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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Do We Need God?

Why the Question?

“Are you good without God? Millions are.” So read a recent billboard message paid for by an atheist group. They evidently feel that they have no need for God.

On the other hand, many who claim to believe in God make decisions as though he did not exist. Salvatore Fisichella, a Catholic archbishop, said of members of his own church: “Looking at us probably no one would recognise we are Christians today because our style of life is the same as non-believers.”

Some are too busy to worry about God. They consider him too remote or inaccessible to play any meaningful role in their lives. At best, such individuals turn to God only when they are in trouble or need something—almost as if he were a servant at their beck and call.

Others see little practical value in religious teachings or, at any rate, fail to practice what their church preaches. To cite just one example, 76 percent of the Catholics in Germany believe that it is acceptable for a man and a woman to live together before marriage—a view contrary to the teachings of both their church and the Bible. (1 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 13:4) Of course, Catholics are not alone in perceiving a disconnect between their religious affiliation and their way of life. Clergymen of many denominations lament that their congregants behave like “practical atheists.”

These examples logically lead to the question: Do we really need God? The issue is by no means a new one. It was first brought up in the opening pages of the Bible. In order to find the answer to the question, let us give attention to a number of issues raised in the Bible book of Genesis.



Why We Need God

Mental-health experts tell us that people need spiritual values in order to be truly happy. We see this in the fact that people want to belong to something or serve someone or some cause greater than themselves. To satisfy this need, some devote their leisure time to nature, art, music, and so on. Yet, most find no deep or lasting fulfillment in such pursuits.

The fact that humans have an inborn spiritual yearning comes as no surprise to Bible readers. The first chapters of Genesis indicate that after God created the first human couple, he spoke with them regularly, allowing them to establish a spiritual relationship with him. (Genesis 3:8-10) God did not design humans to live independently of him; they have a need to communicate with their Maker. The Bible refers to this need frequently.

Jesus, for example, stated: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” (Matthew 5:3) From those words, we may conclude that an essential ingredient of a happy and contented life is satisfying our innate spiritual appetite. How can we do that? Jesus pointed to the answer when he said: “Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah’s mouth.” (Matthew 4:4) In what ways do God’s utterances, that is to say, God’s thoughts and instructions as found in the Bible, make it possible for us to live a happy and meaningful life? Let us consider three fundamental ways.

We Need Good Direction

Today, there are countless experts and specialists ready to offer advice on relationships, love, family life, conflict resolution, happiness, and even the very meaning of life. Yet who is best qualified to give sound, balanced direction in all these areas if not mankind’s Maker, Jehovah God?

To illustrate: When you buy a new piece of equipment, such as a camera or a computer, you



Like a user’s manual, the Bible
is a guide for life

“I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

—Isaiah 48:17, 18

expect it to come with an owner’s manual, or a handbook, that explains how to get the best use and satisfaction out of your acquisition. The Bible can be likened to such a handbook. It is a manual for human life that God, the manufacturer, as it were, has made available to us, the users. This “user’s manual” explains what the product is designed to do and how it should be used for the best results.

As with any well-written instruction manual, the Bible alerts readers to practices that may compromise the safe and reliable operation of the “product”—our life. Advice or shortcuts that others offer might sound appealing, even expedient, but is it not logical to think that we are going to get the best results and avoid problems if we follow the Maker’s directions?

Though Jehovah God provides directions and instructions, he does not force us to accept them. Rather, as a loving Benefactor, he warmly appeals to us: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.” (Isaiah 48:17, 18) In short, if we heed God’s direction, we will live well. To put it another way, to live well and be happy, we need God.

We Need Answers to Life’s Problems

Some feel that they have no need for God because they find many puzzling issues in life incompatible with belief in a loving God. For example, they may ask: ‘Why do good people have to suffer?’ ‘Why are some innocent babies born deformed?’ ‘Why is life so unjust?’ Those are serious questions indeed, and finding satisfying answers to them can have a deep impact on our life. But instead of quickly blaming God for such problems, let us see how God’s Word, the Bible, can shed light on this subject.

In the third chapter of Genesis, we find the account of Satan, who, under the guise of a serpent, attempted to get the first human couple to go against Jehovah God’s command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. “You positively will not die,” Satan told Eve. “For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad.”—Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:4, 5.

By those words, Satan not only asserted that God is a liar but also implied that God’s way of governing is unjust. The Devil contended that if mankind listened to him, things would work out better for them. How could those issues be resolved? Jehovah chose to allow events to take their course in order to enable all to see whether the accusations leveled against him were true or

false. God was in effect giving Satan and those who have taken his side the opportunity to demonstrate whether humans can live well without God.

What do you judge to be the answer to Satan's assertions? Can humans live well and govern themselves successfully without God? The suffering, injustice, sickness, and death as well as the crime, moral breakdown, wars, genocides, and other atrocities that have plagued mankind throughout the centuries are undeniable evidence that man's attempts to govern himself independently of God have been a miserable failure. Rather than showing God to be responsible for mankind's woes, the Bible points to a major cause of them: "Man has dominated man to his injury."—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

In light of this, is it not clear that we need to turn to God not only for answers to the troubling questions facing humans but also for the solution? What will God do?

We Need God's Help

People have long yearned for freedom from sickness, aging, and death. They have spent an enormous amount of time, effort, and resources in its pursuit, but to little or no avail. Some have hoped to find such freedom through the legendary elixir of life, the fountain of youth, Shangri-la, and the like. All these dreams have proved to be disappointing.

God wants humans to live well and be happy. That was his original purpose in creating humans, and he has not forgotten it. (Genesis 1:27, 28; Isaiah 45:18) We have Jehovah God's assurance that whatever he purposes to do will be done without fail. (Isaiah 55:10, 11) The Bible tells us about God's promise to restore the Paradise conditions lost by the first human couple. In the last book of the Bible, we find these words: "He [Jehovah God] will wipe out every tear from



In the Bible, we can find the direction and help that we need

their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) How will God bring about these wonderful conditions, and how can we benefit from this promise?

God's Son, Jesus Christ, taught his followers to pray for God's will to be done. Many people are familiar with or often repeat that prayer, which some call the Lord's Prayer. It goes this way: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) Yes, God's Kingdom is the means by which Jehovah God will do away with the woeful results of human rule and bring about the righteous new world of his promise.* (Daniel

* For more information on how the Kingdom will cause God's will to be done on earth, see chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online and for download at www.jw.org.

2:44; 2 Peter 3:13) What must we do to benefit from God's promise?

Jesus Christ points to the simple step that we must take: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Yes, with God's help, unending life in the promised new world is within reach. That prospect might well convince you of yet another reason to answer yes to the question, Do we need God?

Time to Look to God

Two thousand years ago, at the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, in Athens, the apostle Paul said this about God to the freethinking Athenians: "He himself gives to all persons life and breath and all things. For by him we have life and move and exist, even as certain ones of the poets among you

have said, 'For we are also his progeny.'"—Acts 17:25, 28.

What Paul pointed out to the Athenians is still true. Our Creator provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink. We simply could not live without the good things Jehovah has provided for our sustenance. But why has God continued to make such provisions for all people, whether they give thought to him or not? Paul said that it is "for them to seek God, if they might grope for him and really find him, although, in fact, he is not far off from each one of us."—Acts 17:27.

Would you like to know God better, that is, to learn more about his purposes and his advice for living well now and forever? If so, you are urged to speak to the person who brought you this magazine or contact its publishers. They will be pleased to assist you. ■

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