



COVER SUBJECT

IS THE BIBLE RELEVANT TODAY?

‘For the first time in my life, I found happiness.’

HILTON loved boxing. At the age of seven, he was getting into fights—both in and out of the ring! When in high school, he would roam about with friends, looking for someone to beat up. “I stole, gambled, watched pornography, harassed women, and swore at my parents,” he says. “My behavior was such that my parents considered me beyond reform. After I finished high school, I left home.”

When Hilton returned 12 years later, his parents could hardly believe this was their son! He was calm, controlled, and respectful. What led to this astonishing transformation? While he was away, he began to reflect seriously on where his life was headed. He also examined the Bible to see if it could help him change his ways. “I applied what I read in the Bible,” said Hilton, “which meant getting rid of my old personality and obeying the command at Ephesians 6:2, 3 to honor my parents. For the first time in my life, I found genuine happiness, and I brought joy to my father and mother, not more heartache!”

Hilton’s story underscores both the relevance and the transforming power of Bible values. (**Hebrews 4:12**) Let us consider some of those values—namely, honesty, self-control, fidelity, and love—and how they can greatly enrich lives.

AN OUTDATED BOOK?

Some say that the Bible is out-of-date, like a manual for an obsolete computer. But that comparison is both superficial and deceptive. Computers change and thus manuals become outdated. Basic human nature does not change. For example, people today respond to love and hate, fidelity and infidelity, kindness and cruelty in much the same way as our ancestors did. So when it comes to fundamentals, “there is nothing new under the sun.”—Ecclesiastes 1:9.



HONESTY

BIBLE PRINCIPLE: “Who may be a guest in [God’s] tent? . . . The one who is walking faultlessly, practicing what is right and *speaking the truth in his heart.*”—Psalm 15:1, 2.

THE BENEFITS: Most people value honesty and integrity. But what if an opportunity arises for a person to profit from dishonesty—and get away with it? Now the spotlight is on the heart, the inner person.

Raquel, whose work involved purchasing supplies, said: “Certain sales agents offered me kickbacks. They promised that if I bought from them, they would pass

some of the ‘discount’ on to me instead of to my company. But I recalled the Bible’s counsel on honesty and said no. My boss heard about this, and her confidence in me grew.”

Had Raquel been seduced by the offer, she might have profited financially in the short term. But what if her employer found out? Would Raquel have kept her job? And what about her future job prospects? More important to Raquel were her conscience and self-respect. “A good name is to be chosen rather than great wealth; to be respected is better than silver and gold,” says Proverbs 22:1.

Jessie too was honest and reliable, thus earning a good name with his employer. The benefits? Not only was he given a managerial position but he was also entrusted with more flexibility in his work schedule. As a result, he was able to spend more time with his wife and children and in spiritual activities.

When looking for prospective employees, some employers have gone to groups that are known for their honesty. For example, a company manager in the Philippines wrote to the local office of Jehovah’s Witnesses inviting Witnesses to apply for work. They are “hardworking, honest, and dedicated,” he said. The credit for this, however, goes to Jehovah God, who teaches us to “hate what is bad” and to “love what is good.”—Amos 5:15.

Jessie made a good name for himself as an honest employee



“I feel as though I have been
raised from the dead!”

SELF-CONTROL

BIBLE PRINCIPLE: “A stupid person gives vent to all his feelings, but the wise one *calmly keeps them in check.*”—Proverbs 29:11.

THE BENEFITS: If you were to list all the benefits of self-control, you would need reams of paper! At the very least, this quality protects our physical health. “A calm heart gives life [or, “health,” footnote] to the body,” the Bible says. It also states that “a joyful heart is good medicine.” (Proverbs 14:30; 17:22) Conversely, studies show that people who are prone to anger and hostility increase their risk of ill health, especially cardiovascular

disease. Of course, the benefits of self-control go far beyond physical health.

Cassius, now in his 30’s, recalls: “I was quarrelsome and hot-tempered, and I often picked fights. I had very little self-respect. But all that changed when I began to apply Bible principles. I learned to control my temper and to cultivate humility and a forgiving spirit. Otherwise, I might have ended up in prison. Indeed, I feel as though I have been raised from the dead!”

Cassius learned to control his
temper and be forgiving



FIDELITY

BIBLE PRINCIPLE: “Let marriage be *honorable* among all, and let the marriage bed be *without defilement*.”—Hebrews 13:4.

THE BENEFITS: Some people consider those words antiquated. But they are wrong—dead wrong! Unfaithfulness hurts as deeply today as it did when the Bible was penned.—Proverbs 6:34, 35.

Jessie, who is both a husband and a father, wrote: “Marital faithfulness has contributed greatly to my strong relationship with my wife and to our happiness. Indeed, trust is very important in a marriage. Infidelity destroys that trust”—not to mention the further effects it has on children!

Ligaya* put her marriage in jeopardy. “I began to associate with bad people,” she says. “This led to my taking part in wild nightlife and to cheating on my husband.”

* Some names have been changed.

Did this way of life make her happy? She and her husband constantly argued, and she was miserable. She adds: “When I reflected on the embarrassing mess I had got myself into, I realized just how right my parents were when they used to say, ‘Bad associations corrupt good morals.’” —1 Corinthians 15:33, footnote.

Ligaya continues: “Before things got worse, I decided to stop my bad ways and study the Bible—this time applying its teachings.” The results? She saved her marriage, and her husband began to treat her more kindly and respectfully. “The Bible changed my life,” she says, “and I have no regrets about leaving my old ways and so-called friends.”

THE BIBLE IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF MY LIFE

Linh lives in Southeast Asia. She told *Awake!* how the Bible helped her to improve the quality of her life.

Were you satisfied with your life?

On the contrary! I had many problems. I was unable to budget money, I did not know how to find good friends, and I could not help my parents with their problems.

Then your life took a turn for the better. Tell us how.

Some young women who were Jehovah’s Witnesses began teaching me the Bible. When I had problems, I sought their guidance. Even though they were

What is your religious background?

I come from a Buddhist family that follows tradition. I knew nothing of the true God.

LOVE

BIBLE PRINCIPLE: “Clothe yourselves with love, for it is a *perfect bond of union*.”
—Colossians 3:14.

THE BENEFITS: The love predominantly mentioned in the Bible is not the romantic or sexual kind. Rather, it is a principled love characterized by such qualities as compassion, forgiveness, humility, loyalty, kindness, mildness, and patience. (Micah 6:8; Colossians 3:12, 13) Unlike romantic infatuation, which usually fades with time, love can keep growing indefinitely.

Brenda, who has been married for nearly 30 years, says: “The love newlyweds have for each other is nothing compared with the love you have as a marriage grows through time.”

Sam, a husband for over 12 years, observed: “My wife and I have always been delighted—even surprised—at how effective Bible counsel is, and how simple! You apply it, and things go smoothly.

However, as much as I want to say that I always apply it, on occasion I haven’t, such as when I was feeling overly sensitive, a bit selfish, or tired. At those times, I ask Jehovah to help me dispel any negative feelings. Then I give my wife a hug, and before long, it’s like nothing unpleasant happened!”

Jesus Christ said that “wisdom is vindicated by its results.” (Matthew 11:19, footnotes) In the light of that truth, the Bible has all the hallmarks of genuine wisdom. Its teachings and values work. They are timeless. They transcend culture and nationality. And they reflect such deep insight into human nature that they point to a higher Source—our Creator, Jehovah God. The proof, of course, is in the application. Hence, the Bible invites us to “taste and see that Jehovah is good.” (Psalm 34:8) Will you accept that invitation? ■

younger than I was, they gave me excellent advice—but not based on their own views. They showed me what the Bible says. Now that I have experienced the benefits of applying Bible teachings, I am fully convinced that this book is from God and that it can help anyone who strives to live by it. Secular education—although having its place—cannot do that.

Can you enlarge on that?

My parents have a college education and a high station in

society. Yet, they have not found answers to their problems. In fact, they are divorced and unhappy. When I went to college, I was told that there are times when society can be improved only by violence. The Bible, however, tells us that no human efforts can have lasting success, for God gave us neither the ability to govern ourselves nor the authority to do so. That’s why human rule in all its forms is flawed and prone to corruption.* But when we subject ourselves

* See Ecclesiastes 8:9; Jeremiah 10:23.

to God, we can greatly improve our life and be a good influence on others.

How has the Bible helped you?

In many practical ways. I have fewer worries, and I now have good friends. I have learned to budget money and can afford to travel a little. Most of all, I can help others when they are in need.