

Awake!

JANUARY 2015

HOW DID LIFE BEGIN?

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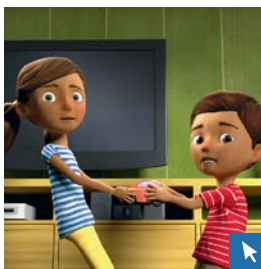
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COVER SUBJECT

How Did Life Begin?

How would you complete the following sentence?

LIFE IS THE RESULT

OF _____.

A. EVOLUTION

B. CREATION

SOME might assume that a scientifically-minded person would pick “evolution” and that a religious person would pick “creation.”

But not always.

Rama Singh, professor of biology at Canada’s McMaster University, says: “The opposition to evolution goes beyond religious fundamentalism and includes a great many people from educated sections of the population.”

Consider Gerard, a professor of entomology who was taught evolution at college. “When I took tests,” he says, “I would give the professors the answers they wanted—but I did not believe it.”

Why is it that even some scientifically-minded people have trouble accepting evolution as the origin of life? To answer that, consider two questions that baffle many researchers: (1) How did life get its start? and (2) How did living things develop?

1 How Did Life Get Its Start?

WHAT SOME SAY. Life arose spontaneously from non-living matter.

WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THAT ANSWER. Scientists know more about the chemistry and molecular structure of life than ever before, yet they still cannot define with certainty just what life is. A wide gulf separates nonliving matter from even the simplest living cell.



- Scientists can only speculate about what conditions on earth were like billions of years ago. They have differing views about where life began—for instance, whether within a volcano or under the ocean floor. Another belief is that life's building blocks first formed elsewhere in the universe and arrived here embedded in meteors. But that does not answer the question of how life began; it just pushes the issue farther into space.

- Scientists speculate about the existence of molecules that preceded genetic material as we know it today. These molecules are supposedly more likely to arise spontaneously from inert material and are self-replicating. Yet, science has found no evidence that such molecules ever existed, nor have scientists been able to create any such molecule in a laboratory.

- Living things are unique in the way they store and process information. Cells convey, interpret, and carry out instructions contained within their genetic code. Some scientists liken the genetic code to computer software and the chemical structure of the cell to computer hardware. But evolution cannot explain the source of the information.

- Protein molecules are necessary for the function of a cell. A typical protein molecule consists of hundreds of amino acids strung together in a specific sequence. Additionally, the protein molecule must fold into a specific

three-dimensional shape for it to be useful. Some scientists conclude that the odds of even one protein molecule forming spontaneously are extremely improbable. "Since a functioning cell requires thousands of different proteins," writes physicist Paul Davies, "it is not credible to suppose they formed by chance alone."

CONCLUSION. After decades of research in virtually all branches of science, the fact remains that life comes only from preexisting life.

2 How Did Living Things Develop?

WHAT SOME SAY. The first living organism gradually developed into a variety of living things, including humans, through a process of random mutation and natural selection.

WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THAT ANSWER. Some cells are more complex than others. According to one reference, how simpler cells could develop into more complex cells is “often rated the second major evolutionary mystery, after the origin of life.”



- Scientists have discovered within each cell intricate molecular machines composed of protein molecules that cooperate to perform complex tasks. These tasks include transporting and converting nutrients into energy, repairing parts of the cell, and conveying messages throughout the cell. Could random mutations and natural selection account for the assembling and functioning of such sophisticated components? Many find that concept difficult to accept.

- Animals and humans develop from a single fertilized egg. Inside the embryo, cells multiply and eventually specialize, taking on different shapes and functions to form distinct parts of the body. Evolution cannot explain how each cell “knows” what to become and where it should move within the organism.

- Scientists now realize that for one kind of animal to develop into another kind of animal would require that changes take place within the cell, at the molecular level. Since scientists cannot demonstrate how evolution can produce even the “simplest” cell, is it plausible that random mutations and natural selection could be responsible for the different kinds of animals on the planet? Regarding the structure of animals, Michael Behe, professor of biological sciences, says that while research “has revealed unexpected, stunning complexity, no progress at all has been made

in understanding how that complexity could evolve by unintelligent processes.”

- Human beings are conscious and self-aware, have the ability to think and reason, and possess moral qualities such as generosity, self-sacrifice, and a sense of right and wrong. Random mutations and natural selection cannot explain the existence of these unique qualities of the human mind.

CONCLUSION. While many insist that an evolutionary origin of life is an indisputable fact, others are not satisfied with the answers that evolution provides regarding how life began and how life developed.



An Answer Worth Considering

Did You Know?

THE BIBLE IS NOT ANTISCIENCE. On the contrary, it *encourages* people to examine the natural world. (Isaiah 40:26) While the Bible is not a science textbook, it is consistent with scientific fact. For example, the Bible does not support creationism. It does not state that the earth was created in six literal 24-hour days. The term “day” as used in Genesis applies to periods of considerable length.*

* For more information, see the brochure *Was Life Created?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.

The Bible Teaches That . . .

LIFE COMES ONLY FROM LIFE. “With you [God] is the source of life.”
—Psalm 36:9.

GOD MADE PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

“ACCORDING TO THEIR KINDS.” (Genesis 1: 11, 12, 21, 24, 25) The Bible does not define the boundaries of these “kinds.” This allows for a degree of variation within each kind.

GOD CREATED HUMANS WITH THE CAPACITY TO DISPLAY THE SAME MORAL QUALITIES THAT HE POSSESSES. These qualities include love, goodness, and justice. “God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.’”
—Genesis 1:26.

AFTER considering the evidence, many people conclude that life is the product of a superior intelligence. Consider the example of Antony Flew, a professor of philosophy who at one time was a leading advocate of atheism. When he learned about the staggering complexity of life and the physical laws of the universe, Flew changed his opinion. Citing an ancient approach to reasoning, he wrote: “We must follow the argument wherever it leads.” For Professor Flew, the evidence pointed to the existence of a Creator.

Gerard, mentioned earlier in this series of articles, came to a similar conclusion. Despite his advanced education and his career in entomology, he said: “I saw no proof that life arose spontaneously from non-living matter. The order and complexity of living things convinced me that there has to be an Organizer and Designer.”

Just as a person can learn about an artist by examining his artwork, Gerard came to discern the Creator's qualities by studying the natural world. Gerard also took time to consider a book attributed to the Creator—the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) There he found satisfying answers to questions about mankind's past and practical solutions to the problems facing people today. He thus became convinced that the Bible was also the product of a superior mind.

As Gerard found, the Bible's answers are worth considering. We encourage you to examine them for yourself. ■



The Honeycomb



HONEYBEES (*Apis mellifera*) construct their honeycombs with wax secreted from glands found on the underside of their abdomen. The honeycomb is regarded as an engineering marvel. Why?

Consider: For centuries, mathematicians suspected that partitions in the shape of hexagons were better than equilateral triangles or squares—or any other shape—for maximizing space with the least amount of building material. But they could not fully explain why. In 1999, Professor Thomas C. Hales provided mathematical proof for the advantage of what he termed “honeycomb conjecture.” He demonstrated that regular hexagons are the best way to divide a space into equal parts with minimal structural support.

By using hexagonal cells, bees can make the best use of all the space available to them, produce a light but sturdy honeycomb with a minimum amount of wax, and store the maximum amount of honey in a given space. Not surprisingly, the honeycomb has been described as “an architectural masterpiece.”

Today, scientists mimic the bees’ honeycomb to create structures that are both resilient and space efficient. Aircraft engineers, for example, use panels patterned after the honeycomb to build planes that are stronger and lighter and thus use less fuel.

What do you think? Did the superior structure of the honeycomb come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■



How to Tame Your Temper



THE CHALLENGE

“I screamed at my sister and swung the door so hard that the hook on the back of it went through the wall. The hole was a constant reminder of how childish I had behaved.”
—Diane.*

“I shouted, ‘You’re a horrible dad!’ and slammed the door. But before it closed, I saw the hurt look on my dad’s face, and I immediately wanted to go back in time and swallow my words.”—Lauren.

Can you relate to Lauren and Diane? If so, this article can help you.

* Some names in this article have been changed.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Outbursts hurt your reputation. “I used to think that others just had to accept my bad temper,” says Briana, now 21. “But then I began to notice that people look foolish when they don’t control themselves, and it hit me—that’s how *I* appeared to *others*!”

The Bible says: “The one who is quick to anger acts foolishly.”—Proverbs 14:17.

Your anger could cause people to avoid you. “When you lose your temper,” says 18-year-old Daniel, “you also lose your dignity and the respect of those around you.” Elaine, also 18, would agree. “Displaying a bad temper isn’t attractive,” she says. “It just makes people scared of you.”

The Bible says: “Do not keep company with a hot-tempered man or get involved with one disposed to rage.”—Proverbs 22:24.

You can improve. “You can’t always control how a situation makes you feel,” says 15-year-old Sara, “but you *can* control how you *express* your feelings. You don’t have to explode.”

The Bible says: “The one slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and the one controlling his temper than one conquering a city.”—Proverbs 16:32.



People will run from an erupting volcano; likewise, they will avoid anyone with an explosive temper



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make a goal. Instead of saying, “That’s just the way I am,” strive to improve within a specified time period—perhaps six months. During that period, keep a record of your progress. Each time you lose your temper, write down (1) what happened, (2) how you reacted, and (3) how you could have reacted better—and why. Then make it your goal to use that better reaction the next time you are provoked. Tip: Keep track of your successes too! Write about how *good* you feel after showing self-control.—*Bible principle: Colossians 3:8.*

Wait before reacting. When someone or something angers you, do not say the first thing that comes to your mind. Instead, wait. Take a deep breath if necessary. “When I breathe,” says 15-year-old Erik, “it gives me time to think before I do or say something I will later regret.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 21:23.*

Expand your view. Sometimes you might become angry because you see only one aspect of the issue—the part that affects *you*. Try to consider the other side of the story. “Even when people are downright rude,” says a young woman named Jessica, “there’s usually an explanation that can help me show a little understanding.”—*Bible principle: Proverbs 19:11.*

If necessary, walk away. The Bible says: “Before the quarrel breaks out, take your leave.” (Proverbs 17:14) As that scripture indicates, sometimes it is best simply to walk away from a volatile situation. Then, rather than stewing over the matter and letting your anger build even more, get active. “I find that exercise can relieve my stress and keep me from losing my temper,” says a young woman named Danielle.

Learn to let go. The Bible says: “Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, . . . and keep silent.” (Psalm 4:4) Note that there is nothing wrong with *feeling* agitated. The question is, What will happen next? “If you allow others to provoke you,” says a young man named Richard, “it gives them power over you. Why not try to be mature and overlook the matter?” If you do, you will be controlling your anger rather than letting your anger control you. ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Put them all away from you: wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech.”
—Colossians 3:8.

“The one guarding his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.”—Proverbs 21:23.

“The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger.”—Proverbs 19:11.



DANIEL

“Eat nutritious food, and drink plenty of water. I’ve noticed that there’s a direct relationship between my temperament and what I choose to eat.”



NATALIE

“Learning to control your temper is part of leaving childhood and becoming an adult. Children tend to argue and bicker, but mature adults know how to discuss things calmly.”



A Visit to Costa Rica



FIVE centuries ago, the Spaniards first visited this region. They called it Costa Rica (Rich Coast), thinking that they would find an abundance of gold—a quest that proved futile. This land is today known, not as a source for valuable metals, but as a country with one of the richest biodiversities on earth.

Costa Ricans are known as *Ticos*, which comes from their custom of adding “-ico” to the end of words to form the diminutive. For example, instead of saying “*un momento*” (just a moment), they might say “*un momentico*” (just a *little* moment). In everyday speech they often say “*¡pura vida!*” (pure life!) to express their appreciation or their agreement or to say “hello” or “goodbye.”

One of Costa Rica’s favorite dishes is *gallo pinto* (literally meaning “spotted rooster”)—rice and beans cooked separately and then together with seasonings. *Gallo pinto* can be served at breakfast, lunch, or



Costa Rica's forests have an astounding variety of plants and animals, such as this red-eyed tree frog (*Agalychnis callidryas*)

Osa Peninsula, Corcovado National Park

Café chorreado, coffee brewed in the traditional Costa Rican style

Stone spheres



dinner. A traditional beverage is *café chorreado*—coffee brewed through a cloth filter hanging in a stand often made of wood.

There are about 450 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Costa Rica. Their meetings are conducted in ten languages, including Costa Rican Sign Language and two languages that are indigenous to Costa Rica—Bribri and Cabecar. ■

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which of these do you think Costa Rica has?

- A.** One of the highest literacy rates in the Western Hemisphere
- B.** A highly developed army
- C.** An island to which more than 500 expeditions have been organized in search of buried treasure

Answers: A and C. Option C refers to Cocos Island, nearly 350 miles (560 km) west of the mainland.

FAST FACTS

Population: 4,878,000

Capital: San José

Official language: Spanish

Land: Coastal plains with central mountains

Government: Democratic republic

DID YOU KNOW? Hundreds of finely crafted stone spheres have been found in Costa Rica. The largest one is eight feet (2.4 m) in diameter. Some are estimated to be more than 1,400 years old. No one knows for certain why they were made!

“I Refuse to Dwell On My Illness”

“I needed help getting in and out of bed. Walking was painful. My throat closed up so that I couldn’t swallow my pain pills. I developed sores that wouldn’t heal, some of which later became gangrenous. I had stomach ulcers and severe heartburn. I didn’t understand what was happening. I was just ten years old.”—Elisa.



SCLERODERMA—meaning “hard skin”—is a word used to describe diseases that afflict an estimated 2.5 million people worldwide. The type most often seen in children is *localized* scleroderma, which mainly involves a hardening of the skin tissues.

Elisa, however, was diagnosed at age ten with a form of *systemic* scleroderma—a condition that can seriously affect not only the skin but also the function of internal organs, involving the kidneys, heart, lungs, and gastrointestinal tract. Doctors thought that treatment would prolong Elisa’s life by only five years. Now, some 14 years later, Elisa is very much alive. Although she is not cured, she maintains a positive attitude about life. *Awake!* spoke to Elisa about her illness and her strength to endure.

Despite her limitations, Elisa enjoys teaching others about the Bible

When did you first become aware that you were not well?

When I was nine years old, I got a cut on my elbow, and it was extremely painful. The wound got bigger, and it wouldn't heal. A blood test revealed that I had systemic scleroderma. Because my health was deteriorating rapidly, we needed to find a doctor who had experience treating scleroderma.

How did your search turn out?

We found a rheumatologist. She told my parents that chemotherapy could slow down the scleroderma and extend my life by five years, with the possibility that my illness might go into remission. The downside was that chemotherapy would compromise my immune system. Even a cold could prove fatal.

Obviously, the worst did not happen.

No—thankfully, I'm still alive! When I was about 12, though, I started experiencing severe chest pains that would last for about 30 minutes, sometimes twice a day. They were so bad that they made me scream.

What was the cause?

The doctors found that my hemoglobin level was danger-

ously low and that my heart was working overtime to pump blood to my brain. Within a few weeks, treatment relieved the problem. But at that point, I remember thinking that anything could happen from one day to the next. I felt more helpless than ever, as if I had no control over what was happening to me.

It has been 14 years since your condition was diagnosed. What is the state of your health now?

I still live with pain, and I have a number of ailments that are associated with scleroderma. These include ulcers, lung fibrosis, and severe heartburn. Still, I refuse to dwell on my illness or waste time feeling sad. I have other things to do.

Like what?

I love drawing, making clothes, making jewelry. Most important, though, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I engage in the work of teaching the Bible. Even when I am not able to walk to people's homes, I am able to assist other Witnesses who conduct Bible study sessions with people in our area. I have even had students of my own. The ministry gives my life purpose.

Why do you engage in this work when you have your own problems to contend with?

I know that the information I share with people is vital and beneficial. Besides, when I keep busy helping others in this way, I'm happier. I even feel healthier! For that brief period of time, I forget that I'm sick.

What role does the Bible play in your positive viewpoint?

It reminds me that my suffering—and the suffering of others as well—is just temporary. Revelation 21:4 says that at his appointed time, God “will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” Thinking about scriptures like that helps strengthen my faith in God's promise of a bright future—not just for those who suffer with chronic illnesses but for everyone.

For more information on what the Bible teaches regarding sickness and God's promises for the future, see chapter 3 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* available at www.jw.org. Also on jw.org, see the online article “Living With Chronic Illness—Can the Bible Help?” Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED. ■



SUFFERING

Some people feel that God causes human suffering or that, at the very least, he is indifferent to it. But is that what the Bible teaches? You might be surprised at the answer.

Does God cause us to suffer?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Some say that everything that happens is God's will. Thus, they believe that God causes us to suffer. When natural disasters strike, for instance, they think that these events are God's way of punishing those who have sinned.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS The Bible clearly teaches that God does *not* cause us to suffer. For example, the Bible says that when we go through trials, it would be a mistake to say: "I am being tried by God." Why? Because "with evil things God cannot be tried, nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) In other words, God never causes the trials we face or the suffering that follows. To do so would be wicked, but "God does not act wickedly."—Job 34:12.

If God does not cause us to suffer, then who or what does? Sadly, humans are often victimized by other imperfect humans. (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Additionally, we may face calamities because of "unexpected events"—that is, because of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) The Bible teaches that ultimately "the ruler of this world," Satan the Devil, is responsible for human suffering, for "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (John 12:31; 1 John 5:19) It is Satan—not God—who causes people to suffer.

"For a certainty, God does not act wickedly."—Job 34:12.



Does God care about our suffering?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Some think that God is indifferent to our trials. For example, one writer cites what he calls God's "apparent lack of mercy or pity in reaction to our suffering." This writer argues that if God exists, he must view humans with "pitiless indifference."

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Far from depicting God as pitiless or indifferent, the Bible teaches that God is deeply moved by our suffering—and that he will soon bring an end to it. Consider three comforting truths found in the Bible.

God is aware of our suffering. From the very start of human suffering, not a single teardrop has gone unnoticed by Jehovah,* whose "watchful eyes" see everything. (Psalm 11:4; 56:8) For example, when his worshippers in ancient times were being oppressed, God said: "I have certainly seen the affliction of my people." But was he only vaguely aware of their pain? No, for he added: "I well know the pains they suffer." (Exodus 3:7) Many people have found comfort in that truth alone—the thought that God is aware of everything we suffer, even the trials that others may not be aware of or fully understand.—Psalm 31:7; Proverbs 14:10.

God feels for us when we suffer. Jehovah God is not only *aware* of human suffering but also deeply *moved* by it. For example, God was sincerely troubled when his ancient worshippers faced trials. "During all their distress it was distressing to him," says the Bible. (Isaiah 63:9) Although God

is vastly superior to humans, he feels empathy for those who suffer—as if their pain were in *his* heart! Indeed, "Jehovah is very compassionate and merciful." (James 5:11; footnote) Additionally, Jehovah helps us to bear our suffering.—Philippians 4:12, 13.

God will end all human suffering. According to the Bible, God will bring an end to the suffering of every human on the planet. By means of his heavenly Kingdom, Jehovah will drastically change the human condition—for the better. Regarding that time, the Bible promises that God "will wipe out every tear from 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) What about those who have already died? God will bring them back to life here on earth so that they too can enjoy life free from suffering. (John 5:28, 29) Will anyone be plagued by painful memories of past suffering? No, for Jehovah promises: "The former things will not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart."—Isaiah 65:17.* ■

* As to why God has allowed suffering for a time and how he will bring it to an end, please see chapters 8 and 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

"During all their distress it was distressing to him."—Isaiah 63:9.

* Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.



SPOTLIGHT ON RELIGION

Religion is supposed to be a force for unity. All too often, however, it has been a source of conflict and distrust.



WORLD More than three quarters of the world's population live in countries with significant restrictions on religion, either because of official policies or social hostilities. In a recent five-year period, the number of countries with incidents of abuse against religious minorities nearly doubled.

TO THINK ABOUT: For what contrasting reasons are some people hostile toward religion?—Matthew 23: 27, 28; John 15:19.



ENGLAND Former Prime Minister Tony Blair writes in the *Observer* newspaper that “an abuse of religion” is a common motive behind recent acts of terrorism. “The battles of this century,” he adds, “are less likely to be the product of extreme political ideology—like those of the 20th century—but they could easily be fought around the questions of cultural or religious difference.”

TO THINK ABOUT: Why is religion so often a source of division? —Mark 7:6-8.



AUSTRALIA The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that 1 out of 5 Australians claims no affiliation with a religion. Even “religious affiliation is not the same as actively participating in religious activities,” says the report. Only 15 percent of men and 22 percent of women with religious affiliations profess that they actively participate in a religious or spiritual group.

TO THINK ABOUT: What negative qualities are evident in much of today's organized religion?—Matthew 7:15-20.

