? Do they need their yard raked from leaves? View older ones as friends. Their outside may be older, but inside they probably still feel like they're young, and they would love to have a young one to associate with.

4.8.4. Quality 3 of 3: Follow through with responsibility

And then third, when you get responsibility, take care of it. Follow through. Do not call it the last minute and say, "I can't do something." Help the elder see that when you get an assignment, it is as good as done. And then lastly, young brothers, set goals in the full-time service. Work hard to reach them.

Why not talk to others in the full-time service? Why not make arrangements with a circuit overseer when he comes through and get his opinion on what you can do? Why not talk to the elders?
Share your goals with them. Reaching a goal is always easier when someone's there to help you.

**4.9. Video: What helped to become effective ministers**

Well, in the following video, note what helped three young brothers to become effective ministers.

**4.9.1. [George Telan, Jr - Philippines]**

I grew up in a family of farmers. My parents trained us to do household chores. When I worked secularly, there was a trap in earning a lot of money and becoming materialistic. But the training our parents gave us when we were kids helped me to keep my life simple. So at work, when I was offered overtime for higher salary, I didn’t accept it, even if it meant a lower salary.

An awake article also helped me a lot. It mentioned there how to budget money using envelopes marked with daily expenses, like this one. And it has helped me a lot to stay content and not spend money on things I don't need. And it helped me to focus on my pioneering.

**4.9.2. [Tomohiro Nishimurta - Japan]**

I wanted to be able to devote everything I had to Jehovah's service. But there were times when I wanted to go to university and see how far I could go in this world. Instead of letting my feelings dictate what I should do, I decided to think things through. I thought of Paul's example. He had received education, and he had riches, fame, and position. However, he said they were rubbish to him. If that was the case, I thought whatever I would be gaining would be even more worthless.
I chose to work part-time as a water meter reader. I had dedicated myself to Jehovah, so I wanted to give him back my all. I was able to spend more time in Jehovah's service.

4.9.3. [Rayner Fernando - India]

When I was young, I used to dream of becoming someone important. I used to think, "When I turn 18, I will be appointed as a ministerial servant." But when the time came, I wasn't appointed as a ministerial servant. I was really disappointed. Then, my mom encouraged me to think about Moses' example. He thought he had all the qualities and skills to lead the nation of Israel. But Jehovah knew that he wasn't quite ready, and he hadn't cultivated humility.

I stopped focusing on myself and started to think about others, paying attention to what they needed. I was determined to accept whatever work I was assigned to do in the congregation. And this has helped me to work well with the brothers and to serve unitedly and with joy.

[End of Video]

So we've talked about what qualities and skills you need for full-time service.

4.10. Doors of Activity open

Now let's look at what doors are open of activity to our young ones. And there's more doors of activity open than ever before.

4.10.1. Regular Pioneering

If you are ready to walk down the path of full-time service, your first step is always regular pioneering. And that makes sense. Pioneering helps you keep your life simple. It lets you talk about Jehovah every day. It lets you go to pioneer school where you
receive more training. It helps you show love to others, particularly your brothers.

But after a little while of pioneering, what other doors are open to you? Let's focus on three.

4.10.2. Door 1 of 3: Bethel Service

The first of the three goals is Bethel service. Young brothers, we need you. Tomorrow's overseers often come from those who have gone to Bethel for training. Many of our United States branch committee came to Bethel as young brothers received training and took on heavy responsibility. Can you start thinking about Bethel service at a young age?

A Bethelite named Dustin reports, "I made full-time service my goal when I was nine years old. And I started pioneering when I finished school. After a year and a half, I was invited to Bethel."

Did you notice how old this brother was when he set goals for the full-time service that led him to Bethel? Nine years old. Many Bethelites have had the goal of going to Bethel for many years because their parents took them to Bethel for a visit every single year.

We've mentioned brothers, but you know there's many Bethel sisters also. Some work at Bethel. Some commute to Bethel. And some work remotely. So young brothers and sisters, can you make Bethel your goal even at a young age?

4.10.3. Door 2 of 3: School for Kingdom Evangelizers

What's our second door of activity? The School for Kingdom Evangelizers or SKE. Maybe you hear the word school and think, "Uh-uh, that ain't for me. I can't wait to get out of school." But SKE is so different from secular schools. All the students are in the
full-time service. Spending two months just learning about Jehovah and Jesus is life-changing. And how could it not be? So if you think you cannot go to SKE, instead of making a list of why you can't go, make a list of why you want to go. Then develop a plan and put it into action. You do not need to walk on water to go to SKE. Start pioneering. And when you meet the qualifications, turn in your application and let Jehovah decide the rest.

SKE will shape your personality and allow you to take on more responsibility. Like what, you ask? Some graduates have been assigned to serve in areas where foreign languages are spoken or to share in the special metropolitan witnessing program. Others graduate and later serve as substitute circuit overseers, as circuit overseers, and even as field missionaries.

4.10.4. Door 3of3: Local Design Construction program

Our third door of activity is our Local Design Construction Program, or LDC. And yes, we do like our acronyms. So what is LDC? Well, it's the department responsible for the maintenance and construction of our theocratic facilities throughout the U.S. branch.

And you can start working for LDC actually in your own backyard. You can start working on the maintenance of your own Kingdom Hall. Young brothers and sisters, if you would like to have hands on training of working on a Kingdom Hall, why not volunteer to work on your own Kingdom Hall? Talk to the elders to see if you could help. There's something else that many young ones have in their backyard that they can take a step forward with LDC.

Assembly halls like this one across the country are often maintained by young ones. So young ones, can you volunteer to help with the maintenance of the assembly halls in your area? If so,
talk to your secretary. Well, we have to say when one starts working with LDC, generally they do not want to stop. They love the excitement of going from one project to another project. They're meeting new brothers and sisters and they know their work is supporting Jehovah's organization.

Well, would you like to know how you can have the best life ever on this side of Armageddon? We imitate the example of Isaiah at Isaiah 6:8. Isaiah 6:8 says, “When I heard the voice of Jehovah saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And I said, Here I am, send me.” When you tell Jehovah, Here I am, please use me, please send me into whatever full time assignment you have, you will enjoy the best life possible.

4.11. Video: Opportunities and Rewards

In the following video, note what happened to the young ones we saw previously, what opportunities did they pursue and what rewards have they experienced.

[Doorbell] When I was 23 years old, I started pioneering. Then I was invited to SKE and I was assigned to go to Albania as a missionary.

I became a pioneer. Now I'm a translator in the remote translation office.

I married a brother who had similar spiritual goals as me.

We pioneered together for two years and then we got the wonderful opportunity to serve as construction servants.

I pioneered for about two years. Then I was invited to Bethel and I serve in the bindery.
I started pioneering. Then I received an invitation to attend SKE. I am currently serving here in the service department in the Philippines branch.

I never thought that Jehovah would use me in such a manner.

No. Never.

I never would have expected that.

I never imagined this.

One public talk had a profound effect on me. The speaker said, "You have already dedicated your life to Jehovah. Are you now living up to your dedication? I can still give him something. I'll apply for SKE."

At times, I feel so insignificant and inadequate. However, I realize that Jehovah makes anyone who is willing to be used by him successful.

With any form of service, our being qualified comes from God.

I learned that if Jehovah gives us an assignment, he will also give us the skills and training we need to be successful in the assignment.

Although I didn't have the experience needed, Jehovah still saw something in me and gave me this assignment. I thank Jehovah from the bottom of my heart and view this assignment as a real blessing.

I can see how Jehovah has been helping us all along. It's like he's holding our hand tightly saying, "Don't worry. I'm right here with you."
I get to spend eight hours each day serving Jehovah with like-minded friends who love talking about him. It's great!

I can't think of words to describe my deep gratitude to Jehovah.

Jehovah has blessed me so much. He has drawn me to his family. He made me his friend. He has used me in ways I've never imagined before. Jehovah has made me see his hand even more as I allow him to use me.

I wake up in the morning and start my day with Jehovah by preparing for the ministry. Then, I go out with my service partners. We talk about Jehovah. We think about how we can help others come closer to Jehovah. Back home, I talk to my roommate about our ministry that day. Then, I take time for Jehovah. I feel like I'm spending every second of every day with Jehovah. And that alone is an enormous gift for me.

[End of Video]

Young brothers and sisters, what will you do for the sake of the Good News? Train yourself now by cultivating qualities and skills you need for the full-time service. Put the Good News first in your life and make necessary sacrifices. Reach out for opportunities to be trained by Jehovah's organization. Start by setting goals even at a young age. What will the result be? If you do all things for the sake of the Good News, you will have a rich and satisfying, and I will say, an exciting life filled with wonderful blessings. You'll have the best life possible on this side of Armageddon.

So when Jehovah asks, "Who will go into the full-time service for me?" Will you respond, "Jehovah, Jehovah, here I am. Please send me."

[End of Talk]
We would like to thank Brother Bell, who serves at Wallkill Bethel and also as a member of the U.S. Branch Committee, for that warm encouragement and practical advice.

5. Next day review

(1:03:23) Today's program has emphasized our privilege to declare the Good News. What can we look forward to on tomorrow's program?

The morning symposium will discuss how we can imitate the faith of characters we saw portrayed in episode 1 of The Good News According to Jesus.

Next, the public discourse will explain why we can face world events without fear.

In the afternoon, we will enjoy a thrilling dramatic Bible reading from the Book of Revelation, and the concluding talk of the convention will help us to cherish the Good News even more.

Be sure to get a good night's rest so that you can fully benefit from the final day of the convention.

5.1. Song 21

Now, let's stand and sing together Song 21 entitled "Keep on Seeking First the Kingdom." After the song, Brother Stephen Bell will offer the closing prayer. Again, that's Song 21.
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2. **Song 61**
1. Why We Don't Fear Bad News

We extend a warm welcome to all who accepted the invitation to attend this convention. All around us, the world grows more unstable. How can you be one who faces the future with confidence? Please enjoy the heartening discourse entitled "Why We Don't Fear Bad News." This talk will be given by Brother Keith Caldwell, serving at Wallkill Bethel. Brother Caldwell, you have our attention.

We are constantly exposed to bad news. Why is that? Is it just because we all have more access to news media than we've ever had in the past? Or is it because news sources know that negative stories tend to engage more readers than positive ones? Well, both of those things are true, but there is a deeper reason for so much bad news. And that reason is because we are living in a period unlike any other in human history. Experts warn that humans face a greater number of existential threats, that is, threats to mankind's existence, than have ever been faced in the past. Climate change, nuclear weapons, the rise of drug-resistant superbugs, the unpredictable effects of artificial intelligence.

One panel of scientists said, "We're afraid of the uncharted territory that we have now entered." But are we really in uncharted territory? Actually, no, we're not, because Jesus foretold the events that we're seeing today. I invite you to turn in your Bible with me to Luke chapter 21. And let's read together Luke 21:10,11. Luke 21:10 begins with Jesus' words, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and in one place after another food shortages and pestilences, and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs." For those
familiar with Jesus' words, the bad news that we hear every day is not surprising, because this prophecy and other Bible prophecies clearly indicate that we're living in the period of time that the Bible calls the conclusion of the system of things. Nevertheless, all of the things that Jesus foretold, warfare, earthquakes, and fearful sights of many different kinds caused distress for millions of people all around the earth.

1.1. Video: Affected by bad news

In the following video, note how some individuals were affected by bad news.

1.1.1. [Polykarpos Aspromallis - Cyprus]

I experienced civil unrest from the time I was born. I thought it was unfair that so many people were killed, maimed, injured, and had their lives ruined. I joined the army when I was 18 years old. As a soldier, I experienced the immense pain that war causes. For many years after, whenever I heard news reports about wars and about civil unrest, I got upset. I had nightmares. I experienced the war all over again.

1.1.2. [Gelu and Dora Dardai - Britain]

Gelu: In December 2008, at the end of the year, I lost my job. It was quite difficult because I didn't speak English, and every job application required me to speak English. We lived modestly. We did have some savings, but they quickly ran out.

Dora: When I realized we almost had no money left, I was very worried.

Gelu: I didn't understand why all of this was happening.
Dora: I am a person who worries a lot. It really was difficult.

[End of Video]

Like Gelu and Dora, like Polykarpos, many people around the earth feel anxious or depressed because of the difficult times that we live in. However, please note with me Jesus' words at Luke 21:9. He said, "Furthermore, when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified. Do not be terrified, for these things must take place first, but the end will not occur immediately." So Jesus' followers are affected by world events, but at the same time they are not paralyzed by fear. Today, over 8.5 million of Jehovah's Witnesses all around the earth do not fear bad news.

Do you know why that is? At this convention, we are always happy to welcome some who are not Jehovah's Witnesses, who perhaps responded to an invitation from a friend, a family member, or a co-worker. And if that is you, we are very happy that you are here. This talk is for you. Being here, you likely know something about Jehovah's Witnesses.

For example, you may know that as a group we have a reputation for being happy, peaceful, united. And perhaps you've asked yourself, "Why are they different? Why are they so peaceful?" Perhaps you've also asked yourself, "Could I find that same kind of peace? Should I learn more? Should I actively associate with them?"

To answer those questions, you need to understand why Jehovah's Witnesses think and act as we do. So to find out, we're going to use a single chapter of the Bible, Psalm 112. So I invite you, take your Bible and turn with me to Psalm 112, because we're going to spend the rest of this talk discussing this Bible chapter.
First, let's read Psalm 112:7 and see why we've chosen this particular chapter of the Bible. Psalm 112:7 says, "He will not fear bad news. His heart is steadfast, trusting in Jehovah." Psalm 112 describes a person who does not fear bad news.

So let's look at portions of this Psalm and find three reasons why that's true.

**1.2. Reason 1 of 3: Fearing Jehovah - Ps 112:1**

To find the first reason, let's read together Psalm 112:1. It says, "Praise Jehovah! Happy is the man who fears Jehovah, who takes great pleasure in his commandments." Verse 1 says, "Happy is the man who fears Jehovah." Jehovah's Witnesses feel confident because they work at building friendship with Jehovah God. And how do they do that? According to verse 1, "By fearing him." And you might say, "Well, that doesn't sound like friendship because I don't fear my friends."

Fear of Jehovah is not a morbid, unhealthy fear, because Jehovah is not a vengeful, angry God, impossible to please. To fear Jehovah means to have deep awe and respect for him, because not only is he almighty, he's also loving, wise, and just. Those who fear him don't want to do anything that would displease him. It's true, Jehovah does have requirements for those who want to be his friends. But those who fear Jehovah know confidently that everything Jehovah asks of them is for their benefit.

That is why, as verse 1 says, "They take great pleasure in his commandments."

**1.2.1. Illustration: Big, powerful man who is gentle**

How could we illustrate this idea of fearing Jehovah? Well, imagine that you met a man who was so big and powerful that...
people who didn't know him were intimidated by him. But as you got to know him, you realized that he's actually very gentle, and he loves to use his power and strength to help people. And more than that, this powerful man wants to be your friend.

How would you feel if someone threatened you and your powerful friend was right by your side? Well, you would feel safe. You'd feel secure. You would not fear bad news. And that's how friends of Jehovah feel.

Note with me Psalm 112:2. Speaking of such a person, it says, "His descendants will be mighty in the earth, and the generation of the upright will be blessed." This verse simply said, expresses that becoming Jehovah's friend results in his blessing and support.

So how can you become Jehovah's friend? Well, learn more about him. Speak to him in prayer. Let him speak to you through his word, the Bible. And as you grow in love for him, let your love for Jehovah move you to obey his commandments.

1.3. Reason 2of3: Wealth and riches providing real security

Well, now using Psalm 112, let's find a second reason why worshipers of Jehovah do not fear bad news. Let's read Psalm 112:3. It says, "Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness continues forever." So Jehovah's Witnesses do not fear bad news because they possess the kind of wealth and riches that provide real security.

And what kind of wealth is that? Well, literal wealth can be of help if we experience bad news. For example, if a person loses their job. Yes, it's helpful to have some savings. But what can happen in the
face of an armed conflict or when there is a natural disaster? Is literal wealth still of help?

1.3.1. Experience: Volcano eruption - Congo, Kinshasa

Note the experience of a father in Congo, Kinshasa. This is what he said. He said, "I had a well-paying job and we had just built a new home. But when Mount Nyiragongo erupted in 2021, I lost my job. And our home was destroyed three months after we had finished it. We lost everything materially, even our clothing." This family lost everything materially, but they did not lose their true wealth. What is that? It's their good relationship with Jehovah God. Nothing can rob a person of that kind of figurative wealth and riches. That's really what Psalm 112:3 is speaking about. That's why Jesus said, "Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." And we can add, "where a volcano cannot burn it up."

The father went on to say, "We were discouraged, but we never lost our joy. Jehovah moved our fellow believers to help us and we have what we need. We saw that Jehovah is a real God. He carried our load and made it easier for us to bear."

Don’t you agree that this family possessed the type of wealth that led to real security and equipped them not to fear bad news? And while we're still looking at verse 3, note what it says about those with spiritual wealth. The conclusion says, "His righteousness continues forever."

What does that mean? Friends of Jehovah have the hope of everlasting life. This hope for the future is the best antidote to any kind of fear about circumstances in the present, in this system of things.
1.4. Reason 3 of 3: Focus on helping others

Let's move forward. Let's find a third reason why Jehovah's Witnesses don't fear bad news. And as we do so, note that this reason has to do with how we spend our energy and what things we choose to focus on in life. Let's read Psalm 112:4,5,9.

So Psalm 112:4 says, "To the upright he shines like a light in the darkness. He is compassionate and merciful and righteous. It goes well for the man who generously lends. He conducts his affairs with justice." And now verse 9, "He has distributed widely. He has given to the poor." And there's this expression again, "His righteousness continues forever. His own strength will be exalted with glory."

Let's isolate a few key expressions from these verses. From verse 4, "He shines like a light. He shows compassion and mercy." Verse 5, "He lends generously." Verse 9, "He gives to the poor."

So why don't we fear bad news? Because instead of focusing on the problems in this system of things, Jehovah's Witnesses focus on helping others. When in material need, especially in the wake of disasters, Jehovah's Witnesses come to the aid of their fellow believers and others in their community and give them physical support and emotional support.

But there is an even more important way to give generously, to lend to the needy. What is the most beneficial way to help someone? Well, note verse 4. It says, "He shines like a light in the darkness." In this dark world, the most beneficial way to help someone is to assist them to come to know Jehovah God and appreciate the truth from the Bible. This kind of help is most needed because it gives genuine hope for the future.
Now you may say, "I know Jehovah's Witnesses do that. They share their faith from the Bible with others and I admire that, but I could never do that myself." If you've ever said that, you are in very good company. Because many of Jehovah's Witnesses at one time said exactly the same thing.

1.4.1. Experience: Irina, Slovenia

For example, 70-year-old Irina from Slovenia enjoyed studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and as she made progress, she made major changes in her life. She even stopped smoking, but she would regularly remind her Bible study conductor that she would never preach to others.

Well, eventually Irina did become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. And what does she say now? She says, "Speaking to others about the Bible gives me more joy than I could ever think of." Why the change? It's because Irina loves what she's learned and she loves people and she has learned that Jehovah can empower her to do something that at one time she thought was impossible for her.

What has she experienced? The truth of Jesus' words at Acts 20-35, that there is more happiness in giving than in receiving. So what about you? Could you speak to someone about the truth from the Bible?

Let me ask you this. Do you have a favorite subject? Do you find it easy to talk about your favorite subject? When you learn something that really helps you, are you eager to share it with other people? Likely both of these are true. So, is it impossible to share the best news ever with someone when you love it and you've come to have strong confidence in it? No, it's not.
1.5. Review

Now, having looked at these portions of Psalm 112, let's take them. Let's first of all just review the three reasons why worshipers of Jehovah don't fear bad news.

- Number one, they enjoy friendship with God.
- Number two, they have the kind of riches that bring real security.
- And number three, instead of focusing on bad news, they focus on helping others, especially sharing the good news from the Bible.

When a person brings all three of these things together in their life, what's the result? Let's go back to Psalm 112:6-8. It says of such a person, "He will never be shaken. The righteous will be remembered forever. He will not fear bad news. His heart is steadfast, trusting in Jehovah. His heart is unshakable. He is not afraid. In the end, he will look in triumph on his adversaries."

Worshipers of Jehovah are not superhuman. We have the same weaknesses and frailties as others. But with Jehovah's support, we can meet any challenge without fear.

1.6. Opposition

As the writer of Psalm 27 expressed it in verse 1, he said, "Jehovah is the stronghold of my life. Whom should I dread?" And that's an important point. Because you may know that Jehovah's Witnesses are not universally loved. There are some people and there are some powerful governments of this world who oppose us. Perhaps you even received a negative reaction from some to your interest in Jehovah's Witnesses or your desire to attend today's convention.
Should any sort of opposition make you fear to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses? No. As you come to know Jehovah and trust him, you will see that there is no reason to be frightened by any sort of opposition. As Hebrews 13.6 says, "Be of good courage and say, 'Jehovah is my helper.' I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

1.6.1. Experience: Valeri

Here's an experience that bears this out. A Witness named Valeri lives in a country where Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to practice their religion freely. One day police officers showed up to search Valeri's home. He says, "My wife and I had just finished having lunch when we heard a loud bang at our door. It sounded like a huge stone had been thrown against it. At that moment I realized what was happening.

I immediately recalled an illustration that depicted a powerful angel looking down on a house where a family sat praying while armed soldiers were about to break in. I told my wife, 'Jehovah, Jesus, and many angels are watching over us right now.' I said a quick prayer and I went and opened the door. It's difficult to explain the sense of calm and closeness I felt with Jehovah both in that moment and ever since. Thanks to Jehovah, my heart is not filled with worry or fear. It's filled with peace and tranquility."

Valeri and his wife turned to Jehovah in prayer and in turn Jehovah took any fear out of their heart. He was truly their helper in that moment of crisis.

1.6.2. Enemies of Jehovah will not succeed

But what about those who opposed Jehovah and his worshipers? Will they succeed? What is their future? Again, Psalm 112 gives us
the answer. Note with me Psalm 112:10. It says, "The wicked one will see and be upset. He will grind his teeth and melt away. The desires of the wicked will perish. Enemies of Jehovah will not succeed in frightening his people and soon they will be completely gone."

The Bible promises that God's kingdom will soon remove the wicked and bring complete peace to the earth. This beautiful promise is expressed in Psalm 37:10,11. Here's what it says, "Just a little while longer and the wicked will be no more. You will look at where they were and they will not be there. But the meek will possess the earth and they will find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." Those verses beautifully describe the near future. But friends of Jehovah are enjoying peace right now.

1.7. Video: What happened to Polykarpos, to Gelu and Dora?

What happened to Polycarpos, to Gelu and Dora whom we saw in the earlier video? Well, let's watch another video and find out.

Dora: I was very, very worried. But Gelu was calm. He reassured me and told me to trust in Jehovah.

Gelu: Instead of focusing on our problems, we focused on our hope and shared it with others.

Dora: The help Jehovah gives us through our brothers and sisters is extraordinary. He not only cares for our physical needs, he also cares for our feelings.

Gelu: It was about five months before I found another job.
Dora: When going through hard situations, we see Jehovah's hand. We see his help. So no matter what comes in the future, we are prepared to deal with it.

Polykarpos: When I met Jehovah's Witnesses, I realized that they can deal with bad news better with hope. Isaiah 65:17 deeply touched my heart and it still does. The scripture contains Jehovah's promise that the former things will not be called to mind. This verse helped me calm down. It made me feel great. So I read it over and over again. Gradually, the truths of God's Word stabilized me. They healed my mental disposition. My hope counteracts negative feelings so that I can live with inner peace.

[End of Video]

So what helped Polycarpos, Gelu, and Dora to face bad news without being overwhelmed by fear? Well, when Gelu lost his job for an extended period, what did he and Dora do? Well, just as Psalm 112 says, they focused on their hope and they shared it. They gave generously to others. And did you recall that Dora said that Jehovah cared for not just their physical needs, but also their feelings. And as a result, now they feel better prepared, equipped, confident to deal with any challenges that arise in the future.

And what about Polykarpos, who was troubled by painful memories of armed conflict from his past? He was stabilized by the hope that the Bible gives, specifically the promise at Isaiah 65:17 that the former things will not be called to mind. He said that hope counteracts his negative feelings so that he can live even now with inner peace.

So what about you? You too can become a person who does not fear bad news. How? First, learn more about what Jesus called the good news of the kingdom. The more you learn about the good
news, the less you will fear bad news. Cultivate a close friendship with Jehovah God. Build your trust in him.

If you're studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, we encourage you, take your Bible study seriously with a view to applying what you're learning in your life. And if you're just now becoming acquainted with Jehovah's Witnesses, we invite you to learn more about Jehovah, to draw close to him with the aid of your own personal Bible study. It's true that doing these things does require effort on your part.

But what will be the result for you personally? Please turn with me to Psalm 16, and let's read Psalm 16:8,9. Psalm 16:8 begins, "I keep Jehovah before me constantly. Because he is at my right hand, I will never be shaken. So my heart rejoices, my whole being is joyful, and I reside in security." Build unshakable trust, faith, and friendship with Jehovah God now, and you too will remain joyful and reside in security.

[End of Talk]

Thank you, Brother Caldwell, for explaining why we can look to the future with courage and confidence.

How can you further strengthen your trust in God? If you would like to have Bible discussions, free of charge, at a time and place convenient for you, please give your contact information to one of the attendants or visit JW.org and fill out an online request for a Bible study. We will be happy to arrange for one of Jehovah's Witnesses to supply you with more details.
2. Song 61

Now we invite all to stand if possible and join in singing Song 61 entitled "Forward You Witnesses." Again, that's Song 61.
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3. Song 126
1. Introduction

Welcome. Welcome one and all. Our afternoon session will now begin with the music video presentation. The video highlights the example Jesus set for us and his central role in bringing blessings to mankind. Please watch and listen quietly and please enjoy the video.

(10:36) We have now reached the final session of our convention. This afternoon's program will build our appreciation for the good news, including the wonderful future that lies ahead. Let us now stand and sing a song that reminds us of what we must do now.

1.1. Song 122

The song is number 122, entitled "Be Steadfast, Unmovable." Again, that's song number 122.

2. Dramatic Bible reading: "There Will Be No Delay Any Longer"

(14:12) In the near future, Jehovah God will act decisively to remove all who slander and oppose him, and he will bring relief to those who love him. What will take place? What role will Jesus Christ play in these events? We invite you to follow along in your Bible as we enjoy the dramatic Bible reading entitled "There Will Be No Delay Any Longer."

[Gage Fleegle]

Would you agree that we live in difficult times? Despite some advances in technology, people still must endure the ravages of war, food shortages, pestilence, and disasters of various kinds. Add
to that the bitter opposition and persecution we face from those who do not yet know Jehovah, how we yearn for justice and relief.

The Bible book of Revelation figuratively quotes faithful martyrs as calling out to Jehovah, (Rev 6:10) "Until when, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, are you refraining from judging and avenging our blood?" Although those martyrs were told to wait a little longer, Christ Jesus makes this remarkable statement recorded at Revelation 10:6, "There will be no delay any longer." That's good news. The entire book of Revelation is good news for all who love and trust Jehovah. It foretells momentous events, but we need not fear them because we know that Jehovah cares for us. The good news that Revelation contains is that all that grieves us today will soon disappear, and all of its promises center on one person, Jesus Christ.

In its very first verse, this thrilling Bible book is described as a revelation by Jesus Christ. It foretells events that occur during the Lord's Day, that is, the period that began when our Lord Jesus became king in 1914 and continues until the end of his thousand-year reign. And throughout Revelation, we read of Jesus' key role in destroying God's enemies, removing our suffering, and restoring earth to a paradise. These are not empty promises. Revelation 1:1 declares that these things must shortly take place.

What sort of things must shortly take place? What role will Jesus play in these events? And how will they bring justice and relief to us?

2.1. World Empire of False religion

Let's begin by considering what will happen to the world empire of false religion. Please turn to Revelation chapter 18. Revelation
depicts false religion as an evil prostitute with the name Babylon the Great. For millennia, she has ridiculed, persecuted, and killed God's people. Shamelessly, she has exploited and deceived people with lies. Her influence is strong, but that's about to change.

As we begin reading at Revelation 18:1, note what will happen to Babylon the Great and why.

2.2. Rev 18:1-8

After this, I saw another angel descending from heaven with great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his glory. And he cried out with a strong voice, saying, "She has fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen, and she has become a dwelling place of demons, and a place where every unclean spirit and every unclean and hated bird lurks. For because of the whine of the passion of her sexual immorality, all the nations have fallen victim, and the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich owing to the power of her shameless luxury."

And I heard another voice out of heaven say, "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind." "Repay her in the way she treated others. Yes, pay her back double for the things she has done. In the cup she has mixed, mix a double portion for her. To the extent that she glorified herself and lived in shameless luxury, to that extent give her torment and mourning, for she keeps saying in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and I am not a widow, and I will never see mourning.'
That is why in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God who judged her is strong."

[End of Reading]

Babylon views herself as a powerful queen who will never be brought down. Why should she? After all, she has thrived for thousands of years, and yet a terrible destruction is coming, and it will envelop her suddenly as if in one day. What role does Jesus play in this event? Look again at verses 1 and 2. "Who announces the fall of Babylon, an angel whose glory lights up the whole earth? To whom has Jehovah given such glory? To our Lord Jesus." Since 1914, Jesus has been exercising authority over the earth as king and judge. How fitting that he announces the fall of Babylon the Great. But that judgment brings with it a warning. Get out of her! Never would we want to have any part of an organization that's doomed to destruction. Jehovah detests Babylon the Great, so must we.

And yet there are many who have profited from false religion. Rulers have looked to Babylon the Great to support their policies and their wars. Merchants have benefited financially. How do they react to Babylon's surprising and sudden destruction?

2.3. Rev 18:9-19

Let's see as we continue reading from Revelation 18 verse 9. "And the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality with her and lived with her in shameless luxury will weep and beat themselves in grief over her when they see the smoke from her burning. They will stand at a distance because of their fear of her
torment and say, 'Too bad! Too bad, you great city! Babylon, you strong city, because in one hour your judgment has arrived.'

Also, the merchants of the earth are weeping and mourning over her because there is no one to buy their full cargo anymore, a full cargo of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, and scarlet cloth, and everything made from scented wood, and every sort of object made from ivory, and from precious wood, copper, iron, and marble. Also, cinnamon, Indian spice, incense, perfumed oil, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, carriages, slaves, and human lives.

Yes, the fine fruit that you desired has left you, and all the delicacies and the splendid things have vanished from you, never to be found again. The merchants who sold these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of their fear of her torment, and will weep and mourn, saying, 'Too bad! Too bad, the great city! Clothed with fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and richly adorned with gold ornaments, precious stones, and pearls, because in one hour such great riches have been devastated.'

And every ship captain, and every seafaring person, and sailors, and all those who make a living by the sea, stood at a distance, and cried out as they looked at the smoke from her burning, and said, 'What city is like the great city?' They threw dust on their heads, and cried out, weeping and mourning, and said, 'Too bad! Too bad, the great city!' In which all those who had ships at sea became rich from her wealth, because in one hour she has been devastated."

[End of Reading]
Too bad! Too bad, they cry! But what about God's servants? They have a much different reaction.

2.4. Rev 18:20-19:3

Let's read on from verse 20 to see how God's servants both in heaven and on earth will react to Babylon's destruction. Notice too why false religion deserves such scathing judgment.

"Be glad over her, O heaven! Also you holy ones, and apostles, and prophets, because God has pronounced His judgment on her in your behalf." "And a strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying, 'Thus with a swift pitch will Babylon the great city be hurled down, and she will never be found again. And the sound of singers who accompany themselves on the harp, of musicians, of flutists, and of trumpeters will never be heard in you again. And no craftsman who practices any trade will ever be found in you again. And no sound of a millstone will ever be heard in you again. No light of a lamp will ever shine in you again. And no voice of a bridegroom and of a bride will ever be heard in you again. For your merchants were the top-ranking men of the earth, and by your spiritistic practices all the nations were misled.

Yes, in her was found the blood of prophets, and of holy ones, and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth."

After this, I heard what seemed to be a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven. They said, "Praise God! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because His judgments are true and righteous. For He has executed judgment on the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His slaves that is on her hands."
And right away, for the second time, they said, "Praise God! And the smoke from her goes on ascending forever and ever!"

[End of Reading]

Yes, "Praise Jah!" Why? False religious leaders were responsible for the death of the prophets and of Jesus Christ Himself. Later, the disciple Stephen asked the religious leaders, "Which one of the prophets did your forefathers not persecute?" Yes, they killed those who announced in advance the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. Instead of taking Stephen's rebuke to heart, they murdered him too that same day. In the centuries since Stephen's day, false religion has continued to mislead, to slaughter, and to corrupt the earth with her sexual immorality.

So once again we can ask, "Why praise Jah?" The heavenly chorus answers, "Because God's judgments are true and righteous!" Our just God, Jehovah, will make sure that false religion will never again defile this world and harm His loyal servants. The destruction of Babylon the Great marks the beginning of what Jesus called the Great Tribulation.

After false religion is gone, what comes next? The book of Ezekiel foretells that the nations will attack Jehovah's people, coming like a vast army and like clouds covering the land. But this is not the first time that the political system has acted against Jehovah and his people. Many nations have fiercely opposed true worship. They've banned our meetings and our preaching work, imprisoned men and women, old and young, for the so-called crime of owning a Bible or talking about their God. Some of our brothers and sisters have even been tortured for their faith. Of course, as long as Jehovah allows human governments to rule over us, we
respect them. And not all governments have actively opposed us. Still, human government itself is insulting to Jehovah.

Human rulers suggest that they could rule better than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ Jesus. How arrogant! No wonder then that once these political powers attack God's people, Jesus will take action.

2.5. Rev 19:11-21

In Revelation chapter 19, note the actions that Jesus takes against the Anglo-American world power, portrayed as a false prophet, and the entire political system described as the kings of the earth and the wild beast. We'll begin reading at Revelation chapter 19:11. "I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the one seated on it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness. His eyes are a fiery flame, and on his head are many diadems. He has a name written, that no one knows but he himself, and he is clothed with an outer garment, stained with blood, and he is called by the name, the Word of God.

Also, the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. And out of his mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which to strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his outer garment, yes, on his thigh, he has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come here! Be gathered together to the great evening meal of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of military
commanders, and the flesh of strong men, and the flesh of horses, and of those seated on them, and the flesh of all, of free men, as well as of slaves, and of small ones, and great."

And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gather together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army. And the wild beast was caught, and along with it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who worship its image.

While still alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulfur, but the rest were killed off with the long sword that proceeded out of the mouth of the one seated on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

[End of Reading]

Who else but Christ Jesus would lead the heavenly forces to the battle of Armageddon? False religion has already been destroyed. Now Jesus turns his attention to what remains of Satan's wicked world, its political and commercial systems. He dismantles, destroys, and brings to nothing all who oppose true worship on earth. But enemies of true worship still remain. Who are they? And what does Jesus do about them?

2.6. Rev 20:1-3

Follow along at Revelation 20, verses 1 through 3.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for one thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and
sealed it over him, so that he would not mislead the nations anymore until the one thousand years were ended.

After this, he must be released for a little while.

[End of Reading]

Who has the key of the abyss? Doubtless the same one who was prophesied to bruise Satan's head, Jesus Christ. It's Jesus who will remove all enemies of God, including the great enemy, Satan himself. Into the abyss he'll go. Jesus doesn't just put him there, he hurls him there. Good riddance.

After the dust of Armageddon settles, God's kingdom will act to restore the earth to the state Jehovah originally intended. Those who've been loyal to Jehovah will then witness astonishing things.

2.7. Rev 20:12-14

Let's consider one of them, beginning at Revelation 20:12. "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. The dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds. And death and the grave were hurled into the lake of fire." This means the second death, the lake of fire.

[End of Video]

According to verse 4, Jehovah, the supreme judge, has delegated authority to judge to Jesus Christ and his co-rulers. Whom will they be judging? Not merely the great crowd who have survived Armageddon, but billions of others who will be resurrected from the
dead. And at the end of the millennial reign, death itself will finally be gone. It's hurled into the lake of fire, as irretrievable as a piece of paper thrown into a raging furnace.

2.8. Rev 21:4

What will life be like under kingdom rule? How we love the promises at Revelation 21:4. "And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more. Neither will mourning, nor outcry, nor pain be any more." Just think of what this will mean. The deaf will hear and listen to the sounds of gentle rains, happy people, bird song, and beautiful music. The blind will see, examine starry skies, and behold rainbows. They will watch animals and children at play. Mankind will experience miraculous healing on a global scale. Those once disabled or elderly will hike through a forest, climb a mountain, or run on a sandy beach. Gone will be hunger, sickness, and injustice. There will be no wicked people. Everyone will live in perfect health, security, and happiness. And do so forever. Think deeply about these promises. Engage your senses.

2.9. Rev 22:1-17

Let's conclude by reading a passage from the final chapter of Revelation, chapter 22, which describes other blessings that will come from Earth's righteous rulers. "And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of its main street. On both sides of the river were trees of life, producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruit each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations. And there will no longer be any curse. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His
slaves will offer Him sacred service. And they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Also, night will be no more, and they have no need of lamplight or sunlight, for Jehovah God will shed light upon them, and they will rule as kings forever and ever.

He said to me, 'These words are faithful and true. Yes, Jehovah, the God who inspired the prophets, has sent His angel to show His slaves the things that must shortly take place. Look, I am coming quickly. Happy is anyone observing the words of the prophecy of this scroll.'"

[End of Reading]

Do you long to worship Jehovah in perfect health, under perfect rule, in a perfect world? Our King longs for that day too. The angel tells John that these things must shortly take place. And speaking in Jesus' name, the angel says, "I am coming quickly."

Today's world presents many problems, but Jesus will solve them all. He's announced that false religion will soon end. He'll defeat the rest of this system of things at the War of Armageddon. He'll abyss and eventually destroy that despicable serpent, Satan the Devil. And soon, He'll eliminate the last enemy, death. These things will happen. Should we ever have any doubts, remember the angel's words. "These words are faithful and true." What good news for all of us who support our King Christ Jesus.

Yes, we echo the Apostle John's words in verse 20. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

[End of Talk]
3. Song 126

How thrilling to contemplate what will soon take place. Let us now stand and sing song number 126, which expresses what we need to do as the end of this system approaches. The song is entitled, "Stay Awake, Stand Firm, and Grow Mighty." After the song, there will be a few announcements during which you may remain standing. Again, that's song number 126.
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1. Introduction

Thank you for your generous financial support of Kingdom Work. Your donations support theocratic construction projects, disaster relief, and conventions throughout the world. Those who wish to donate can use any of the contribution boxes. Those making a contribution by check should make the check payable to Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. If possible, however, please donate online at donate.jw.org. Please be seated.

2. What Did You Learn?

No doubt you have enjoyed our convention so far. What key lessons will you want to remember in the days ahead? Please give your attention to Brother Jeffrey Winder, a member of the Governing Body, as he presents the talk, "What Did You Learn?"

How quickly the convention has gone by. You may feel like you just arrived and now the convention is nearly over. What lessons will you take away?

Well, this convention was designed to deepen our understanding of the Gospel accounts, to strengthen our faith in the Good News, and to motivate us to share the Good News with others.

2.1. Understanding of the Gospel accounts

Let's begin by reviewing how the convention deepened our understanding of the Gospel accounts.

The symposium, Lessons from the Land of Jesus, explained the environment and customs that we saw depicted in Episode 1 of
The Good News According to Jesus. We examined how people lived, worked, and worshipped in Jesus' day.

Did you note this key lesson? When the Israelites faithfully followed Jehovah's direction, they benefited. The same is true of us. We are not under God's law to Israel, but the principles behind the law still guide Christians today.

We exert ourselves to share in true worship. Parents teach their children practical skills and teach them about Jehovah. And all of us make time for the more important things.

As you watched Episode 1 of The Good News According to Jesus, did you gain greater insight into the thoughts and feelings of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, and young Jesus?

Why did Jehovah use these ones as he did? They were humble. They loved Jehovah. And they had faith in Jehovah's word of promise.

Do you recall how we can imitate them? By accepting correction. By focusing on our blessings, not on our disappointments. By strengthening our friendship with Jehovah. By giving priority to our family's spiritual needs. By encouraging others despite having our own challenges. And by strengthening our conviction and taking a firm stand for what is right.

2.2. Strengthened our faith in the Good News

Next, let's consider how the convention strengthened our faith in the Good News. In the symposium, They Were Moved by Holy Spirit, we took a careful look at each of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We considered why we can trust these ancient writings. The writers either personally witnessed the events
they recorded, or they did careful research. Their accounts are historically accurate and in agreement with one another. Do you recall some of the evidence that the Gospel accounts have been reliably transmitted down to our day?

We can't help but be in awe of what Jehovah has accomplished. By using His Holy Spirit to guide the Gospel writers and by preserving their accounts, He has left us with a remarkably trustworthy and intimate portrayal of His Son. More than any other book in the world, these four, along with the rest of the Bible, convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

2.2.1. Six prophecies fulfilled

We also strengthened our faith by considering six prophecies whose fulfillment was shown in Episode 1 of The Good News According to Jesus. These prophecies clearly point to Jesus as the foretold Messiah. Their fulfillment could not have been coincidence. Rather, we saw how Jehovah maneuvered events so that the prophecies were fulfilled.

What does this mean for us? Not only can we be certain that Jesus is the Messiah, we can also have complete confidence that all remaining Messianic prophecies, including those about Jesus' thousand-year reign, will be completely fulfilled. How refreshing it was to see the events surrounding Jesus' birth portrayed accurately in The Good News According to Jesus.

The symposium Believe the Truth About Jesus affirmed that what we believe about Jesus' identity, His name, and His birth are scriptural facts, not man-made traditions. And these truths have the power to change lives.

I have become more positive, and my life is full of meaning.
I absolutely love teaching the Bible to people. As long as I have breath in me, I'm going to use it to share with others about Jehovah and the Messiah, Jesus.

I liked having a clear understanding of why God sent Jesus to the earth, what He was sent to do.

Our faith was further strengthened by seeing how The Good News is increasing and bearing fruit in all the world. Do you recall these examples?

Where would we be without the Good News? The Good News transforms lives. It gives us meaning, makes us better people. And even if it's difficult, if our health limits us, if persecutors try to stop us, if the changes our students need to make seem impossible, Jehovah will help us to never give up in sharing the Good News.

We also considered the power of the Good News to defeat bad news. That is, we saw how to use the things Jesus said and did to counteract harmful gossip, excessive guilt, negative news reports, and discouragement.

The wrong view some people had toward us changed, thanks to the power of the Good News and the peaceable attitude of our brothers and sisters.

He wants us to focus on the hope. The way she helped us that morning helped us focus completely on that hope.

2.3. Motivated us to share the Good News

Finally, let's review how the Convention motivated us to share the Good News with others. The symposium "Eager to Declare the Good News" showed that each Christian has a responsibility to preach. Doing so is a personal expression of our faith and a part of
our worship. Jehovah views our expressions of praise in the ministry as sacrifices offered to Him.

What will help us to be effective ministers? Being well prepared. Cultivating love for people and being ready to speak wherever we are. And being willing to expand our ministry in whatever way Jehovah directs.

If you are a young servant of Jehovah, we urge you to take to heart the encouragement in the talk "What Will You Do for the Sake of the Good News?" Don't let this world set your goals. And don't let yourself get sidetracked. Plan for a rich and satisfying life in the full-time ministry. Cultivate the skills needed to reach your goal. Like so many others, you'll find great joy and have no regrets.

As a result of a more intense relationship with Jehovah and a deeper love for people in the ministry, the ministry brings me more joy.

I stopped focusing on myself and started to think about others, paying attention to what they needed.

I feel like I'm spending every second of every day with Jehovah. And that alone is an enormous gift for me.

At the start of the convention, the Chairman's address reminded us to be grateful for the privilege of knowing and declaring the Good News. We are working along with the angels under the oversight of Jesus Christ. The everlasting Good News we declare is a message of hope that means life for those who respond favorably.

What will happen when the Good News has been preached to Jehovah's satisfaction? As today's convention theme reminds us, "And then the end will come." Brothers and sisters, may this
convention encourage you to make good use of the time remaining by zealously and boldly declaring the Good News.


(11:12) Why is the Good News of such great value? And how can we strengthen our faith in it? Well, Brother Kent Fisher, who is a Patterson Bethelite and a member of the U.S. branch committee, will now deliver the final talk of this convention. The theme of his talk is "Hold firmly to the Good News. Why and how."

3.1. Esperanza diamond

A few years ago, a young couple named Travis and Bobby were visiting friends in the state of Arkansas. Well, while they were there, they decided to take a day and visit the nearby Crater of Diamonds State Park, where you can actually dig for diamonds and keep what you find. It cost them $8 each to gain entrance. Well, after just a short time, Bobby noticed a small, oblong, clear stone. She thought it was probably a piece of quartz, but put it in her pocket anyway. Later that day, she took her findings to the park rangers for inspection, and they took that stone away. And after a long wait, the ranger returned and congratulated her on finding an 8.5-carat diamond.

Now, if that were not amazing enough, that diamond was later found to be almost flawless, and what became known as the Esperanza diamond was eventually valued at a million dollars. Now, can you imagine how it would feel to learn something that you thought was almost worthless was worth a million dollars, a
priceless treasure? Well, actually, I'd like to tell you that you do know what that feels like.

3.2. Ernest Lodi

But in order for you to understand what I'm talking about, I have to tell you about another treasure hunter. His name was Ernest Lodi. When Ernest was just a young boy, he lost his father tragically to cancer. Ernest was devastated, and he remembers praying, "God, I beg you to save my dad. I need him. Why didn't you answer my prayers?" For several years, Ernest would visit his father's grave every day and pray, "Please, God, I want to know where my dad is." Well, Ernest prayed that same prayer off and on for 17 years. And then a workmate told him that the answers to his questions were in the Bible and gave him two Bible study aids. Ernest said, "I devoured those books." He and his wife were soon studying the Bible twice a week. Ernest was thrilled to learn that those who have died are safe in their Creator's memory and will be back in the resurrection. Ernest had found a priceless treasure.

How did he or how does he feel now? Here's his own words. "I prayed for 17 years to find answers to my questions. Another 39 years have passed. I am still praying. Only now I can say, 'Thank you, my dear Heavenly Father, for answering the prayers of my childhood.'"

So there's two treasure hunters who each found a valuable gem. Which of these was of greater value, the million-dollar diamond or the good news from the Bible? Well, of interest, the name given that diamond, Esperanza, is a Spanish word meaning "hope."

Did the funds from the sale of that diamond give hope to the finder? Maybe. Maybe not. But there's no question what the good
news did for Ernest. He found immediate comfort, a real hope for an eternal future when he will experience the joy of being reunited with his dear Father.

3.3. Good News like finding a treasure

Now let me ask you this. When you first heard the good news, was it like finding a treasure? You know, a literal precious gem, which this replica is not, has many facets. It's also true of the good news.

So when you first learned the good news, which of the facets touched your heart? Was it when you learned that God has a name or that that name has meaning? Was it His purpose for the earth or the condition of the dead or the resurrection hope?

You know, maybe when you first heard the good news, you didn't realize it was a treasure. Your parents were in the truth. You took the truth for granted. It was just what you did. In a sense, you put it in your pocket for a while. But then something happened. Maybe you faced a crisis in life and prayed to Jehovah for help. And amazingly, Jehovah answered you.

Or perhaps you saw the impact on someone else when they learned the truth. But at some point, you took that good news out and you started looking at all those facets. And you said, I have found a priceless treasure.

3.4. Does the Good News mean as much today?

Now, here's an important question for each of us to ask ourselves. Does the good news mean as much to me today as when I first realized it had value? Or are there times where I take this priceless treasure a bit for granted? Well, we all need the
admonition in our theme scripture for this talk, 1 Corinthians 15:1,2. And we invite you to turn there and keep your Bibles open to this chapter. 1 Corinthians 15:1,2. “Now I remind you brothers, of the good news that I declare to you which you also accepted and for which you have taken your stand. Through it you are also being saved if you hold firmly to the good news I declared to you, unless you became believers for nothing.”

So the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians, and he's urging us, hold firmly to the good news. Now, I think you'll agree this convention has renewed our appreciation for the good news. We've looked at it from a lot of different angles. We've seen many facets of it. But this concluding talk of our convention is going to help us see how we can keep holding firmly to it.

Now, fair warning, this is not just the final talk of this convention. This is the longest talk of the convention. Do you find that it's easy for you to lose focus when we have a longer talk? I know I do. My attention span is not what it used to be.

3.5. Sections of the Talk

Perhaps it will help us if we remember that this talk is in five sections. We have an introductory section, which by the way, we've just finished. Later at the end, as you would expect, we will have a concluding section.

But in between, we have three important questions to answer, and two of those are right in our theme. Why and how?

3.6. Q1of3: What is the good news?

So why is it so important that we hold firmly to the good news? And how can we strengthen the hold that we have on it? But you
know, first we need to answer a very basic question. What is the good news that we need to hold firmly to? So put simply, this talk has a what, why, and how sections. Let's get started. Let's begin with the what section.

What good news was Paul referring to? Now, you would think that our whole program and earlier talks have clearly answered that question, and there's truth on that. But we do want to look and make sure that we know what the Apostle Paul was specifically referring to when he said, "hold firmly to the good news." So just as with any verse in the Bible, we want to understand, we look for clues.

Let's start right in the verse right away. Did you notice Paul said, "I want to remind you, brothers, of the good news that I declared to you." So Paul's talking about when they first learned the truth. The Apostle Paul stayed in Corinth for at least 18 months during his second missionary tour. That's when he lived with Aquila and Priscilla and made tents. Acts 18 tells us that he gave talks and he personally witnessed to people.

For what reason? "To prove that Jesus is the Christ." That was part of the good news. And now in his letter to the Corinthians, what do we find? Well, if we went back to chapter 9, Paul uses the phrase, "the good news about the Christ." So it wasn't just that Jesus was the Messiah. It was good news about who the Messiah was, the things he taught, the example he set, his role in God's purpose, and the need for faith on our part in order to gain salvation.

3.6.1. Jesus resurrection is the foundation

But you know there was one event in Christ's life that the Apostle Paul put special emphasis on. And if you're still in 1 Corinthians 15,
just go down to verse 14 for a moment. Here's what Paul wrote, "But if Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and your faith is also in vain." Why focus on Jesus' resurrection? Because the resurrection of Christ Jesus is like a foundation for the good news that everything else is built on. The ransom, the kingdom, the new world, our personal hope for the future, these are all built on the assumption that Jesus was raised from the dead.

And we're going to get into that a little bit deeper later in our talk. But after we've considered these clues in the history of the Corinth Congregation, the context of chapter 15, when Paul urged the Corinthians and when he urges us to hold firmly to the good news, what did he mean? He means to cherish the good news about Jesus, his teachings, his role in God's purpose, and to cherish it just as much as when we learned the truth.

Yes, like the gem it is, we need to regularly hold the good news up and admire its many facets and features and build strong faith in everything that Jesus said and did.

3.7. *Q2of3: Why hold firmly to the good news*

And that brings us to the next section of our talk, the "why" section. Now that we've confirmed what the good news Paul was referring to, why should we hold firmly to it? We're talking about our motivation, and maybe it would help us to start with a multiple choice question. Now, I'm not going to make you write down any answers. You don't have to raise your hand. But please pay close attention to these options and think deeply about your own motivation.
3.7.1. What is my primary motivation?

Here's the question. What is my primary motivation to hold firmly to the good news? Is it fear? I need to hold on to the good news or my parents will freak out, or God will destroy me at Armageddon.

Or maybe our motivation is self-interest. I need to hold firmly to the good news because I want to live on that mansion on the hill forever in the paradise.

Or is our motivation love? I need to hold firmly to the good news because I need to show Jehovah, Christ Jesus, and my neighbor how much I love them.

Or, number four, is it all of the above?

Do you have the answer clearly in your mind? Well, in reality, all of the above motivations do have some impact on us. As children, we have a respectful fear of our parents. We have a fear of Jehovah as our judge. We want to live forever. And yet, if we were to ask every parent who's here today, they would tell us that there is a limit to the effectiveness of fear as a motivator. Or rewarding good conduct also has its limits. If you really want motivation in your children that will endure even when you're not there to watch them, they need to be motivated based on love.

3.7.2. Love is the best motivator

So what's the point of this? The point is that we should be holding firmly to the good news because of love. In what areas? Well, let's consider four ways, briefly, that love motivates us to hold firmly to the good news.
3.7.2.1. Way 1of4: Love Jehovah

Number one, and most important, we hold firmly to the good news because we love Jehovah God. Turn with me in the Bible to 1 Timothy 1:11. There it uses this phrase, 1 Timothy 1:11, "According to the glorious good news of the happy God with which I was entrusted." So Jehovah is the source of the glorious good news. Now think for a moment what that means. Jehovah not only created us, but he refused to abandon us when Adam and Eve sinned. Instead, what did he do? He implemented a carefully constructed plan to rescue each one of us. That plan included the ransom, the kingdom, the anointed, the resurrection.

Well, how does that motivate us? 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he, Jehovah, first loved us." Yes, we hold on to the good news to glorify and honor Jehovah, our God whom we love so much, who first loved us.

3.7.2.2. Way 2of4: Love Jesus Christ

Let's look at another area where love motivates us. We hold firmly to the good news because we love Christ Jesus. Turn with me, please, to Luke 4:43. Let's read these interesting words. Luke 4:43 says this, "But he," Jesus, "said to them, 'I must also declare the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities. For this I was sent.'"

So now usually when we talk about why we love Christ Jesus is for what reason. We think immediately of his role in providing the ransom, and that's true. And yet, would any of us have ever heard of the ransom if Jesus did not arrange for the good news to be preached? No, we would not.
How did Jesus accomplish this? Well, he started by what the verse says, his own example. He spent his whole life, his ministry of three and a half years, preaching the good news. And he did more than that. He brought others along with him and he taught them to preach.

What did they do after Jesus was gone? They taught still others, and they taught others right down to the day when someone literally or figuratively knocked on your door and brought you the good news.

We love Jesus for making sure that we got the chance to hear the good news. And we show that love by doing our share now, by keeping the work going, by declaring the good news. We make sharing our faith a priority in life, and we try to also bring others along and train them as well.

3.7.2.3. Way 3of4: Love of Neighbor

A third way, we hold firmly to the good news because we love our neighbor. How important is that to love our neighbor? You know, my neighbors aren't that lovable. That may be what we're thinking. You don't know my relatives. You don't know the people in my neighborhood.

Well, Matthew 22:39, Jesus listed it right after love of God. And he said those two commandments, love of God and neighbor, really summed up all of Jehovah's laws. Very, very important. Because love of neighbor moves us to avoid selfishly hoarding the good news that's brought so much meaning to our own lives. You know, so far in our discussion, we've been comparing the good news to a literal treasure. But here's a beautiful difference.
If you had a literal treasure, let's say you had that Esperanza diamond, you sold it for a million dollars and you said, I'd like to share my treasure with my family. So you start handing out money. What happens? I now have less treasure. My share has been diminished. But that's not true with the good news. When we share it, when we see it change lives, when we see right-hearted ones on the road to life, the good news, it's even more valuable. It's sparkling even more brightly than it was before. You know, in our busy lives, it's easy to not notice or to forget how much our neighbors need the truth. And that's an area that perhaps we can imitate Christ more closely. And we'll talk about that in a little more detail later in our talk.

3.7.2.4. Way 4of4: We love life

But there's one more way we want to talk about how love motivates us. We hold firmly to the good news because we love life. Turn with me to Psalm 34. And notice a very interesting question that the psalmist David wrote. Psalm 34:12. Let's see what he posed. See how you would answer this question. He wrote, "Who among you takes pleasure in life and would love to see many good days?" And we say, "I would." If I put that up for a vote, I think all of us would say, "Yes, I want to enjoy good life or good health and enjoy many good days." So how has the good news helped us to do that? Well, when we learned the good news and began to live in harmony with it, we found something else, a sense of purpose in life that we didn't have before. And as a result of that, we may not have an easy life in this old world. We still have the same aches and pains and illnesses and problems that other people have.

But one thing is sure, we have a far better life than we would have if we did not have the good news and a relationship with Jehovah. And even better than that, we have the prospect of
gaining the real life, the eternity of good days full of joy and peace. How thankful we are for the good news.

3.7.3. Review

So why? Why do we hold firmly to the good news? It's because of love. We love Jehovah who didn't give up on us, who's the source of the good news. We love Christ Jesus who gave his life as a ransom but also made sure we heard about it. We love our neighbors who need the truth so much. And we love life itself and want to enjoy the real life, perfect eternal life in the new world.

Now brothers and sisters, wouldn't you agree that those are excellent reasons to hold firmly to the good news?

3.8. Q3of3: How to hold firmly to the good news

And that brings us to the how section of our talk. Specifically, we know the good news is a treasure. And love moves us to hold on to it. But how do we strengthen that hold? What could we do that would allow us to hold the truth, the good news even more firmly? Well, that's a very important question because as we've enjoyed the convention, likely all of us have seen some areas where our grip isn't quite as tight as we thought it was. We saw some room for improvement, didn't we? What can we do? Well, earlier we were reminded that the good news centers directly on Christ Jesus. So it makes sense to strengthen our hold on the good news would mean get to know Jesus better, build more faith in Him, imitate Him more closely. So let's talk about some practical ways that maybe we can do that.

3.8.1. Cultivate the mind of Christ - 1 Cor 2:16

First scripture we want to look at is in 1 Corinthians 2:16. Would you turn with me there, please? 1 Corinthians 2:16, there it says,
"However, the spiritual man examines all things, but he himself is not examined by any man. For who has come to know the mind of Jehovah so that he may instruct him? But we do have the mind of Christ." The mind of Christ, we need to more fully cultivate the mind of the Christ.

Now what does that refer to? Well, obviously, His way of thinking, His pattern of thinking. And as we learn more and more about Jesus' appealing personality, we're then moved to imitate Him, to adopt His way of thinking. How can we do that? How can we learn more about Jesus? Well, an excellent place to start is in the Gospel accounts. To learn more about what Jesus said and did and taught while He was on the earth.

And as we do that, we should have two goals. First of all, we want to make sure we understand what we're reading. And we want to really bring it to life like it's real. And then we want to stop after we're done and think about, "How can I better imitate Christ? How can I better have His mind?"

Let's try that with the Bible account. The Bible account is Mark 6:30-34. Now as we turn there together, let's talk a little bit about the context. Context is very important to give us understanding of what happens. Now, how do we know the context? Well, I could look at a couple of verses before the account and a couple of verses after. That can be a good start, but you know the Gospels are a little tricky that way. Because it's not always written in chronological order. And some Gospel writers included certain events and others left them out. So we have to do a little treasure hunting. We have to go to our study notes in the Bible and to the articles it refers to.
And a real treasure hunter's guide when it comes to Jesus is the book, "Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Because it takes all those four Gospel accounts, puts them together in one chronological narrative. What a valuable tool. So if we did that research on March 6, what would we find out? The time is about Passover of 32 CE, just before then. The Apostles and Jesus have been preaching in Galilee. They're tired out, but they're excited about how Jehovah has blessed them.

Matthew's account reveals something else very helpful. Jesus has just heard about John the Baptizer's death. A friend and distant relative. It's a busy, tiring, emotional time for Jesus. Okay, that's the context.

Let's read. Mark 6, starting in verse 30. "The Apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all the things they had done and talked. And he said to them, ‘Come ye yourselves privately into an isolated place, and rest up a little’. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure time even to eat a meal. So they set off in the boat for an isolated place to be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many got to know it. From all the cities they ran together on foot and got there ahead of them.

Well, on getting out, he, Jesus, saw a large crowd. And he was moved with pity for them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he started to teach them many things." It was quite a situation Jesus faced. Here he is tired out physically and emotionally. And as the boat approaches the shore, he sees a crowd of perhaps 15,000 people. Almost ten times the attendance we have today. Now, can you picture Jesus saying, "Boys, turn the boat around. There's only so much one man can do. We're going to have to help this crowd another day." No, that's not the Jesus we know. He didn't let it be all about him and his needs or about the
Apostles' needs. Instead, he looked at the crowd. Not to number them. He looked at individuals. And of course, with Jehovah's help, he could see their individual hearts. He knew what their needs were. And what did that cause on his part? Pity. He felt sorry for them. He wanted to help them. Now, you can imagine Jesus at that moment saying a silent prayer to Jehovah and saying, "Jehovah, give me the strength to help these folks." And then he did.

By comparing the accounts, we see he healed the sick. He taught them many things, filled their spiritual needs. He even miraculously provided them a beautiful meal. Do you think if you were there that day that you would have ever forgotten what happened? Or the love that Christ had for you? Absolutely not.

Now, after we read an account like that, what can we ask ourselves? We can say, that's quite an example. Do I really look at people I meet to try to discern who they are? Now, I can't do it miraculously like Jesus did, but do I look beyond the rough exterior and discern their needs? Or do I have enough compassion to bump myself out of my comfort zone and try to help others? When we put ourselves in the account and we reflect on Jesus' example, we're moved to imitate him, to have his view of people, to have his mind. And we'll do all we can to share the good news with others as well. We'll think more like Jesus. We'll deepen our appreciation for the good news. And we will hold on to it like we have never held on before.

3.8.2. Strengthen our faith in the resurrection of Jesus - Cor 15:17-19

Now, here's a second way we can hold firmly to the good news or hold more firmly. And that's to strengthen our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remember, we talked a little bit about...
that before. Let's go back to that subject. Why is strong faith in
Jesus' resurrection so important? Well, turn with me back to our
main scriptural chapter, 1 Corinthians 15:17-19. There it says,
"Further, if Christ has not been raised up, your faith is useless. You
remain in your sins. Then also those who've fallen asleep in death
and union with Christ have perished. If in this life only we have
hoped in Christ, we are to be pitied more than anyone." Now, think
about that for a moment. If we're not convinced that Jesus was
resurrected, why would we believe in the ransom? Doesn't make
sense. Why would we think we have a chance to live forever? If
Jesus wasn't resurrected, what about our loved ones who've died?
What chance do they have? Paul didn't overstate it here. If Jesus
was not resurrected, our faith would be useless. So why are we so
sure that he was? Well, look back at verses 4 to 8. We won't read
these, but what does Paul do here?

Paul goes through the evidence. After Jesus was raised up, he
appeared to many people. He appeared to Peter. He appeared to
the apostles. He appeared to his brother James. One time he
appeared to over 500 people at one time. And then after his
resurrection to heaven, he appeared miraculously to Saul of Tarsus
the Pharisee, who became the beloved apostle Paul. Now, can you
imagine trying to sit down with the beloved apostle Paul and tell him, "You
know, Paul, you didn't really see Jesus. You were tricked. It was
your imagination." And he would say, "Oh, no. I know what I saw.
All of those witnesses knew Jesus was resurrected. And their
testimony helped many in their day to build faith."

A study project on all of these examples can do the exact same
thing for us. Now, once we're convinced Jesus was resurrected,
that's foundation. What gets built on that? My goodness, many,
many good things. If Jesus was resurrected and went to heaven, it means now he's in heaven as the king of God's kingdom.

It means he's already cleansed the heavens. Revelation tells us that. He's thrown Satan out. Soon, he's going to act as we just saw or heard in our sound drama to cleanse the earth and destroy the wicked and preserve the great crowd. And that means it's not a fantasy for us to picture ourselves being in the New World. It's a sure certainty. Now, for a moment, do that. Imagine. Picture yourself in the New World. You are a billion years old, and you're just getting started, and you wake up in the morning, and you realize, "I don't have one ache or pain or blemish on my body." Can you even picture that? I can't. But it sounds good.

Have you pictured the throwing reunions you're going to have with those who are resurrected? Who are you looking forward to seeing in the resurrection the most? What's your first words to them? Have you imagined your first embrace? Or, what Bible character do you look forward to meeting? Now, there's a lot not said in the Bible records, so what questions do you have that you'd like to get an answer to? Thoughts like this are not unrealistic daydreams. On the contrary, they are realistic previews of a future that's guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And when we do that, it's like holding up that treasure of the Good News and watching it sparkle, seeing all its facets of blessings in the light of our faith and our imagination.

Well, this convention has introduced us to a very powerful tool that's going to help us to strengthen our faith in Jesus and imitate him more fully. At this convention, we had the privilege, the very first ones, to view episode one of The Good News According to Jesus. Weren't we thrilled to see the start of this series? [applause]
And we can be sure the next 17 episodes are not going downhill from there.

You know, virtually every word in this series is in the Bible, and we've read it hundreds of times, but did you notice, did you pick up nuances that you've missed before in the Bible record as you heard people speak from their heart these words? Absolutely amazing. It touched us in new ways that the Bible record had not before.

So as we watch each episode, let's take it beyond entertainment, as we heard this morning. Let's learn about the mind of the Christ and do our best to adopt his way of thinking and imitate his actions. For example, we're told that episode 18, episode 18, portrays Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. So no doubt seeing that portrait is going to deepen our conviction that Jesus was resurrected.

Now, as I was preparing this talk, I thought, and you may be thinking now, you know, it's really teasing us to talk about episode 18 when we just saw episode 1, and there's truth in that. We're going to have to be patient. Though I will say, if you're feeling a little impatient, you can read ahead the book that the series is based on. That is allowed.

3.9. Preview of Episode 2 & 3

But to whet our appetite, would you like to see a preview of the next two episodes?

The one standing among you, whom you do not know, the one coming behind me. The lace of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. We have found the Messiah.
For God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed, but have everlasting life.

Rabbi.

This is my son.

[End of Preview]

Well, as you saw pictured there, we're pleased to announce episodes 2 and 3 will be presented at our conventions next year.

3.10. Announcements

Now, here's two additional announcements about this series. First of all, you'll be happy to know that two parts of episode 1 that we saw are now available for download on JW Library app and JW.org. And in addition, the Good News According to Jesus series is being released in 1080p high definition, along with other video resolutions. So if you have a really big TV, it's going to look nice. You're going to enjoy that.

Here's another announcement. We're delighted to inform you of another electronic release, The Good News According to Jesus Video Reference Guide. Now, this publication is going to enable us to access video clips from the Good News According to Jesus directly from the study Bible outline pane at JW Library.

Now, how exactly will that work? I will let someone who understands it better than me explain in the following brief video.

3.10.1. How to use: Video Reference Guide

The Good News According to Jesus series is now available in JW Library. See the Gospels come alive by viewing video clips as you study the Bible. Want to learn how? In the Library tab, go to Contents
Convention Releases and select Day 3. There you'll find a new publication, The Good News According to Jesus Video Reference Guide. Download this publication to see a scene by scene breakdown of each episode and references to the verses on which each scene is based. Once you've downloaded The Good News Video Reference Guide, you can access video clips directly from your Bible in JW Library. Tap on a verse. Then tap on the gem icon to see the study content for the verse, including clips from The Good News series as they become available. If supported on your device, use the Picture in Picture feature to view the Bible and video at the same time. Bring your Bible reading to life with these new features.

[End of Video]

How exciting that is. Now, you may be so excited you're thinking, "I have to tell somebody about this." If that's the case, if you just absolutely have to tell someone, please talk to Jehovah about it. You know, our brothers, as they attend their conventions, they need to be surprised and amazed and appreciative, just like we are today. So please allow them to learn as they attend their conventions. And that brings us to the end of the "How" section of our talk.

3.10.2. Review

How can we strengthen our hold on the Good News? We work hard to get the mind of the Christ. We strengthen our faith in the resurrection of Jesus. And finally, we use each episode of The Good News According to Jesus as it comes out to further strengthen our hold on the Good News.
3.11. Concluding Section

(52:30) And that brings us to the concluding section of our talk. Now, on this program, we have heard from many faithful brothers, young and old. We even included one brother who has been dedicated to Jehovah for 85 years and is now 100 years of age. I'm telling on him. Now, do we appreciate the effort of all the brothers who are used by Jehovah to teach us, as well as those who work behind the scenes to make it possible?

Jehovah is very good to us, indeed. Well, I know we all leave determined to keep holding firmly to the Good News. How long have you been doing that already in your life? You know, yesterday we had seven new brothers and sisters who were baptized. So they've now been holding firmly to the Good News for a full 24 hours. Aren't we proud of them for reaching this milestone in their lives?

Now, what about you? You've been serving for more than a day, for many days, maybe many months, many years, many decades. We commend you for your record of faithfulness to Jehovah, and we know Jehovah appreciates it even more than we do. And yet, no matter how long we've been holding firmly to the Good News, none of us can afford to relax our hold on it.

We are in the last of the last days of this system of things, and each passing day brings us closer to Armageddon. Armageddon, we saw that in our sound drama. Very dramatic words in Revelation. Sobering. Even a little frightening. But brothers, let's remember this. Armageddon is Good News. Because it's going to mean the salvation of the human family, including each of us. And more importantly, it's going to bring about the sanctification of
Jehovah God's name. There is no more worthy goal than that. It will be a day that we will never forget.

3.11.1. Be steadfast and immovable - 1 Cor 15:58

Now, with that in mind, let's consider the last scripture of this talk, 1 Corinthians 15:58. Now, the last verse in that chapter. Verse 58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord." Well, brothers, here we see two reminders and a beautiful assurance.

First of all, be steadfast and immovable. The Corinthians had already taken their stand for the Good News. Paul was saying, "Don't take it for granted. Hold firmly to it. Be steadfast. Don't let anyone take the truth away from you." And that's good advice for us because Satan is going to keep trying to tempt us, to scare us, to trick us into letting go of the Good News we love. We must not let anything cause us to loosen our grip on the life-saving truth that we love. We must be steadfast and immovable.

A second reminder, Paul said, "Have plenty to do in the work of the Lord." Well, there certainly is plenty to do. You know, it involves the preaching work, all forms of the ministry. It includes the work that supports the preaching work that many of you are involved in. There is no better way to use our lives than to be completely absorbed in the work of the Lord. And when we do that, we are truly fellow workers with the Sovereign Lord Jehovah and the Lord Jesus Christ. What an amazing privilege that is.

And then that beautiful assurance, your labor, your labor is not in vain. As we each do our best in Jehovah's service, we're
accomplishing some very good things. We're helping right-hearted individuals to learn the truth.

Now, we may not think we're that effective in the ministry, but you know something that we're all doing? Planting seeds. Planting seeds. We're giving a little informal witness here. We're living the truth. We're writing letters. We're knocking on doors. We're standing at carts. How many of those seeds are growing now? We don't know. How many will grow in the future? We don't know. But Jehovah knows. He's using those seeds we planted to draw right-hearted ones to the truth. What a privilege.

We're also helping ourselves and our family. Being busy in the ministry keeps our hope for the future bright. Giving the good news away, that treasure, never diminishes our share. Only makes it better than ever. The busier we are, the more protected we are from activities that don't build us up and might actually loosen our grip on the good news. And most importantly, being busy in the ministry brings honor to Jehovah God and furnishes him another reply to Satan the devil. Our labor in Jehovah's service is never in vain.

3.12. Original Song

And now, brothers, let's enjoy the final video of this convention. It focuses on the great privilege we have of preaching the good news and features the original song that we've all been practicing and that we're going to be singing together at the end of this program. Please enjoy.

Glory in the heights above, good news for all men
When God's Son arrived in Bethlehem
His hope for those who mourn,
a Savior has been born
Good news, this good news, joy for all mankind
Praise Jehovah for his light
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might
Good news, Christ is born, the way, the truth, the life
He will reign for righteousness, peace he will provide
Jesus is the way to endless life
Truth he will defend, his kingdom will not end
Good news, this good news, joy for all mankind Praise Jehovah for his light
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might
Good news, Christ is born, the way, the truth, the life
Good news, this good news, joy for all mankind
Praise Jehovah for his light
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might
Good news, Christ is born, the way, the truth, the life
[End of Video]
Yes, the good news that we have been given is a priceless treasure. So brothers, let us now leave this convention more determined than ever to declare the good news and keep holding firmly to it.
[End of Talk]
Thank you, Brother Fisher. Your talk and this entire convention has built our gratitude for the good news. The attendance for this
final session of our declare the good news convention was 1506. Let us conclude this convention by expressing our desire to share the good news at every opportunity.

4. Good News

Please stand as we sing together the original song entitled "Good News," which we heard sung in the last video of the concluding talk. After the song, Brother Fisher will conclude with prayer.

Now we invite all to stand and sing out aloud with the Watchtower Chorus "Good News."

Glory in the heights above, good news for all men
When God's Son arrived in Bethlehem
Hope for those who mourn, a Savior has been born
Good news, this good news, joy for all mankind
Praise Jah for his light!
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might.
Good news, Christ is born
The way, the truth, the life
He will reign for righteousness. Peace He will provide
Jesus is the way to endless life
Truth He will defend, His kingdom will not end Good news, this good news, joy for all mankind
Praise Jah for his light!
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might
Good news, Christ is born
The way, the truth, the life
Good news, this good news. Joy for all mankind
Praise Jah for his light!
Good news, this good news, preach with all your might
Good news, Christ is born
The way, the truth, the life