



IS THE BIBLE
RELEVANT
TODAY?

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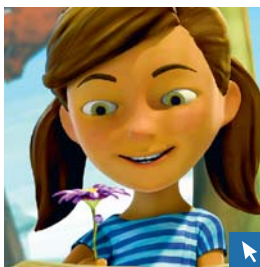
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COVER SUBJECT

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AN OUTDATED BOOK?

Some say that the Bible is out-of-date, like a manual for an obsolete computer.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 out-dated. 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.

What is your religious background?

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

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

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.



SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH

Despite medical advances, disease continues to plague mankind. Yet, as evidence shows, many health problems are preventable.

WORLD The World Health Organization predicts that 24 million people will be diagnosed with cancer annually by 2035. This is an increase of about 70 percent more than the number currently diagnosed, which is thought to be over 14 million. An estimated half of those cases will be caused by lifestyle factors, such as alcohol abuse, inactivity, obesity, radiation exposure, and smoking.



NORWAY Depression can increase the risk of heart failure by up to 40 percent, suggests an 11-year study of nearly 63,000 Norwegians. The European Society of Cardiology quoted one of the authors of the study as saying that depression not only triggers stress hormones that can lead to heart disease but also hinders a person's ability to follow advice that could improve his health.

BRITAIN After an evidence presentation, the British government launched an inquiry into the possibility that the human form of mad cow disease could be spread by procedures such as blood transfusions. "We were extremely concerned to hear evidence that this incurable disease still poses a significant risk to public health," said Andrew Miller, a member of Parliament. "We were told [the infection could be spread] through widespread contamination of the blood and organ supply," he added.



UNITED STATES Scientists are investigating the potential health hazards of so-called thirdhand cigarette smoke, which consists of residues from smoking that are left behind on surfaces and in dust in apartments, hotel rooms, and vehicles. Accumulating residues can become progressively more toxic as they age.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit saps one's strength."—Proverbs 17:22.

"Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh."
—2 Corinthians 7:1.

WISDOM THAT PROTECTS

“Riches are the ransom for a man’s life, but the poor are not even threatened.”

—PROVERBS 13:8.

WHILE being rich may have certain advantages, wealth is a mixed blessing, especially in our perilous times. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) In some lands, the wealthy, including tourists who look affluent, have become targets of thieves and kidnapers seeking a ransom.

Concerning one developing country, a news report stated: “Violent robberies, fraud and kidnappings pit the haves against the have-nots. Restaurants post armed guards; the homes of the wealthy have walls with razor-wire, floodlights, cameras and security guards.” A similar situation exists in many other lands.

Yet, “the poor,” the Bible says, “are not even threatened.” How can you benefit from that gem of wisdom? If you live in an area known for crime and violence or if you have to travel to such a place, do not attract attention to yourself by appearing to be affluent. Think carefully about what you wear and carry in public, especially if your possessions would be noticed. “The shrewd one sees the danger,” says Proverbs 22:3, “but the inexperienced keep right on going and suffer the consequences.”

The wisdom recorded in the Bible reflects our Creator’s care for us. He wants us to be safe. Such “wisdom is a protection,” says Ecclesiastes 7:12, for it “preserves the life of its owner.” ■





When Your Child Asks About Death



THE CHALLENGE

Your six-year-old asks, “Are you going to die someday?” Startled by his question, you wonder: “Is my child old enough to understand the answer? How can I talk to him about death?”*

* Although we refer to the child as a boy, the principles discussed apply to girls as well.

Chapters 34 and 35 of the book *Learn From the Great Teacher* can help your children learn what the Bible teaches about death. The book is available for free download at www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS > BOOKS & BROCHURES

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Children do think about death. Some even play games in which someone pretends to die. Therefore, death should not be considered a taboo subject, and you should welcome any questions your child may have about it. By occasionally talking openly about death, you help your child learn how to cope with the loss of a loved one.

- Talking about death will not cause your child to have morbid thoughts. Rather, it will help him alleviate fears. However, you may need to correct some misunderstandings. For example, some experts say that many children under the age of six do not view death as final. In their games, a child will be “dead” one moment and “alive” the next.

When they get a little older, however, children begin to grasp the seriousness of death—a fact that may cause them to have questions, concerns, or even fears, especially if a loved one has died. Therefore, it is vital that you discuss the subject. Mental-health expert Marion Haza points out: “A child will develop anxieties related to death if he feels that he is not allowed to talk about this subject at home.”

- You need not worry excessively about what to say. According to one study, children just want to “hear the truth expressed in kind words.” Be assured that a child will usually not ask a question unless he is ready to hear the answer.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Take advantage of opportunities to talk about death. If your child sees a dead bird on the side of the road or if a beloved pet dies, use simple questions to encourage him to talk. For example, you could ask: “Does a dead animal suffer? Is it cold or hungry? How do you know that an animal or a person is dead?”—*Bible principle: Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7.*

Do not hide the truth. When an acquaintance or a relative has died, avoid using confusing euphemisms such as “He has gone away.” Your child might wrongly conclude that the deceased will soon return home.

Since a young child might think that death is contagious, assure him that he is safe

Instead, use simple and direct words. For example, you might say: “When Grandma died, her body stopped working. We can’t talk to her, but we will never forget her.”—*Bible principle: Ephesians 4:25.*

Reassure your child. He might think that his actions or thoughts *caused* someone’s death. Instead of just saying that he is not responsible for what happened, you could ask, “What makes you think that it is your fault?” Listen carefully, without belittling his feelings. Also, since a young child might think that death is contagious, assure him that he is safe.

Draw out your child. Talk freely about loved ones who have died, including relatives whom your child has never met. You might evoke fond memories of an aunt, an uncle, or a grandparent and relate amusing anecdotes. When you openly discuss such people, you help your child understand that he need not avoid talking or thinking about them. At the same time, do not force your child to talk. You can always broach the subject later, when you feel the time is right.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 20:5.* ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“There is . . . a time to be silent and a time to speak.”
—Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7.

“Each one of you speak truth.”
—Ephesians 4:25.

“The thoughts of a man’s heart are like deep waters, but the discerning man draws them out.”
—Proverbs 20:5.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONVEY

If a loved one has died, you can help your child overcome inordinate fears about death by making sure he understands the following:

- He is not going to die.
- If something happens to you, he will not be abandoned; relatives will look after him.
- Once dead, a person is no longer suffering.
- The deceased person will not be forgotten. You might say, “You cannot see Grandma anymore, but you can keep memories of her in your heart.”

Remember, saying *nothing* to your child will not reduce his anxiety. On the contrary, it may only serve to give his imagination free rein.



Why a Priest Left His Church

AFTER studying in Rome for nine years, Antonio Della Gatta was ordained as a priest in 1969. Later, he served as the rector, or head, of a seminary near Naples, Italy. While there, after much study and meditation, he concluded that the Catholic religion is not based on the Bible. He spoke with *Awake!* about his spiritual journey.

Please tell us about your childhood.

I was born in Italy in 1943. I grew up with my brothers and sisters in a small village where my father was a farmer and a carpenter. Our parents raised us to be good Catholics.

Why did you want to become a priest?

As a boy, I loved listening to the priests in church. I was enchanted by their voices, as well as the impressive rituals. So my heart was set on becoming a priest. When I was 13 years of age, my mother took me to a boarding school that prepared boys for future, more-advanced studies for the priesthood.

Did your training involve Bible study?

Not really. When I was 15, one of my teachers gave me a copy of the Gospels—the his-

torical accounts of Jesus' life and ministry—and I read the book several times. When I was 18, I went to Rome to study in the pontifical universities, which are directly under the pope's authority. I studied Latin, Greek, history, philosophy, psychology, and theology. Although we recited verses from the Bible and heard Bible readings in Sunday sermons, we did not actually study the Bible.

You became a rector. Did that involve teaching?

My work was mainly administrative. But I did teach classes on the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.

Why did you start doubting the church?

Three things troubled me. The church was involved in politics. Misconduct among the clergy and parishioners was tolerat-

ed. And certain Catholic teachings did not seem right. How, for example, could a God of love punish people forever after death? Also, does God really want us to repeat prayers hundreds of times with a rosary?*

What did you do?

With tears streaming from my eyes, I prayed for guidance. I also purchased a copy of the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*, which had recently been published in Italian, and began reading it. Then, one Sunday morning as I was hanging up my robes after Mass, two men came to the seminary. They introduced themselves to me as Jehovah's Witnesses. We talked for more than an hour about the Bible and what

* The Bible gives clear answers to these and many other questions. For more information, visit jw.org. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

it says about the identifying marks of true religion.

What was your impression of the visitors?

I admired their conviction and the ease with which they referred to passages in a Catholic edition of the Bible. Later, another Witness, named Mario, began visiting me. He was patient and faithful—every Saturday morning, rain or shine, he rang the seminary doorbell at nine o'clock.

What did the other priests think of those visits?

I invited them to join in our discussions, but none took Bible study seriously. I, however, enjoyed it. I was learning wonderful things, such as why God tolerates evil and suffering—something that had long puzzled me.

At last, I feel truly close to God

Did your superiors try to dissuade you from studying the Bible?

In 1975, I visited Rome several times to explain my views. My superiors tried to change my thinking, but none used the Bible. Finally, on January 9, 1976, I wrote to Rome stating that I no longer considered myself a Catholic. Two days later, I left the seminary and took a train to attend my first meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses, which turned out to be an assembly involving several congregations. Everything was so different from what I was accustomed to! Each Witness had a Bible and followed along with the speakers as they discussed various topics.

What did your family think about all of this?

Most of them bitterly opposed me. I found out, however, that one of my brothers was studying with the Witnesses in Lombardy, a region in northern Italy. I went to see him, and the Witnesses there helped me to find work and a place to live. Later that year, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Do you have any regrets?

Not at all! At last, I feel truly close to God, because what I know about him is based on the Bible, not philosophy or church tradition. And I can teach others with conviction and sincerity. ■





THE MESSIAH

The Bible foretold that the Messiah would come into the world and deliver people from sickness, suffering, and death. Is Jesus Christ that one?

How would people recognize the Messiah?

According to Bible prophecy, the Messiah, or Christ, would come in two different roles, separated by a long period of time.* In his first role, he would be a human. So that he could be clearly recognized, Bible writers foretold many aspects of his life and ministry. In fact, “the witness concerning Jesus” is a primary objective of Bible prophecy.—Revelation 19:10.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS The Messiah would be . . .

- A descendant of King David.—Isaiah 9:7; Luke 3:23-31.[#]
- Born in the town of Bethlehem.—Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-7.
- A humble proclaimer of “good news.”—Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:43.
- Despised and held of no account.—Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 26:67, 68.
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.—Zechariah 11:12, 13; Matthew 26:14, 15.
- Silent before his accusers as they unjustly condemned him to death.—Isaiah 53:6, 7; Matthew 27:12-14.
- A sacrificial “lamb,” who would annul sin and enable humans to have a clean

standing before God.—Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29, 34, 36.

- Killed without any of his bones being broken.—Psalm 34:20; John 19:33, 36.
- Buried with the rich.—Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60.
- Resurrected on the third day.—Matthew 16:21; 28:5-7.

Jesus fulfilled all those prophecies and many more. He also healed the sick and raised the dead. He thus not only provided us with further proof that he was the Messiah but also gave us a solid basis for faith in the Bible’s promises that he will do those things on a global scale in the future. (Luke 7:21-23; Revelation 21:3, 4) After his resurrection, Jesus sat at God’s “right hand,” awaiting the time for him to finish his Messianic work.—Psalm 110:1-6.

“When the Christ comes, he will not perform more signs than this man has done, will he?”—John 7:31.

* The word “Messiah” is of Hebrew origin. “Christ” is the equivalent derived from the Greek.—John 1:41.

[#] The first reference here is to the prophecy; the second, to the fulfillment.



How will the Messiah complete his work?

The Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah to liberate them from Roman rule and to reign over a restored kingdom of Israel. (Acts 1:6) Only later did Jesus' Jewish followers understand that he would complete his role from heaven as a mighty spirit creature vested with vast authority.—Matthew 28:18.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS In his second role, the Messiah would . . .

- Rule as King of God's Kingdom, a *world* government.—Daniel 7:13, 14; Revelation 11:15.
- Be a blessing to *all* humans who exercise faith in him.—Genesis 22:17, 18; Psalm 72:7, 8.
- “Startle many nations” and their rulers when he crushes them for opposing him.—Isaiah 52:15; Revelation 19:19, 20.
- Preserve an international “great crowd” of righteous humans into a peaceful new world.—Revelation 7:9, 10, 13-17.
- Along with Jehovah God, resurrect the dead to life in Paradise on earth.—Luke 23:43; John 5:21, 28, 29.
- Teach his subjects the ways of true peace.—Isaiah 11:1, 2, 9, 10.
- Eradicate sin, the underlying cause of sickness and death.—John 1:29; Romans 5:12.
- Ultimately break up all of Satan's works and unite the human family under Jehovah God's rule.—1 Corinthians 15:25-28; 1 John 3:8.

Jesus fulfilled his first role as Messiah. He will also complete his second. The wise, therefore, study him closely, for Jesus said: “I am the way and the truth and the life.”—John 14:6. ■

“In his days the righteous will flourish, and peace will abound until the moon is no more. He will have subjects . . . to the ends of the earth.”—Psalm 72:7, 8.



As a human, Jesus did on a small scale what he will do on a global scale as a mighty spirit creature



Eagle: © Jim Zipp / Science Source

The Upturned Wing Tip of Soaring Birds

A JET plane in flight creates rapidly spiraling swirls of air at the tips of its wings. These vortices cause drag, increasing fuel consumption. They also buffet planes that may be following closely. Thus, flights departing from the same runway must be sufficiently spaced to allow time for the vortices to dissipate.

Airplane engineers have discovered a way to reduce these problems. Their solution? Winglets, inspired by the upturned wing-tip feathers of soaring birds, such as buzzards, eagles, and storks.

Consider: During flight, the feathers on the wing tips of those large birds bend upward until they are almost vertical. This configuration balances maximum lift with minimum wing length. It also improves performance. Engineers have designed airplane wings with a similar shape. Using innovative wind-tunnel testing, they found that if the modified wings were precisely

curved at the tip and properly aligned with the airflow, they improved aircraft performance—nowadays by up to 10 percent or more. The reason? Winglets minimize drag by reducing the size of the vortices. Moreover, winglets also create a form of thrust that “counteracts some of the normal drag of the airplane,” says the *Encyclopedia of Flight*.

Winglets thus enable airplanes to fly farther, carry a greater load, have shorter wings—which also facilitates parking—and save fuel. In 2010, for example, airlines “saved 2 billion gallons [7,600 million L] of jet fuel worldwide” and contributed to large reductions in aircraft emissions, says a NASA news release.

What do you think? Did the upturned wing tip of soaring birds come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

