

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Who Is God?



THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

WHO IS GOD?

Many people say that they believe in God. But ask who God is, and you will get different answers. To some, God is a harsh judge, bent on punishing people for their misdeeds. To others, he is always loving and forgiving, no matter what they do. Still others believe that God is far away and disinterested in us. Given such conflicting views, many may feel that it is simply impossible to know who God is.



Does it matter? Yes, it does. Knowing God better can add purpose and meaning to your life. (Acts 17:26-28) The closer you draw to God, the more he will love and help you. (James 4:8) Ultimately, having accurate knowledge of God can lead to unending life.—John 17:3.

How can you come to know God? Think of someone you know well, such as a close friend. How did that friendship develop? Likely you got to know that person's name, personality, likes and dislikes, as well as what he or she has done and plans to do, and more. This is what drew you to that person—you *learned about* him or her.

Similarly, we can come to know God by considering the following:

- WHAT IS GOD'S NAME?
- WHAT IS HE LIKE?
- WHAT HAS GOD DONE?
- WHAT WILL HE DO?
- WHAT CAN KNOWING GOD MEAN FOR YOU?

This magazine is designed to provide Bible answers to those questions. The articles will help you learn not only who God is but also what is in store for you as you come into a personal relationship with him.

WHAT IS GOD'S NAME?

When trying to get to know someone, the first thing you would likely do is ask, “What is your name?” If you were to ask God that question, what would he say?

“I am Jehovah. That is my name.”—Isaiah 42:8.

Is that name new to you? It may well be, because many translators of the Bible use God's name sparingly, if at all. They often replace it with the title “LORD.” Yet, God's name actually occurs some 7,000 times throughout the original-language text of the Bible. The name consists of four Hebrew consonants, corresponding to YHWH or JHVH, and has historically been rendered “Jehovah” in English.

WHY GOD'S NAME MATTERS

The name matters to God himself. No one gave God his name; he chose it for himself. Jehovah declared: “This is my name forever, and this is how I am to be remembered from generation to generation.” (Exodus 3:15) In the Bible, God's name occurs more often than any of his titles, such as Almighty, Father, Lord, or God, and more often than any other personal name, such as Abraham,

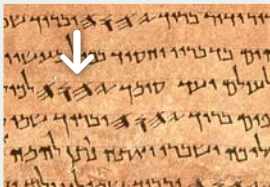
Moses, David, or Jesus. What is more, it is Jehovah's will that his name be known. The Bible states: “May people know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”—Psalm 83:18.

The name matters to Jesus. In what has been called the Our Father or the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught his followers to petition God with the words: “Let *your name* be sanctified.” (Matthew 6:9) Jesus himself prayed to God: “Father, glorify *your name*.” (John 12:28) Jesus made glorifying God's name a priority in his life, and for this reason he could say in prayer: “I have made your name known to them and will make it known.” —John 17:26.

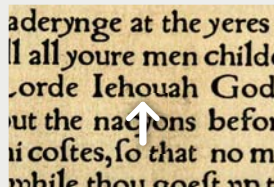
The name matters to those who know God. God's people in the past understood that their protection and salvation were linked to God's unique

God's name appears throughout the Hebrew text and is found in many translations

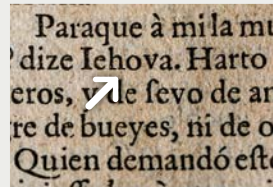
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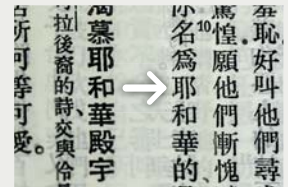
Tyndale's translation
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Reina-Valera version
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Union Version
1919, CHINESE



name. “The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous one runs and receives protection.” (Proverbs 18:10) “Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” (Joel 2:32) The Bible shows that God’s name would distinguish those who serve him. “For all the peoples will walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever.”—Micah 4:5; Acts 15:14.

WHAT THE NAME REVEALS

The name uniquely identifies God. Many scholars conclude that the name Jehovah means “He Causes to Become.” Jehovah God gave insight into the meaning of his name when he referred to himself with these words spoken to Moses: “I Will Become What I Choose to Become.” (Exodus 3:14) God’s name thus conveys more than his role as the Creator who causes all things to come into existence. His name expresses his ability to *cause himself as well as his creation to become whatever is needed to achieve his purpose*. While titles may describe God’s position, authority, or power, it is only his name, Jehovah, that embodies all that he is and can become.

The name reveals God’s interest in us. The meaning of God’s name implies his ongoing attachment to his creation, which includes us. Moreover, the fact that God has made his name known indicates that he wants us to know him. After all, he took the initiative to tell us his name before we even knew to ask for it. Clearly, God wants us to view him, not as some vague and distant deity, but as a real Person we can draw close to.—Psalm 73:28.

Using God’s name reveals our interest in him. To illustrate, you may ask someone you hope to befriend to call you by your given name. How would you feel if that person persistently refused to use your name? In time you would likely wonder whether that person really wanted to be close to you. So it goes with God. Jehovah has told mankind his name, and he encourages us to use it. When we do, we show Jehovah that we want to get close to him. Why, he even notices “those medi-

tating on [or, “treasuring,” footnote] his name!” —Malachi 3:16.

Learning God’s name is the vital first step in knowing him. But we must not stop there. We need to discover the Person behind the name. We need to learn what he is like.

WHAT IS GOD’S NAME?

God’s name is Jehovah. That name uniquely identifies God as a Person who can accomplish his purpose

WHERE DID GOD COME FROM?

That is a question many have wondered about. Perhaps you have too. It might be put this way: If the universe and everything in it had to have a cause or a creator, where did God come from?

Scientists generally agree that the material universe had a beginning. In harmony with this basic concept, the first verse of the Bible says: “***In the beginning*** God created the heavens and the earth.”—Genesis 1:1.

The universe could not have created itself; it could not have come from nothing. ***Nothing*** cannot produce ***something***. If nothing existed before the beginning of the universe, there would be no universe today. Though it is hard for us to comprehend fully, an eternal, nonmaterial first cause was necessary. Jehovah God, an infinitely powerful and wise spirit being, is that First Cause. —John 4:24.

The Bible says of God: “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the productive land, ***from everlasting to everlasting***, you are God.” (Psalm 90:2) Thus, God himself has always existed. Then, “in the beginning” he created the material universe.—Revelation 4:11.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

The more we discern someone's qualities, the better we know that person, and thus our friendship can deepen. Similarly, the more we come to know Jehovah's qualities, the better we will know what he is like, and thus our friendship can deepen. Of all God's wonderful attributes, four are outstanding: his power, wisdom, justice, and love.

GOD IS POWERFUL

"O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Look! You made the heavens and the earth by your great power."

—JEREMIAH 32:17.

Evidence of God's power is seen in creation. For example, when you stand outside on a bright summer day, what do you feel on your skin? The warmth of the sun. Actually, you are feeling the results of Jehovah's creative power. How powerful is the sun? At its core, its temperature is said

to be about 27,000,000 degrees Fahrenheit (15,000,000°C). Every second, the sun emits energy equivalent to the explosion of many hundreds of millions of nuclear bombs.

Yet our sun is small compared to many of the untold trillions of stars in the universe. Scientists estimate that one of the largest stars, named UY Scuti, has a diameter about 1,700 times that of the sun. If UY Scuti replaced the sun, it would engulf the earth and extend beyond the orbit of the planet Jupiter. Perhaps that helps us to grasp more ful-



ly Jeremiah's statement that Jehovah God made the heavens and the earth, that is, the universe, by his great power.

How do we benefit from God's power? Our life depends on God's physical creations, such as the sun and all the wonderful resources on earth. In addition, God uses his power to benefit humans in a personal way. How? In the first century, God granted power to Jesus to perform deeds that were truly miraculous. We read: "The blind are now seeing and the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up." (Matthew 11:5) What about today? "He gives power to the tired one," says the Bible, adding: "Those hoping in Jehovah will regain power." (Isaiah 40:29, 31) God can supply "power beyond what is normal" to enable us to deal with or endure the hardships and trials of life. (2 Corinthians 4:7) Do you not feel drawn to a God who so lovingly uses his limitless power in our behalf?

GOD IS WISE

"How many your works are, O Jehovah! You have made all of them in wisdom."—PSALM 104:24.

The more we learn about the things God has made, the more we find ourselves awed by his wisdom. In fact, there is a field of study called biomimetics, or biomimicry, in which scientists examine Jehovah's creation and borrow elements of design found in nature to enhance their own designs. These range from a simple fastener to the design of airplanes.

God's wisdom is seen nowhere more marvelously than in the human body. Consider, for example, the way a human baby develops. The process begins with one fertilized cell, which contains all the genetic instructions needed. That cell divides into many cells that look alike. But at just the right time, the cells begin to form differently, resulting in hundreds of distinct types, such as blood cells, nerve cells, and bone cells. Soon organ systems

appear and start to function. In just nine months, that original cell develops into a complete infant made up of billions of cells. The wisdom seen in such design moves many to agree with the Bible writer who said: "I praise you because in an awe-inspiring way I am wonderfully made."—Psalm 139:14.

How do we benefit from God's wisdom? The Creator knows what we need to be happy. Drawing from his vast knowledge and understanding, he provides wise counsel in his Word, the Bible. For example, it urges: "Continue . . . forgiving one another freely." (Colossians 3:13) Is that wise counsel? Yes. Research has found that being forgiving can improve one's sleep and lower one's blood pressure. It may also reduce the risk of depression and other health issues. God is like a wise, caring friend who never ceases to give us helpful and beneficial advice. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Would you not want to have such a friend?

The human eye
is a marvel of creation



GOD IS JUST

“Jehovah loves justice.”—PSALM 37:28.

God always does what is right. In fact, “it is unthinkable for the true God to act wickedly, for the Almighty to do wrong!” (Job 34:10) His judgments are upright, as the psalmist said when addressing Jehovah: “You will judge the peoples fairly.” (Psalm 67:4) Because “Jehovah sees into the heart,” he cannot be fooled by hypocrisy but is always able to perceive the truth and make accurate judgments. (1 Samuel 16:7) Furthermore, God is aware of every act of injustice and corruption on earth, and he has promised that soon “the wicked . . . will be cut off from the earth.”—Proverbs 2:22.

However, God is not a harsh judge who is eager to punish. He shows mercy when appropriate. The Bible says: “Jehovah is merciful and compassionate,” even toward wicked ones if they sincerely re-

pent. Is that not true justice?—Psalm 103:8; 2 Peter 3:9.

How do we benefit from God’s justice? The apostle Peter stated: “God is not partial, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) We benefit from God’s justice because he never shows partiality or favoritism. We can be accepted by him and be his worshippers regardless of our race, nationality, education, or social standing.

Because God wants us to understand and benefit from his justice, he has provided us with a conscience. The Scriptures describe the conscience as a law ‘written in our hearts,’ which ‘bears witness’ as to whether our behavior is right or wrong. (Romans 2:15) How do we benefit? Properly trained, our conscience can motivate us to turn away from harmful or unjust actions. And if we do make a mistake, it can move us to repent and correct our

God is impartial, and we can benefit from his impartiality regardless of our race or social standing



course. Indeed, an understanding of God's sense of justice helps us and draws us to him!

GOD IS LOVE

"God is love."—1 JOHN 4:8.

God displays power, wisdom, and justice, but the Bible does not say that God *is* power, wisdom, or justice. It says that he *is* love. Why? Because it can truthfully be said that God's power *enables* him to act and his justice and wisdom *guide* the way he acts. But Jehovah's love *motivates* him to act. Love influences everything that he does.

Although Jehovah did not lack anything, his love moved him to create intelligent beings, both heavenly and earthly, who can benefit from and enjoy his love and care. He unselfishly prepared the earth to be the ideal home for his human creation. And he continues to show love to all humans in that "he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good and makes it rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Matthew 5:45.

In addition, "Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (James 5:11) He expresses affection toward those who sincerely take steps to know and draw close to him. God sees such people as individuals. In fact, "he cares for *you*."—1 Peter 5:7.

How do we benefit from God's love? We enjoy the beauty of a sunset. We delight to hear a baby's laughter. We cherish the love of a close family member. These may not be essential things, but they enrich our life immeasurably.

We also benefit from another expression of God's love: prayer. The Bible urges us: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God." Like a loving father, he wants us to turn to him for help with our most intimate concerns. Then Jehovah, in his unselfish love, promises to provide "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

Has this brief discussion of God's principal attributes—such as his power, wisdom, justice, and love—helped you to get a better picture of what God is like? To further your appreciation of God, we invite you to learn what he has done and will yet do for your benefit.



WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Jehovah is more powerful, wise, and just than anyone else. But his most appealing quality is his love

WHAT HAS GOD DONE?

If you want to get to know someone well, it is helpful if you learn what he has accomplished and the challenges he has overcome. Similarly, if you want to know God well, you need to learn what he has done. As you do, you may be surprised to discover how much of what he did in the past benefits us now and involves our future.

GOD CREATED ALL THINGS FOR OUR GOOD

Jehovah God is the Grand Creator, and his “invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made.” (Romans 1:20) “He is the Maker of the earth by his *power*, the One who established the productive land by his *wisdom* and who stretched out the heavens by his *understanding*.” (Jeremiah 10:12) The wonders of creation also reveal God’s interest in us.

Consider how Jehovah enriched our life by creating humans “in his image.” (Genesis 1:27) That means he made it possible for us to reflect in a small way his incomparable qualities. He en-

dowed us with spiritual capacity, or the ability to understand his views and values. As we endeavor to live by these, we enjoy greater happiness and meaning in life. More than that, he gave us the potential for building a relationship with him.

The earth testifies to how God feels about us. In the words of the apostle Paul, God “did not leave himself without witness in that he did good, giving [us] rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying [us] with food and filling [our] hearts with gladness.” (Acts 14:17) God supplied more than the mere necessities for our survival. He provided abundantly in quantity and variety so we could enjoy life. All of this is but a glimmer of what he intended for us.



Jehovah created the earth so that humans could live forever on it. The Bible states: “The earth he has given to the sons of men,” and he “did not create it simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited.” (Psalm 115:16; Isaiah 45:18) Inhabited by whom and for how long? “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29.

Accordingly, Jehovah created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and settled them in an earthly paradise “to cultivate it and to take care of it.” (Genesis 2:8, 15) God gave them an exciting twofold assignment: “Be fruitful and become many, fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:28) Thus Adam and Eve had before them the hope of enjoying unending life on earth. Sadly, they chose to disobey God and for that reason lost the prospect of being among “the righteous” who “will possess the earth.” However, as we will see, their actions have not changed Jehovah’s purpose for us or the earth. First, though, let us consider something else God has done.

GOD PROVIDED HIS WRITTEN WORD

The Bible is also known as God’s Word. Why did Jehovah provide the Bible for us? Primarily so that we can learn about him. (Proverbs 2:1-5) True, the Bible does not answer every question we might have about God—no book ever could. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Yet everything that the Bible does contain helps us to know God. We see who he is by how he deals with people. We observe the sort of individuals he likes and dislikes. (Psalm 15:1-5) We learn his views on worship, morality, and material things. And the Bible gives us the most intimate portrait of Jehovah’s personality through the words and actions of his Son, Jesus Christ. —John 14:9.

Another reason Jehovah provided his Word, the Bible, is so that we can know how to live a happy, purposeful life. Through the Bible, Jehovah tells us how to have a happy family, how to be con-

tent, and how to cope with anxiety. And as explained later in this magazine, the Bible contains the answers to life’s big questions, such as: Why is there so much suffering? What will the future hold? It also explains what God has done to see that his original purpose is fulfilled.

The Bible is truly a remarkable book—a divine achievement—in many other ways. It was written over a period of 1,600 years by some 40 men, yet it retains a central theme because God is its real Author. (2 Timothy 3:16) Unlike other ancient works, it has been accurately preserved down through the ages, as verified by thousands of ancient Bible manuscripts. What is more, the Bible has prevailed over efforts made to keep it from being translated, distributed, and read. Today it is the most widely distributed and translated book. The Bible’s existence is proof that “the word of our God endures forever.”—Isaiah 40:8.

GOD GUARANTEED HIS PURPOSE

Yet another of God’s achievements is the special provision he made to guarantee his purpose for us. As mentioned earlier, God intended that humans live forever on earth. However, when Adam chose to disobey God and thereby sinned, he lost the opportunity for everlasting life not only for himself but also for his future children. “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) Man’s disobedience thus challenged God’s purpose. How did Jehovah react?

Jehovah’s actions were consistent with his character. He justly held Adam and Eve accountable for their actions, but he lovingly made provisions for their future offspring. In his wisdom Jehovah determined how to deal with the challenge, and he immediately announced a solution. (Genesis 3:15) The way out from sin and death would be provided through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. What did that involve?

To redeem humans from the effects of Adam's rebellion, Jehovah sent Jesus to the earth to teach people the way to life and to "give his life as a ransom in exchange for many."* (Matthew 20:28; John 14:6) Jesus could provide the ransom because he was a perfect man like Adam. But unlike Adam, Jesus maintained perfect obedience, even to the point of death. Since Jesus did not deserve to die, Jehovah resurrected him back to heavenly life. Jesus could now do what Adam failed to do—pass on to obedient humans the prospect of everlasting life. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one person many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19) Through Jesus' ransom sacrifice, God will fulfill his promise to have mankind live forever on earth.

We learn much about Jehovah from the way he dealt with the challenges posed by Adam's disobedience. We see that nothing can prevent Jehovah from finishing what he started; his word will meet with "sure success." (Isaiah 55:11) We also appreciate the magnitude of Jehovah's love for us. "By this the love of God was revealed in our case, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:9, 10.

God "did not even spare his own Son but handed him over for us all," so we are assured that God will "kindly give us all other things" that he has promised. (Romans 8:32) What has God promised that he will do for us? Read on.

* For more details about the ransom, see chapter 5 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.



WHAT HAS GOD DONE?

Jehovah created humans to live forever on the earth. He provided the Bible so that we could learn about him. Through Jesus Christ, Jehovah provided the ransom, thus ensuring that his purpose will be realized

WHAT WILL GOD DO?

If you were in difficulty, you would no doubt expect a good friend to do something to help you. With that in mind, some say that God is not a friend because they feel God is not doing anything in their behalf. In reality, not only has God already done many things for our benefit but he will also take action to deal with all the problems and suffering we face today. What will God do?

END ALL WICKEDNESS

God will end all wickedness by eliminating its source. The Bible identifies what that source is when it says: “The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) That “wicked one” is none other than the one Jesus called “the ruler of this world,” Satan the Devil. (John 12:31) Satan’s influence on the world of mankind is the root cause of the distressing conditions on earth. What will God do?

Jehovah God will soon take action through his Son, Jesus Christ, to “bring to nothing the one having the means to cause death, that is, the Devil.” (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8) In fact, the Bible shows that the Devil himself knows that “he has a short period of time” before his destruction. (Revelation 12:12) God will also do away with all who cause wickedness.—Psalm 37:9; Proverbs 2:22.

MAKE THE EARTH A PARADISE

After eliminating all wickedness from the earth, our Creator will take action to fulfill his eternal purpose regarding mankind and the earth. What can we look forward to?

Lasting peace and security. “The meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37:11.

Ample and wholesome food. “There will be an abundance of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains it will overflow.”—Psalm 72:16.

Suitable homes and satisfying work. “They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. . . . The work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full.” —Isaiah 65:21, 22.

Do you long to see such conditions? They will soon be an everyday experience for all.

ERADICATE SICKNESS AND DEATH

Everyone is subject to sickness and death today, but that will not be the case much longer. God will soon apply the benefits of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice so that “everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) What will be the result?

Sickness will be eradicated. “No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’ The people dwelling in the land will be pardoned for their error.”—Isaiah 33:24.

Death will no longer plague mankind. “He will swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces.” —Isaiah 25:8.

People will live forever. “The gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.” —Romans 6:23.

Those who have died will be brought back. “There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15) They will benefit from God’s gift of the ransom.

How will God accomplish all of this?

ESTABLISH A PERFECT GOVERNMENT

God will accomplish his purpose for mankind and the earth by means of a heavenly government, with Christ Jesus as the appointed Ruler. (Psalm 110:1, 2) It is the government, or kingdom, that Jesus taught his followers to pray for in these words: “Our Father in the heavens, . . . let your Kingdom come.”—Matthew 6:9, 10.

God’s Kingdom will exercise authority over the earth and eliminate all woes and suffering from its realm. This Kingdom is the best government mankind could ever have! That is why Jesus exerted himself to declare “the good news of the Kingdom” during his earthly ministry and told his disciples to do the same.—Matthew 4:23; 24:14.

Out of his great love for his human creation, Jehovah God has promised to do all these wonderful things for them. Does that not make you want to know him and draw close to him? What will your choosing to do so mean for you? The next article will explain.

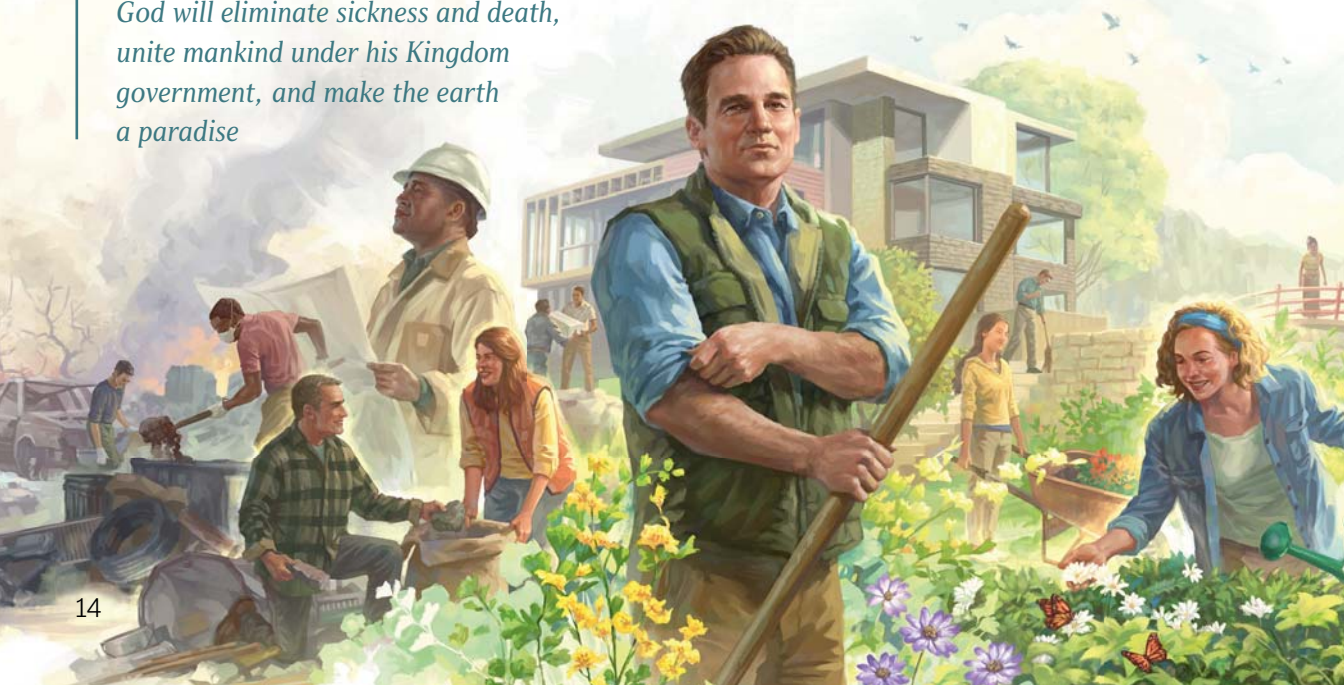
WHAT IS GOD’S KINGDOM?

- It is a heavenly government by God that will accomplish his will.—Genesis 1:28; Matthew 6:9, 10.
- It is ruled by a divinely appointed King with all authority in heaven and on earth.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:2-4; Matthew 28:18.
- It is governed by Jesus’ teachings based on God’s laws.—Matthew 22:37-39; James 2:8.
- It is already in operation, with millions of people making known the “good news of the Kingdom” worldwide.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.*

* For more information about the Kingdom and its rule, see chapter 8 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.

WHAT WILL GOD DO?

God will eliminate sickness and death, unite mankind under his Kingdom government, and make the earth a paradise



WHAT CAN KNOWING GOD MEAN FOR YOU?

Up to this point, we have taken progressive steps to find the answer to the question, Who is God? We began by seeing in the Bible that his name is Jehovah and that his dominant quality is love. We also considered what he has done and what he will yet do for the benefit of his human creation. Though there is much more to learn about God, you might wonder what doing so can mean for you.

Jehovah promises that “if you search for him, he will let himself be found by you.” (1 Chronicles 28:9) Imagine the precious gift that awaits you as you search and come to know God—a “close friendship with Jehovah”! (Psalm 25:14) What can such a friendship mean for you?

Genuine happiness. Jehovah is described as “the happy God.” (1 Timothy 1:11) Becoming close to him and imitating his ways will bring you genuine happiness, which can benefit you emotionally, mentally, and physically. (Psalm 33:12) You will also be able to build a happy life—by avoiding damaging lifestyles, cultivating healthful habits, and maintaining good relations with others. You will come to agree with what the psalmist said: “Drawing near to God is good for me.”—Psalm 73:28.

Personal care and attention. Jehovah promised his servants: “I will give you advice with my eye upon you.” (Psalm 32:8) That means that Jehovah gives his servants personal attention and tai-

lors his care to fit their individual needs. (Psalm 139:1, 2) Once you have developed a proper relationship with Jehovah, you will find that he is always there for you.

A grand future. In addition to offering you the key to a happy and satisfying life now, Jehovah God also opens to you a marvelous future. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) The Bible states: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) In these turbulent times, the hope that God offers can act like an anchor that keeps us “sure and firm.”—Hebrews 6:19.

These are but a few of the many important reasons to get to know God better and to develop a personal relationship with him. You are welcome to talk with any one of Jehovah’s Witnesses or visit jw.org for more helpful information.



You Can Be Close to God

SOME PEOPLE FEEL THAT . . .

God has little interest in us or that he is lofty, holy, and unapproachable.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.”—James 4:8.

“Throw all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE CLOSE TO GOD?

- Talk to him.—Psalm 145:18, 19.
- Listen to him.—Psalm 32:8.
- Follow his directions.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.
- Do not give up.—Matthew 7:7, 8.



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What Can the Bible Teach Us?

For more information about how to draw close to God, see chapter 1 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at **www.jw.org**

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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A photograph of a young woman with reddish-brown hair, seen in profile from the chest up. She is looking down and to the right with a thoughtful or somber expression. She is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and other people, suggesting a park or public space. The lighting is warm, possibly from the setting or rising sun, creating a soft glow on her hair and face.

**Is Life
Worth
Living?**

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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When Life Seems Unbearable



LIFE can be pure bliss—when all goes well. But what if circumstances make your life seem unbearable?

For instance, Sally,* in the United States, who lost most of her possessions in a hurricane, explains: “I didn’t know how much more I could take. Many days I felt that I was near the breaking point.”

Or what if a loved one dies? Janice, in Australia, says: “When I lost both my sons, I had to gather the fragments of my shattered life and reassemble them as best I could. I begged God: ‘Please, my heart can’t take any more! Just let me sleep. I don’t want to wake up again.’”

Daniel, on the other hand, was devastated when his wife was unfaithful. He explains: “When my wife confessed that she had been unfaithful, it was like a knife pierced my heart. I felt this physical pain stabbing me again and again—and it lasted several months.”

This issue of *The Watchtower* will consider how life can be worth living even when

Disaster strikes

A loved one dies

A spouse is unfaithful

You are dealing with a serious illness

Life becomes unbearable

So, first, how can we cope when disaster strikes?

* Some names in this series of articles have been changed.



When Disaster Strikes

“Our first feeling was total despair. Everything we owned had been destroyed by a mudslide and flooding.”—Andrew, Sierra Leone.

“After the hurricane, we returned to our home. Nothing was left. We were speechless. My daughter dropped to her knees and wept.”—David, Virgin Islands.

IF YOU have ever survived a disaster, you may understand what other survivors have experienced: shock, denial, confusion, anxiety, and nightmares. Many disheartened and fatigued survivors have little motivation to move on in life.

If your life has been devastated by a disaster, you too may feel that you are near the breaking point. You may even begin to feel that your life is not worth living. However, the Bible explains that your life is worth living and that you can have a firm basis for hope in a better future.

KNOWING BIBLE TRUTH MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING

Ecclesiastes 7:8 says: “Better is the end of a matter than its beginning.” When you are just beginning to recover from a disaster, life may seem hopeless. But as you patiently work at rebuilding your life, things can get better.

The Bible foretells a time when “no more will there be heard . . . the sound of weeping or a cry of distress.” (Isaiah 65:19) This will be true when the earth is transformed into a paradise under God’s Kingdom. (Psalm 37:11, 29) Disasters will be a thing of the past. Any painful memories and lingering trauma will be wiped out forever, because Almighty God promises: “The former things will

not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart.”—Isaiah 65:17.

Just think: The Creator has arranged “to give you a future and a hope”—a peaceful life under God’s perfect rulership. (Jeremiah 29:11) Can having knowledge of this truth help make your life worth living? Sally, quoted in the opening article, states, “Reminding yourself of all the wonderful things that God’s Kingdom is going to do for us in the future can help you let go of the past and get through the present.”

Why not learn more about what God’s Kingdom will soon do for mankind? Doing so can assure you that despite the disaster you have suffered, your life is worth living now as you eagerly await a disaster-free future. In the meantime, the Bible provides practical guidance that can help you to cope with the aftermath of a disaster. Consider a few examples.

Bible Verses That Can Help

Get needed rest.

“Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind.”—**Ecclesiastes 4:6.**

Researchers report that after a traumatic experience, “a lack of quality sleep . . . can exacerbate your trauma symptoms and make it harder to maintain your emotional balance.” Therefore, it is wise to get sufficient rest.

Discuss your feelings.

“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down [or, “depresses him,” footnote], but a good word cheers it up.”

—**Proverbs 12:25.**

Confide in a family member or trusted friend. In addition to providing a listening ear, family members or close friends can provide words of encouragement and give practical help.*

* A person who experiences prolonged stress or severe anxiety may need to seek medical treatment.

Look ahead to better times.

“There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God’s] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”

—**2 Peter 3:13.**



When a Loved One Dies

“I felt helpless when my older brother died unexpectedly. Months later I would suddenly remember him and feel sick, as if a knife were stabbing me deep inside. At times, I was also angry. Why did my brother have to die? And I felt guilty for not having spent more time with him.”—Vanessa, Australia.

IF YOU have lost someone you love in death, you too may have felt a wide range of emotions, from sorrow to loneliness and helplessness. Perhaps you have also felt anger, guilt, and fear. You may have even wondered whether life is still worth living.

Be assured that grief is not a sign of weakness. It indicates how much your loved one meant to you. However, is it possible to find a measure of relief from your painful grief?

HOW SOME HAVE COPED

While your pain can seem unending, you may find the following suggestions consoling:

ALLOW YOURSELF TIME TO GRIEVE

Not everyone grieves in the same way or for the same amount of time. Still, crying can provide an outlet for fragile emotions. Vanessa, quoted earlier, says: “I would just cry; I needed to release the pain.” Sofia, whose sister died suddenly, says: “Confronting my thoughts and feelings is very painful, like opening and cleaning an infected wound. The pain is almost unbearable, but it allows the wound to heal.”

TALK ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Understandably, at times you may wish to be alone. But grief is a heavy burden to carry by your-

Bible Verses That Can Help

God cares about your grief and tears.

One Bible writer said to God: “Do collect my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not recorded in your book?”—**Psalm 56:8.**

You can pour out your heart to God.

“Before [God] I tell about my distress . . . I call to you, O Jehovah,* for help.”—**Psalm 142:2, 5.**

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

self. Seventeen-year-old Jared, who lost his father, recalls: “I talked about my emotions with others. I doubt I made much sense, but it was good just to be able to express myself.” Janice, quoted in the opening article, adds another benefit: “Talking with others was tremendously comforting. I felt understood, and I didn’t feel so alone.”

ACCEPT HELP

One doctor says: “The bereaved who allow friends and relatives to help them through [the] initial period [of shock] tend to continue to move with some ease through the different phases of grief.” Let your friends know what they can do to help; they likely want to but might not know how. —Proverbs 17:17.

DRAW CLOSER TO GOD

Tina says: “When I suddenly lost my husband to cancer, I could no longer confide in him, so I would tell God everything! I started each day asking him to help me get through the day. God helped me in more ways than I can mention.” Tarsha, who was 22 years old when her mother died, says: “Bible reading was my daily source of comfort. It gave me something encouraging to think about.”

VISUALIZE THE RESURRECTION

Tina continues: “Initially, the resurrection hope didn’t comfort me because I needed my husband—and my boys needed their father—right then. However, now, four years later, I cling to this hope. It’s a lifeline for me. I imagine seeing him again, and it brings me such peace and joy!”

You are not likely to experience instant relief from your grief. Nevertheless, Vanessa’s experience can be reassuring. She says, “You think you’ll never get through it, but you will see brighter days.”

Remember, while the void you feel in your heart may not disappear, life is still worth living. With God’s tender help, you can still enjoy warm friendships and a purposeful life. And soon God *will* resurrect the dead. He wants you to be able to embrace your loved one again. Then that pain in your heart will be healed forever!

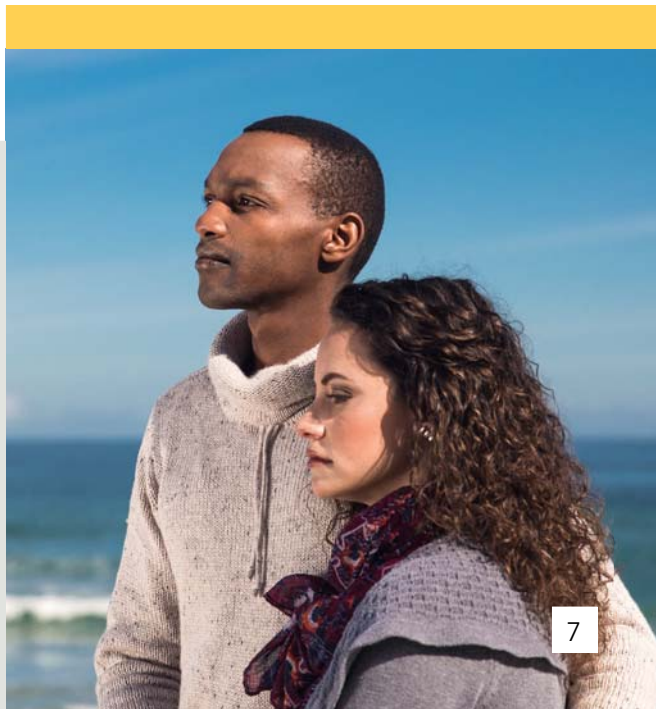
You can have hope.

“There is going to be a resurrection.”

—Acts 24:15.

God promises to bring back to life countless people who have died, and he yearns to do so.*—Job 14:14, 15, footnote.

* For more information about the resurrection, see chapter 7 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available for free download at www.jw.org.





When a Spouse Is Unfaithful

“I wanted to die when my husband said that he was leaving me for a younger woman. It all seemed so unfair, especially when I remembered the sacrifices I had made for him.”—Maria, Spain.

“When my wife suddenly left me, it seemed that something died inside me. Our dreams, our hopes, and our plans had been destroyed. There were days when I thought I was free from anxiety, only to find myself back in the depths of despair.”—Bill, Spain.

MARITAL unfaithfulness is devastating. True, some mates have found that they can forgive a repentant spouse and rebuild their relationship.* But whether the marriage survives or not, those who discover that their mate has been unfaithful invariably suffer intense agony. How can such ones deal with their fragile emotions?

BIBLE VERSES THAT CAN HELP

Despite the heartache, many innocent spouses have found comfort in the Scriptures. They have learned that God sees their tears and shares their pain.—Malachi 2:13-16.

“When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.”—**Psalms 94:19.**

“As I read that verse, I imagined Jehovah soothing my pain tenderly, as a compassionate father would,” recalls Bill.

“With someone loyal you act in loyalty.”—**Psalms 18:25.**

“My husband had not been loyal,” explains Carmen, whose husband had been unfaithful for

months. “But I could trust in Jehovah’s loyalty. He would never let me down.”

“Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication . . . let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts.”
—**Philippians 4:6, 7.**

“I read this text over and over again,” says Sasha. “As I prayed more and more, God gave me peace in my life.”

All those quoted above felt like giving up at times. But they trusted in Jehovah God and drew strength from his Word. Bill put it this way: “My faith gave meaning to my life when everything else seemed to have collapsed. Though I walked for a time ‘in the valley of deep shadow,’ God was with me.”—**Psalms 23:4.**

* For a discussion of whether to forgive or not, see the series in *Awake!* of April 22, 1999, “When a Mate Is Unfaithful.”

How Some Have Coped

Meditate on comforting scriptures.

“I read the book of Job and then the Psalms,” explains Bill, “underlining every passage that seemed to fit my own circumstances. I realized that these Bible writers had experienced the kind of pain and anxiety that I was feeling.”

Find consolation in music.

“When I could not sleep at night, I listened to music,” Carmen remembers. “This was a great source of comfort.” Daniel says: “I learned to play the guitar and found that the harmony needed for the music helped me recover my inner peace and harmony.”

Talk about your feelings.

“I was not used to talking about my feelings,” Daniel says. “But I had some good friends, and I reached out to them every day. I unburdened my feelings on them, both in writing and in conversation. That really helped.” Sasha says: “The help of my family was crucial. My mother was always there for me. If I wanted to talk, she was there to listen. My father also made me feel secure, and he helped me recover at my own pace.”

Persist in prayer.

“I prayed constantly,” says Carmen. “I felt that God was near to me, listening to me, and helping me. Through this terrible time, I drew closer to God.”



When You Have a Serious Illness

“When I learned that I had cancer in my lung and colon, I thought that I had just received a death sentence. But after I got home from the doctor, I thought, ‘OK, it’s not what I expected, but I have to find a way to deal with this.’”—Linda, aged 71.

“I suffer from a debilitating nerve syndrome on the left side of my face. On occasion, the severe pain has caused me to fall into depression. Many times, I felt alone and even contemplated suicide.”
—Elise, aged 49.

IF YOU or a loved one has been diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening illness, you know how distressing it can be. In addition to the disease itself, you have to deal with fragile emotions. Fear and anxiety can be intensified by nerve-racking medical appointments, difficulty obtain-

ing or paying for treatment, or the unpleasant side effects of medications. The mental anguish associated with serious illness can be overwhelming.

Where can we turn for assistance? Many have found that their greatest comfort comes from

Bible Verses That Can Help

Lean on God.

“I inquired of Jehovah, and he answered me. He rescued me from all my fears. This lowly one called, and Jehovah heard.”

—**Psalms 34:4, 6.**

Linda, quoted earlier, says: “I never pray, ‘Make me better.’ I always pray, ‘Help me be strong, and help me to endure my illness.’”

Draw strength from God’s Word.

“No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”

—**Isaiah 33:24.**

Tap into the sustaining power of hope by meditating on God’s promises for the future.

leaning on God in prayer and reading comforting passages found in the Bible. Another help may come through the love and support that family and friends can provide.

HOW SOME HAVE COPED

“Face illness with your faith in God,” advised 58-year-old Robert, “and he will carry you through. Go to Jehovah in prayer. Let him know how you feel. Ask him for holy spirit. Ask him for strength to be strong for the family and to allow you to go through your illness with dignity.

“It means so much when your family supports you emotionally, when they are there for you. I get phone calls every day from one or two who ask, ‘How are you doing?’ I get encouragement from friends all over. They definitely give me a boost, and that helps me to keep going.”

If you are a friend visiting a sick person, note what Linda points out: “The patient no doubt wants to lead as normal a life as possible and may not always want to talk about the sickness. So talk about the things you usually talk about.”

With strength from God and comfort from the Scriptures, as well as the support of loving family and friends, we can maintain our assurance that life is worth living, even when we are enduring a serious illness.



Seek support from family and friends.

“A true friend shows love at all times and is a brother who is born for times of distress.”—**Proverbs 17:17.**

“Do not isolate yourself,” advises Elise, quoted earlier. “Allow your friends to help you. There might be times when you feel alone and you don’t even think that God is listening, but do not isolate yourself.”



When You Feel You Cannot Go On

“These feelings were relentless,” admits Adriana, from Brazil. “So I concluded that it would be better to end my life.”

HAVE YOU ever felt so bad that you no longer wanted to live? Then you may understand how Adriana felt. She suffered from acute anxiety and felt sad and hopeless. Adriana was diagnosed with clinical depression.

Consider, too, a Japanese man named Kaoru, who cared for his sickly, aged parents. “At the time, I was overwhelmed by extreme pressure at work,” he explains. “In time I lost my appetite, and my sleep was terribly disturbed. I came to think how relieved I would be if I could just die.”

A Nigerian man named Ojebode says, “I was always sad to the point of shedding tears, so I looked for a means to end my life.” Thankfully, Ojebode, Kaoru, and Adriana did not take their lives. But every year hundreds of thousands do.

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Most people who commit suicide are men, many of whom felt too ashamed to ask for help. Jesus said that sick people need a physician. (Luke 5:31) So if you have such feelings, please do not be ashamed to seek help. Many people who suffer from depression have found that medical treatment can help them to cope. Ojebode, Kaoru, and Adriana all received professional help and now cope much better.

Doctors may use medication or talk therapy or both to treat depression. Those who suffer also need the empathetic support of patient, caring family and friends. The best friend anyone can have is Jehovah God, who provides wonderful help in his Word, the Bible.

IS THERE A PERMANENT SOLUTION?

Victims of depression often need prolonged treatment and have to learn how to cope by making adjustments to their lifestyle. But if you struggle with depression, you can look forward to a bright future, as does Ojebode. He says, “I look forward to seeing the fulfillment of Isaiah 33:24, which foretells the time when no one on earth will say ‘I am sick.’” Like Ojebode, take comfort in God’s promise of “a new earth,” where “pain” will be no more. (Revelation 21:1, 4) That promise includes an end to all mental and emotional pain. Your painful feelings will be gone forever. Never again will your painful feelings “be called to mind, nor will they come up into [your] heart.”—Isaiah 65:17.

Bible Verses That Can Help

God understands your feelings.

“I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, . . . saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I will help you.’”

—**Isaiah 41:13.**

Jehovah understands our feelings better than anyone else, and he wants to help us.

Meditate on God’s Word.

“[Elijah] asked that he might die. He said: ‘ . . . O Jehovah, take my life away.’”—**1 Kings 19:4.**

“Meditating on God’s Word helped me,” says Ojebode. “I realized that the prophet Elijah once felt just as I did.”

Learn from Bible examples.

“I [Jesus] have made supplication for you [Peter] that your faith may not give out.”—**Luke 22:32.**

After the apostle Peter denied Jesus three times, his feelings were hard for him to bear and he wept bitterly. “Peter’s experience,” says Kaoru, “helped me to see that Jehovah and Jesus cared about Peter’s feelings. This encouraged me.”

Never again will your painful feelings “be called to mind, nor will they come up into [your] heart.”—**Isaiah 65:17**



Why Life IS Worth Living

Faizal required major heart surgery just over a year after his wife died. He says: “When I read the book of Job, I know Jehovah put it there for a reason. When we find an example in the Bible that we can relate to, it is a way of soothing our pain of heart.” He adds: “Life is still worth living.”

Tarsha was young when her mother died. She says: “Knowing our Creator is what gives life purpose, hope, and joy despite all the things we may have to deal with. Jehovah is more than capable of sustaining us and helping us to get through each day.”

THE PRECEDING articles show how various traumatic events can make life seem unbearable. As you carry your own personal burden, you may wonder if life is worthwhile or whether anyone even cares about you. Be assured that God does care about your distress. You are precious to him.

The writer of Psalm 86 expressed confidence toward God: “I call on you in the day of my distress, for you will answer me.” (Psalm 86:7) You may wonder, though, ‘How will God answer me “in the day of my distress”?’

Although God may not take away your problems immediately, his Word, the Bible, assures you that he can give you inner peace to help you cope: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts.” (Philippians 4:6, 7, footnote) Please consider how the following Bible verses give us assurance of God’s tender care.

God Does Care About You

“Not one [sparrow] is overlooked by God. . . . You are worth more than many sparrows.”

—Luke 12:6, 7, footnote.

CONSIDER: Seemingly insignificant birds are not inconsequential to God. Not even one tiny sparrow escapes God’s notice; every one is a precious living creature. Humans are far more valuable to God than sparrows are. Humans, as the centerpiece of God’s earthly creation, are made in his “image” and are capable of cultivating and displaying his elevated qualities.—Genesis 1:26, 27.

“O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me. . . . You discern my thoughts Examine me, and know my anxious thoughts.”—Psalm 139:1, 2, 23.

CONSIDER: God knows you personally. He knows your most intimate feelings and concerns. While others may not understand your distressing situation, God cares about you and wants to help you. That makes life worth living.

Although you may be troubled and your life may seem to be unbearable, make a careful study of God’s Word and build your faith in the hope that God promises. It will make you happy and confident that life is worth living.

Your Life Has Meaning

“O Jehovah, hear my prayer; let my cry for help reach you. . . . Incline your ear to me; do answer me quickly when I call. . . . He will pay attention to the prayer of the destitute.”

—Psalm 102:1, 2, 17.

CONSIDER: It is as if from the very start of human suffering, Jehovah had been keeping a record of every tear humans have shed. (Psalm 56:8) This includes your tears. God remembers all your trials and tears because you are precious to him.

“Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you . . . I, Jehovah your God, am . . . the One saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I will help you.’”

—Isaiah 41:10, 13.

CONSIDER: God is ready to help you. If you fall down, he will lift you up.

There Is Hope for a Better Future

“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.”—John 3:16.

CONSIDER: You are so dear to God that he willingly gave his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice in your behalf. This sacrifice gives you the prospect of living a happy and purposeful life forever.*

* To learn more about how you can benefit from Jesus' sacrifice, watch the video *Remember Jesus' Death* at www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS > OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY.



“He Cares for You”

Even if others in your life may fail you, there is One who will never leave you. Who is that?

King David of old said: “Even if my own father and mother abandon me, Jehovah himself will take me in.”—Psalm 27:10.

Jehovah is “the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials.”—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

“Throw all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

To learn how God wants to care for you, see chapter 12 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org



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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Is This Life
All There Is?



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THE SAD REALITY OF DEATH



IMAGINE yourself watching a video about a celebrity, perhaps a famous musician whom you admire. It starts with scenes of her childhood, her music lessons, and her endless practice. Then you see her performing in concerts, traveling far and wide, and becoming an international celebrity. Before long, come images of her golden years, and finally as the video ends—she dies.

This video is not fiction, but it provides glimpses of a life that is no more. Whether the subject was a musician, a scientist, an athlete, or some other well-known person, the story would basically be the same. The person might have accomplished much, but do you not wonder how much more he or she could have achieved had it not been for the harsh reality of old age and death?

Sad as it is, this is what awaits us all. (Ecclesiastes 9:5) No matter how hard we try, we have not been able to escape the effects of aging and death. Not only that, our life may be cut short by a sudden accident or a cruel illness. As described in the

Bible, we are like a morning mist that “appears for a little while and then disappears.”—James 4:14.

To some, life seems so uncertain and pointless that they follow the “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die” lifestyle. (1 Corinthians 15:32) But would you not agree that living in such a way is really an acceptance of the sad reality of death? Sooner or later—and especially when undergoing a painful ordeal—you may ask, ‘Is this life all there is?’ Where can you find the answer?

Many today turn to science. Progress in science and medicine has extended our life expectancy. And some scientists are working to extend life even longer. Whatever the outcome of their efforts, the questions remain: Why do we grow old and die? Is there hope that our enemy death will be conquered? The following articles will examine these topics and answer the question, Is this life all there is?

THE SEARCH FOR LONG LIFE

“I have seen the occupation that God has given to the sons of men to keep them occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has even put eternity in their heart.”—**Ecclesiastes 3:10, 11.**

THOSE ancient words of wise King Solomon accurately describe the feelings humans have about life. Perhaps because life is short and death is unavoidable, humans have over the centuries yearned for something better. History has many stories and legends of man’s search for the secret to a long life.

Take, for example, Gilgamesh, a Sumerian king. Many fanciful legends were told about his life. One, as recounted in the Epic of Gilgamesh, purported that he made a dangerous journey to learn how to escape death. He failed in his attempt.

In the fourth century B.C.E., alchemists in China tried to concoct an elixir that was believed to prolong life. They came up with a potion laced with mercury and elements of arsenic. It is thought that this elixir brought death to several Chinese emperors. In medieval Europe, some alchemists attempted to make gold digestible because they believed that its corrosion-resistant properties could extend human life.

Today, some biologists and geneticists are trying to unlock the secret of aging. Like the quest for the “elixir of life,” their search shows that the hope of overcoming aging and death is still very much on people’s minds. But what have been the results of such research?

SEEKING THE CAUSES OF AGING TODAY

Scientists who study the human cell have come up with more than 300 theories to explain why we grow old and die. In recent years, molecular biol-



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A medieval alchemist
in his laboratory

ogists have succeeded in manipulating genes and proteins to slow down the aging process in laboratory animals and in human cells. Such advances have prompted some prominent citizens to finance research on “the problem of death.” What directions have such investigations taken?

Turning back the internal clock. Some biologists believe that a key factor in aging lies in the end sections of our chromosomes, called telomeres. Telomeres protect the genetic information in our cells as they reproduce. But each time the cells divide, the telomeres shorten. Eventually, the cells stop dividing and aging sets in.



Has the manipulating of human genes
led to the secret of long life?

The 2009 Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn and her team identified an enzyme that delays the shortening of the telomeres and, as a result, the aging of the cell. However, their report acknowledges that telomeres “are not magical life extenders—they don’t let us live past the normal human life span as we know it.”

Cellular reprogramming is another approach to curb aging. When our cells become too old to replicate, they may send wrong signals to nearby immune cells, causing inflammation, chronic pain, and disease. Recently, scientists in France have reprogrammed cells taken from elderly people, some of whom were over 100 years old. The research team leader, Professor Jean-Marc Lemaitre, declared that their work demonstrated “the reversibility of aging” in the cells.

CAN SCIENCE LENGTHEN OUR LIVES?

Not all scientists agree that antiaging treatments can prolong human life far beyond what is attainable today. True, human life expectancy has steadily increased since the 19th century. But this is mainly due to better hygiene, successful measures against infectious diseases, and the use of antibiotics and vaccines. Some geneticists believe that the human life span has more or less reached its natural limit.

About 3,500 years ago, the Bible writer Moses acknowledged: “The span of our life is 70 years, or 80 if one is especially strong. But they are filled with trouble and sorrow; they quickly pass by, and away we fly.” (Psalm 90:10) Despite man’s efforts to extend our life span, life remains basically the way Moses described it.

On the other hand, creatures like the red sea urchin or one species of the quahog clam can live over 200 years, and trees like the giant sequoia can live thousands of years. When we compare our life span with that of these and other living things, do we not wonder, ‘Is this life of 70 or 80 years all there is?’

**GOD HAS
“PUT ETERNITY
IN THEIR HEART.”**

—ECCLESIASTES 3:10, 11

WE ARE DESIGNED TO LIVE

WHO OF us does not want to enjoy a long and happy life? Just think how wonderful it would be if we could live forever in health and happiness! We could spend more time with loved ones, travel the world, develop new skills, grow in wisdom, and learn thoroughly about whatever interests us, to our heart's content.



Is such a desire unnatural? Far from it! The Scriptures tell us that God has put that desire within us. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) They also say that “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) Does it make sense that a loving God would create in us a desire to live forever and then make that desire impossible to realize?

Clearly, death is no friend. In fact, the Bible describes it as an unwelcome “enemy.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) For some it comes early; for others it comes later. But it always comes. For many, thinking about it is uncomfortable, even frightening. Will this enemy ever be conquered? Is that really possible?

EVIDENCE FOR HOPE

Would it surprise you to know that it was never God's purpose for humans to die? The Bible book of Genesis provides evidence that it was God's purpose for humans to live forever on earth. Jehovah God took great care to prepare the earth for human habitation. Then he created the first man, Adam, and placed him in a paradise, a garden in Eden. After that, “God saw everything he had made, and look! it was very good.”—Genesis 1:26, 31.

Adam was created perfect, in God's image. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Adam's wife, Eve, too was

without defect of any kind, perfect in mind and body. Jehovah said to them: “Be fruitful and become many, fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving on the earth.”—Genesis 1:28.

To fill the earth with their offspring would take time. Eve would have children, and those children would bear children until the earth became fully inhabited just as God intended. (Isaiah 45:18) Is it reasonable to think that Jehovah would offer Adam and Eve that prospect if they were meant to live only long enough to see their children and perhaps grandchildren, and never know the outcome?

Think, too, about the commission to have the animals in subjection. Adam was told to name the animals, and that would have taken time. (Genesis 2:19) But to have them in subjection would have meant that he would have had to learn about them and to understand how to care for them. That would have taken far more time.

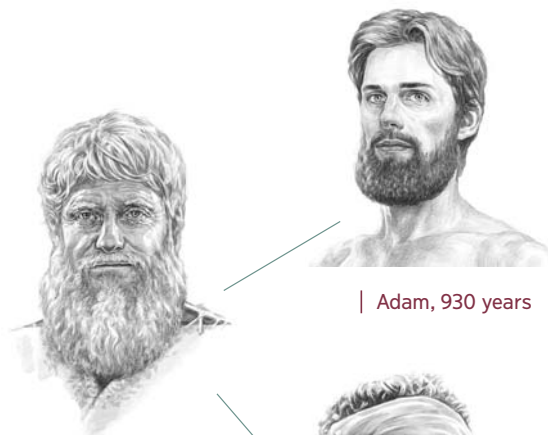
So God’s instructions to fill the earth and to have animals in subjection indicate that the first human couple were designed to live for a long time. In fact, Adam did live for a very long time.

THEY LIVED VERY LONG LIVES

The Bible shows that humans once lived far longer than we do today. It says: “All the days of Adam’s life amounted to 930 years.” Then, it goes on to list six other men who lived for more than 900 years! They were Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Jared, Methuselah, and Noah. All of them lived before the Flood of Noah’s day—Noah having lived for 600 years before the Flood came. (Genesis 5:5-27; 7:6; 9:29) How was such a long life possible?

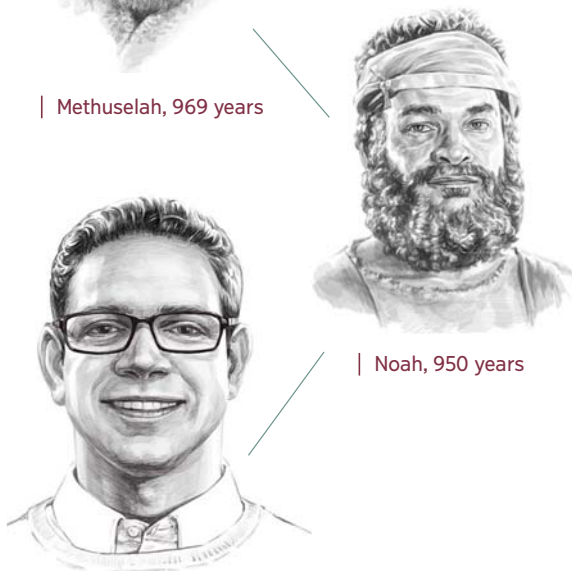
All those men lived close to the time when humans were perfect. Likely that was a major factor in their longevity. But how is perfection linked to living a long life? And how will death be conquered? To find the answers, we first need to understand why we grow old and die.

GOD’S PURPOSE IS FOR HUMANS TO LIVE FOREVER IN AN EARTHLY PARADISE



| Adam, 930 years

| Methuselah, 969 years



| Noah, 950 years

| Today, 70-80 years

WHY DO WE GROW OLD AND DIE?

IT WAS not God's purpose for humans to die. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created perfect in mind and body; they could have been alive today. This is clear from what Jehovah said to Adam concerning a certain tree that grew in the garden of Eden.

"In the day you eat from [the tree]," God told Adam, "you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:17) That command would have made no sense if Adam was meant to grow old and die anyway. Adam knew that if he did not eat from the tree, he would not die.

Adam and Eve did not need to eat from that tree to sustain their life—there were many fruit-bearing trees in the garden. (Genesis 2:9) By not eating from the tree, the first couple would have shown their obedience to the One who gave them life. It would also have shown that they recognized God's right to direct their ways.

WHY ADAM AND EVE DIED

To understand why Adam and Eve died, we need to examine a conversation that had far-reaching effects. Satan the Devil used a serpent to convey a malicious lie. The Bible account says: "Now the serpent was the most cautious of all the wild animals of the field that Jehovah God had made. So it said to the woman: 'Did God really say that you must not eat from every tree of the garden?'" —Genesis 3:1.

To that Eve replied: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But God has said about the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden: 'You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it; otherwise you will die.'" Next the serpent said to her: "You certainly will not die. For God knows that in the very day you eat from it, your eyes will

God told Adam: "In the day you eat from it you will certainly die."

—GENESIS 2:17

be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and bad." Thus, Satan asserted that Jehovah was a liar who was holding back something good from our first parents.—Genesis 3:2-5.

Eve believed what she heard. She gazed at the tree. It looked so pleasing, so desirable! She reached out, took some of the fruit, and began to eat it. Then the Bible says: "Afterward, she also gave some to her husband when he was with her, and he began eating it."—Genesis 3:6.

How it must have saddened God to see that his beloved children had willfully disobeyed him! What did he do? To Adam, Jehovah said: "You will . . . return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:17-19) As it turned out, "all the days of Adam's life amounted to 930 years, and then he died." (Genesis 5:5) Adam did not go to heaven or pass on to some spirit realm. He had no existence before Jehovah created him from the dust of the ground. So when he died, he became as lifeless as



the dust from which he was created. He ceased to exist. How tragic!

PERFECTION IS NOT OURS

Because of their deliberate disobedience, Adam and Eve lost their perfection and the prospect of living forever. They underwent a physical change; they became imperfect and sinful. But their sin of disobedience did not affect them alone. They passed on their sinful condition to their offspring. Romans 5:12 says: “Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.”

The Bible describes sin and death as “the shroud that is enveloping all the peoples and the covering that is woven over all the nations.” (Isaiah 25:7) This shroud envelops humankind like a poisonous mist from which there is no escape. Truly, “in Adam all are dying.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) The question that arises, as posed by the apostle Paul, is: “Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?” Could anyone? —Romans 7:24.

IT WAS NOT GOD’S PURPOSE FOR HUMANS TO DIE

CONQUERING THE ENEMY DEATH—HOW?

EVEN though the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, brought sin and death to all humankind, it did not change God's purpose for the human family. Throughout his written Word, the Bible, God repeatedly confirms that his purpose has not changed.

- “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”
—**Psalms 37:29.**
- “He will swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces.”
—**Isaiah 25:8.**
- “The last enemy, death, is to be brought to nothing.”—**1 Corinthians 15:26.**
- “Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—**Revelation 21:4.**

How will God “swallow up death,” bringing the enemy death “to nothing”? As noted, the Bible clearly says that “the righteous . . . will live forever.” But it also says that “there is no righteous man on earth who always does good.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20) To conquer death, will God abandon his own standard? That is unthinkable! He will never do so, because “God . . . cannot lie.” (Titus 1:2) What, then, will God do to fulfill his loving purpose in creating humans?

CONQUERING DEATH BY PAYING A RANSOM

Jehovah God made a loving provision to redeem mankind from death—by paying a ransom. The

basic idea of a ransom is something of equal value paid to cover damages or satisfy the demands of justice. Since all humans are sinners and under the penalty of death, the Bible frankly says: “None of them can ever redeem a brother or give to God a ransom for him, (the ransom price for their life is so precious that it is always beyond their reach).”—**Psalms 49:7, 8.**

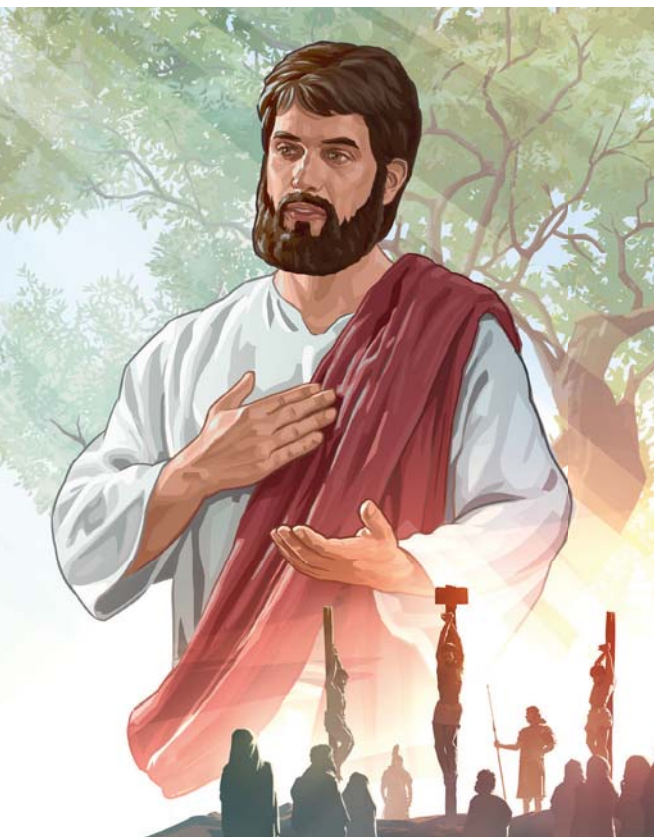
When an imperfect human dies, he can only pay the penalty for his own sins; he cannot redeem himself, nor can he pay for the sins of anyone else. (Romans 6:7) We needed a person who was perfect and sinless to offer his life, not for his own sins, but for our sins.—**Hebrews 10:1-4.**

That is exactly what God arranged to have done. He sent his Son, Jesus, from heaven to be born on earth as a perfect, sinless human. (1 Peter 2:22) Jesus said he came to “give his life as a ransom in exchange for many.” (Mark 10:45) He died to conquer the enemy death so that we may have life.—**John 3:16.**

WHEN WILL DEATH BE CONQUERED?

Today, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, we live in “critical times hard to deal with,” proving that we live in the “last days” of this evil system of things. (2 Timothy 3:1) The last days will culminate in “the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly people.” (2 Peter 3:3, 7) But people who love God will survive that destruction and be blessed with “everlasting life.”—**Matthew 25:46.**

Millions of others will have the opportunity of gaining everlasting life when they are resurrected. Jesus performed a resurrection when he visited the city of Nain. The only son of a widow had died, and Jesus, “moved with pity,” raised him to life



Jesus came to “give his life as a ransom in exchange for many.”—Mark 10:45

again. (Luke 7:11-15) Also, the apostle Paul said: “I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” This solid hope is an extraordinary demonstration of God’s love for mankind.—Acts 24:15.

Billions can look forward to living forever. The Bible says: “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.” (Psalm 37:29) At that time, they will personally experience the stirring yet comforting words that the apostle Paul wrote some 2,000 years ago: “Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55) Mankind’s formidable enemy death will have been conquered!

GOD “WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER.”

—ISAIAH 25:8

HOW CAN YOU HAVE MORE THAN THIS LIFE?

LIFE today is not the way God intended it to be. The earth should have been filled with people who respect the Creator's sovereignty, benefit from his guidance, and reflect his loving personality. They were to cooperate happily with one another as they raised families, discovered new things, and made all the earth a paradise.

GOD PROMISES TO CHANGE LIFE ON EARTH TO THE WAY HE INTENDED IT TO BE

- "He is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth."—**Psalm 46:9.**
- "The appointed time came . . . to bring to ruin those ruining the earth."
—**Revelation 11:18.**
- "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"
—**Isaiah 33:24.**
- "The work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full."
—**Isaiah 65:22.**

How will these prophecies be fulfilled? God has appointed his Son, Jesus, as King of a perfect government that will rule from heaven over the earth. The Bible calls it the Kingdom of God. (Daniel 2:44) The Bible says of Jesus: "God will give him the throne . . . , and he will rule as King."—Luke 1:32, 33.

While on earth, Jesus performed many powerful works to show that as Ruler he will make human life much better than the life that we have now.

JESUS DEMONSTRATED HOW HE WILL BENEFIT OBEDIENT MANKIND

- He cured every sort of disease, demonstrating how he will eliminate infirmities from mankind.
—**Matthew 9:35.**
- He calmed the sea, showing how he will protect people by controlling the forces of nature.—**Mark 4:36-39.**
- He fed thousands, showing that he will provide people with life's necessities.—**Mark 6:41-44.**
- He turned water into wine at a wedding, proving that he will help people to enjoy life.—**John 2:7-11.**

How can you have the sort of life that God is preparing for those who love him? There is a "road" you need to take. The Bible describes it as "the road leading off into life, and few are finding it."
—Matthew 7:14.

FINDING THE ROAD TO A BETTER LIFE

What is the road to life? God says: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One guiding you in the way you should walk." (Isaiah 48:17) Walking on this road is the best way of life possible.

Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) It is by believing the truths that Jesus taught and by imitating the example that he



God wants humans to do more than merely work, eat, play, and raise a family. We can know our Creator and become his friend. We can show that we love him by doing his will. Jesus said: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God.”—John 17:3.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP ON YOUR JOURNEY

Learning to please the only true God may require making certain changes. That can seem challenging. But in reality, it is a delightful journey that, like any other, begins with taking the first step. To help you find answers to basic questions about God, Jehovah’s Witnesses offer a free Bible study course at a time and place convenient to you. You can contact us by using our website at www.jw.org.

set that we can draw close to God and benefit ourselves.

How can you find the road to life? There are many religions, but Jesus warned: “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the Kingdom of the heavens, but only the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will.” (Matthew 7:21) He also said: “By their fruits you will recognize them.” (Matthew 7:16) The Bible can help you identify true worship and distinguish it from false worship.—John 17:17.

How can you follow the road to life? It involves getting to know the Source of life: Who is he? What is his name? What is he like? What is he doing? What does he want us to do?*

* See *The Watchtower*, No. 1 2019.

**THROUGH THE BIBLE,
GOD TEACHES YOU
“TO BENEFIT YOURSELF.”**

—ISAIAH 48:17

MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE TODAY

LIFE without the painful effects of sickness, old age, and death—that wonderful future can be yours! Even so, life today is still filled with harsh realities and problems. What can help you to make the most of life today? The Bible offers guidance that can lead you to a happy and satisfying life now. Consider some of life's challenges and how the Bible can help.

FINDING CONTENTMENT

The Bible's advice: "Let your way of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things."

—**Hebrews 13:5.**

The world today bombards us with countless must-have products and services. Yet, the Bible says that we can be "content with the present things." How?

Avoid "the love of money." People sacrifice health, family, friendships, morals, even their dignity—all for "the love of money." (1 Timothy 6:10) What a high price to pay! In the end, a lover of wealth "will never be satisfied."—Ecclesiastes 5:10.

Value people, not things. Granted, material things have their place. But things cannot love or appreciate us; only people can do that. Having "a true friend" contributes to our contentment in life. —Proverbs 17:17.

COPING WITH POOR HEALTH

The Bible's advice: "A joyful heart is good medicine."—**Proverbs 17:22.**

Like "good medicine," joy can help us to cope with poor health. But how can we find joy when we suffer from poor health?

Be appreciative. If we dwell on our afflictions, "all the days" will appear bad. (Proverbs 15:15) Instead, "show yourselves thankful," says the Bible. (Colossians 3:15) Learn to appreciate the good things in life, however small. A beautiful sunset, a gentle breeze, the smile of a loved one—these things can enrich our life.

Do things for others. Even if our health is not good, "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) When others appreciate our efforts, we feel a warm glow of satisfaction, and this takes our mind off our problems. We can make our life better by helping others to make their life better.



WE CAN MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE TODAY BY FOLLOWING THE BIBLE'S GUIDANCE

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGE

The Bible's advice: "Make sure of the more important things."—**Philippians 1:10.**

Couples who spend little time together risk drifting apart. Husbands and wives are thus wise to give priority to their marriage—one of the *more* important things in life.

Do things together. Instead of pursuing personal interests alone, why not plan on doing things together? "Two are better than one," says the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 4:9) Together, you can cook a meal, exercise, relax over a beverage, or take up a hobby.

Express your love. The Bible encourages a husband and a wife to love and respect each other. (Ephesians 5:28, 33) A warm smile, a loving embrace, or a small gift can do much to strengthen a marriage. Of course, spouses should reserve expressions of sexual intimacy only for each other. —Hebrews 13:4.

"AT LAST, I FOUND PURPOSE IN LIFE!"

—Told by Ryoko Miyamoto, Japan.

Life was hard. My husband abused alcohol and could not keep a job. He abandoned his responsibilities as father to our four children. No matter how hard I worked, there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. I wondered, 'Was this fate, or was this punishment for sins I had committed in a previous life?'

Then, one of Jehovah's Witnesses came to my door. With a warm smile, she spoke enthusiastically about God's Kingdom and everlasting life. She offered me a Bible study. I soon learned that God exists and that he is wise, just, and loving. I also learned about the condition of the dead and that my sufferings were not due to fate.

Above all, I came to appreciate that a truly satisfying life is built on a relationship with God. Knowing Bible truth has brought me much encouragement, freedom, and refreshment. At last, I found purpose in life!

WHAT HOPE FOR THE DEAD?

Death affects every one of us. But does death end it all? Are the dead forgotten forever? Is there any hope for the dead?

CONSIDER WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

THE DEAD ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

“All those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out.”—John 5:28, 29.

God remembers the dead; those in his memory will come back to life.

THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION ON EARTH

“There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”—Acts 24:15.

Billions will be brought back to life with the hope of living forever in an abundance of peace.

THE RESURRECTION HOPE IS BELIEVABLE

“[God] counts the number of the stars; he calls all of them by name.”—Psalm 147:4.

Being able to call all the stars by name, God can easily remember people whom he will resurrect.



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What Can the Bible Teach Us?

For more information about how to draw close to God, see chapter 1 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org


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