

THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHY
PRAY?

Have you ever felt that your prayers are not heard by God? If so, you are not alone. Many have prayed to God for help, but their problems still remain. This series of articles will discuss why we can be sure that God hears our prayers, why some prayers are not answered, and how to pray so that your prayers are answered.



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Available in 380 LANGUAGES

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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What People Say About Praying

“When I pray, I feel as if God were by my side, holding my hand and guiding me when I feel lost.” —**MARÍA**.

“My wife died after a 13-year battle against cancer. I remember praying to God every day and feeling that he was really listening to me in my pain. I felt at peace.” —**RAÚL**.

“Prayer is a beautiful gift from God to humans.” —**ARNE**.

For María, Raúl, Arne, and many others, prayer is a unique gift. They feel that through prayer, they can talk to God, thank him, and seek his help. They wholeheartedly believe the Bible’s assurance regarding praying to God: “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that no matter what we ask according to his will, he hears us.” —1 John 5:14.

On the other hand, many people find it difficult to accept what the Bible says about prayer. Steve recounts how he felt about praying: “When I turned 17, three of my friends were killed in two separate accidents. One died in a car crash, and the other two drowned at sea.” What did Steve do? “I

prayed to God for answers as to why all that had happened, but I got no reply. So I asked myself, ‘Why pray?’” Seemingly unanswered prayers have led many to ask whether there is really any point in praying.

People also question the value of prayer for other reasons. Some say that since God knows all things, he is already aware of our needs or our problems, so there is little point in telling him about them.

Others believe that God actually refuses to listen to their prayers because of mistakes they have made in the past. “My biggest problem,” says Jenny, “is that I feel so worthless. I’ve done things that I regret, so I convince myself that I don’t deserve to be heard by God.”

How do you feel about praying? If you have ever had similar concerns or doubts

about prayer, you can take comfort from the fact that the Bible can offer satisfying answers. The Bible is an authority on the subject of prayer;* it can help you find answers to such questions as:

- **Does God really hear our prayers?**
- **Why are some prayers not answered?**
- **How can you pray and be heard?**
- **What can prayers do for you?**

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Does God Hear Our Prayers?

Have you ever wondered whether God hears you when you pray? If so, you are not alone. Many have prayed to God about certain problems, yet the problems remain. Does that mean that God ignores our prayers? No! The Bible assures us that God listens to us when we pray to him in the proper way. Let us consider what the Bible says.

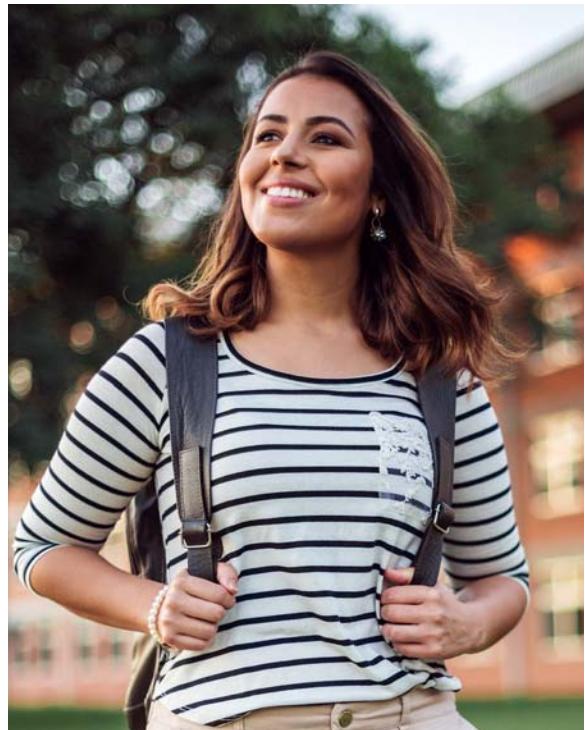
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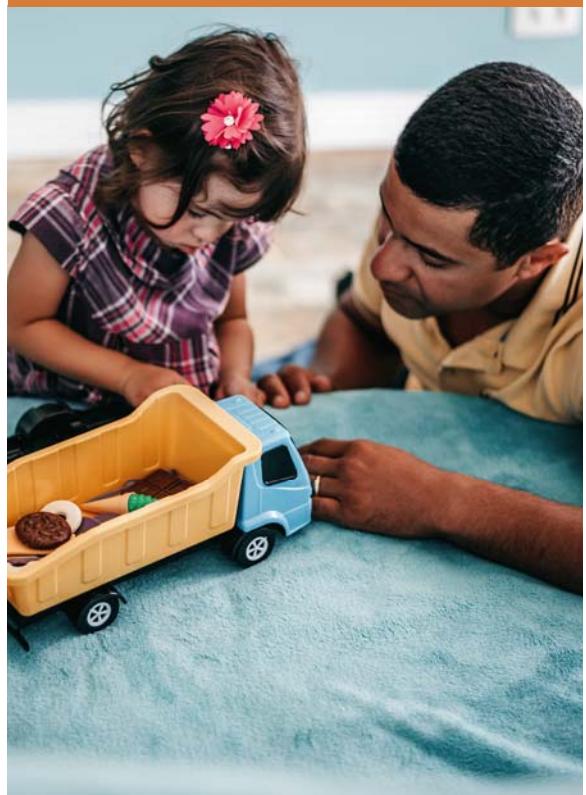
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In the Bible, we are encouraged to “pray continually” and to “carry on prayer on every occasion.” Clearly, Jehovah God wants us to pray to him.—Matthew 26:41; Ephesians 6:18.

Why does God want us to pray to him? Consider: What parent would not want his young child to say “Can you help me, Dad”? Of course, a father may already know what his child needs or feels, but when he *hears* those words, it shows him that his child trusts him and is close to him. Similarly, when we pray to Jehovah God, we show him that we trust in him and want to be close to him.—Proverbs 15:8; James 4:8.



GOD REALLY CARES ABOUT YOU.

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

God wants us to pray to him because he loves and cares for us. He is fully aware of our concerns and anxieties, and he wants to help us.

Throughout his life, King David prayed to Jehovah God for help and told Him his thoughts and feelings. (Psalm 23:1-6) How did God feel about David? God loved David and listened to his many prayers. (Acts 13:22) Likewise, God listens to our prayers because he cares for us.



"I LOVE JEHOVAH BECAUSE HE HEARS MY VOICE"

Those are the words of the writer of one of the psalms in the Bible. He was sure that God heard his prayers, and that fact had a powerful effect on him. He felt closer to God and found the strength to deal with life's distress and grief.—Psalm 116:1-9.

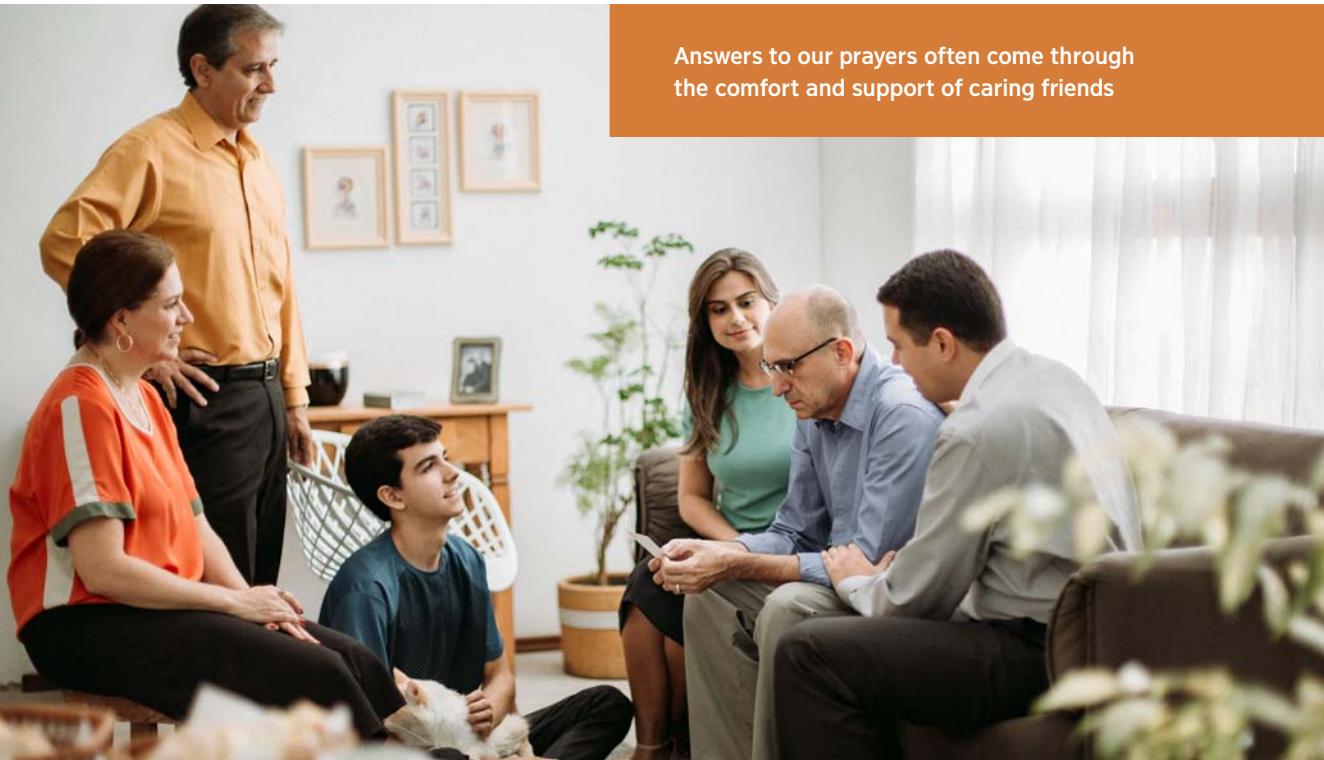
When we are sure that God hears our prayers, we will persevere in talking to him. Consider the experience of Pedro, who lives in northern Spain. He lost his 19-year-old son in a traffic accident. In his sorrow, Pedro poured out his heart to God and prayed repeatedly for comfort and support. What happened? “Jehovah answered my prayers

through the comfort and support that my wife and I received from fellow Christians,” says Pedro.

While prayers did not bring his son back to life, they did help Pedro and his family in important ways. His wife, María Carmen, recalls: “Prayers helped me to endure my grief. I knew that Jehovah God understood me because when I prayed to him, I felt at peace and a calm came over me.”

The Bible and personal experiences clearly show that God does hear prayers. Yet, it is also apparent that God does not answer all prayers. Why does God answer some prayers and not others?

Answers to our prayers often come through the comfort and support of caring friends



Why Does God Not Answer All Prayers?

Our heavenly Father, Jehovah God, is willing and pleased to hear our sincere prayers. But there are things that would stop him from answering our prayers. What are these things, and what should we keep in mind when we pray? Here are some Bible guidelines.

“When praying, do not say the same things over and over again.”—Matthew 6:7.

Jehovah does not want us to repeat memorized prayers or read them out of a prayer book. Rather, he wants us to speak from the heart. Imagine how frustrating it would be to have a friend recite the same words to you day in and day out. Good friends are open and sincere. When we pray in our own words, we are saying something personal to our heavenly Father.

“When you do ask, you do not receive because you are asking for a wrong purpose.”—James 4:3.

We would certainly not expect God to answer our prayers if we were to ask for things we know he does not want us to do or to have. For example, would Jehovah grant a gambler’s request for good luck when He has clearly warned against greediness and the superstitious belief in luck? (Isaiah 65:11; Luke 12:15) How illogical to expect Jehovah to answer such prayers! For God to answer when we pray to him, we must make sure that our requests are in harmony with what he tells us in the Bible.



“The one refusing to listen to the law—even his prayer is detestable.”—Proverbs 28:9.

In Bible times, God did not answer those who rejected his righteous laws. (Isaiah 1:15, 16) His feelings have not changed. (Malachi 3:6) If we want God to answer our prayers, we must do what we can to live in harmony with his laws. What, though, if we did things in the past that are wrong? Does that mean Jehovah will never listen to us? Of course not! God will lovingly forgive us if we turn our life around and do our best to please him. —Acts 3:19.



“Whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.”—Hebrews 11:6.

Prayer is not a mere emotional outlet for us when we are under stress. It is an expression of our faith and part of our worship of God. If we do not “keep asking in faith,” says the disciple James, then we “should not expect to receive anything from Jehovah.” (James 1:6, 7) To build faith in God, we must take the time and effort to get to know him by studying the Bible. Doing so will help us to know his will and to pray with conviction.

DO NOT GIVE UP!

Though God does not answer all prayers, he does hear and answer the sincere prayers of millions of people. The Bible outlines steps you can take so that your prayers will be pleasing to God. The next article will explain.

How Can You Pray and Be Heard?

Jehovah God is the “Hearer of prayer.” (Psalm 65:2) We can speak to him anywhere and at any time, aloud or silently. Jehovah wants us to address him as “Father,” and he really is the best Father we can have. (Matthew 6:9) Lovingly, Jehovah teaches us how to pray and be heard by him.

PRAY TO JEHOVAH GOD IN THE NAME OF JESUS

“If you ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name.”—John 16:23.

Jesus’ words clearly show that Jehovah wants us to pray to him, not through images, saints, angels, or departed ancestors, but in the name of Jesus Christ. When we pray to God in Jesus’ name, we show that we recognize the vital role of Jesus. “No one comes to the Father except through me,” said Jesus.—John 14:6.

SPEAK FROM THE HEART

“Pour out your hearts before him.”—Psalm 62:8.

When we pray to Jehovah, we should speak as we would to a loving father. Instead of reading out of a book or reciting something memorized, we should speak to him respectfully and from the heart.

PRAY IN HARMONY WITH GOD’S WILL

“No matter what we ask according to his will, he hears us.”—1 John 5:14.

In the Bible, Jehovah God tells us what he will do for us and what he wants us to do for him. For our prayers to be acceptable to God, we need to pray “according to his will.” To do so, we need to study the Bible so that we can get to know him well. If we do, our prayers will be pleasing to him.



WHAT MIGHT WE PRAY FOR?

Pray for Your Needs. We can pray to God for our daily needs—food, clothing, and shelter. We might also pray for wisdom to make right decisions and for strength to endure our trials. We can pray for faith, for forgiveness, and for God's help.—Luke 11:3, 4, 13; James 1:5, 17.

Pray for Others. Caring parents are pleased when their children love one another. Jehovah too desires that his children on earth care about one another. It is appropriate to pray for our mate, our children, our family, and our friends. “Pray for one another,” wrote the disciple James.—James 5:16.

Express Thanks. Of our Creator, the Bible says: “He did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying you with food and filling your hearts with gladness.” (Acts 14:17) When we think about all that God has done for us, we will be moved to express our thanks to him in prayer. Of course, we should also show our gratitude to God by the way we live.—Colossians 3:15.

BE PATIENT AND KEEP PRAYING

At times, we may feel disheartened because of not getting an immediate answer to our sincere prayers. Should we conclude that God is not interested in us? By no means! Consider the following experiences that emphasize that we may simply need to keep praying.

Steve, mentioned in the opening article, admits, “Had it not been for prayer, I would have given up on life years ago.” What led to the change? He started to study the Bible and learned about the need to pray and to persist in it. “I pray to God to thank him for all the loving support I have received from my dear friends,” says Steve. “I am happier now than I’ve ever been.”

What about Jenny, who felt that she was not worthy of being heard by God? She says, “At my lowest point, I begged God to help me understand why I felt so worthless.” How did that help her? “Talking to God has helped me put things into perspective, to see that even if my heart condemns me, he does not. It has also helped me not to give up but to keep trying.” The result? “Prayer has helped me to see Jehovah as a real, loving, caring God, Father, and Friend, who will always be there for me and help me as long as I keep trying to do what he wants.”

Consider, too, the experience of Isabel. When she became pregnant, her doctors told her that her child would be born severely handicapped. She was devastated. Some even advised her to end the pregnancy. “I felt as if I were going to die from all the anguish in my heart.” What did she do? “I prayed and prayed to God for support,” she says. In time, she gave birth to a son, Gerard, and he was handicapped. Does Isabel feel that God answered her prayers? Yes, she does! In what way? “As I see my son, who is now 14 years old, enjoying life despite his disability,” says Isabel, “I realize that he is the best answer to my prayers, the greatest blessing Jehovah God has given me.”

Such heartfelt expressions make us think of the words of the psalmist: “You will hear the request of the meek, O Jehovah. You will make their hearts firm and pay close attention to them.” (Psalm 10:17) What wonderful reasons for persevering in prayer!

The Bible records many of Jesus’ prayers. The best known is surely the one he taught his disciples. What can we learn from it?



“I realize that he is the best answer to my prayers,” says Isabel when she sees her son Gerard enjoying life despite his disability

The Lord's Prayer—A Model for You

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer, often called the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13; see also Luke 11:2-4.) Over the centuries, this prayer has become so popular that many have memorized and repeated it word for word. Was that Jesus' intention for this prayer? It hardly seems likely because

earlier in that sermon, Jesus had told his disciples to avoid repetitive prayers. (Matthew 6:7) Rather, Jesus was teaching his followers how to pray and what to pray about. Let us see what we can learn from the model prayer.

“Our Father in the heavens”

We should address our prayers only to God himself.

“Let your name be sanctified”

God's name, Jehovah, should be honored and viewed as sacred.

“Let your Kingdom come”

God's Kingdom is a heavenly government with Jesus as King, and it will soon exercise its rule over the entire earth.

“Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth”

God's will is for humans to live forever on earth in peace and security.



“Give us today our bread for this day”

Jehovah is the one who provides the things we need to live.

“Forgive us our debts”

We all make many mistakes and need forgiveness.

Keeping those points in mind can help you to offer meaningful personal prayers.

What Prayers Can Do for You

Faced with a serious illness, Pamela sought professional medical help. However, she also prayed to God for strength to endure her ordeal. Did prayer help her?

“During my cancer treatment, I often felt a sense of dread,” Pamela explained. “But when I prayed to Jehovah God, a feeling of calm came over me and I could think clearly. I still suffer from chronic pain, yet prayer helps me to maintain a positive outlook. When people ask me how I feel, I say, ‘I don’t feel well, but I am in good spirits!’”

Of course, we do not have to wait until a life-threatening crisis comes on us before we pray. All of us face challenges, large and small, and we often feel we need help to deal with them. Can prayer help?

The Bible says: “Throw your burden on Jehovah, and he will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to fall.” (Psalm 55:22) What a comforting thought that is! So how can prayer help you? When you pray to God in the proper way, he will give you what you need to deal with your challenges.—See the box “What Prayers Can Bring You.”

WILL YOU BENEFIT?

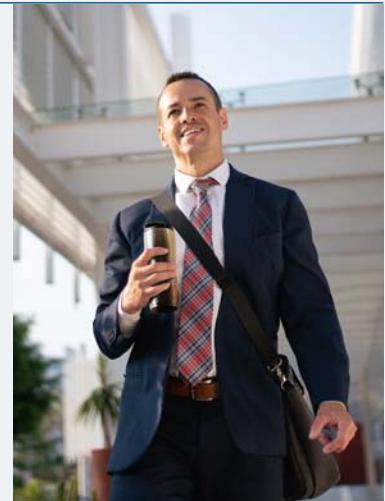
Jehovah, of course, does not force you to pray to him. Instead, he lovingly invites you to do so. (Jeremiah 29:11, 12) What, though, if in the past you felt that your prayers were not answered? Do not lose heart or give up. Loving parents may not help their children in the exact way or at the very moment that the children expect. Perhaps the parents have a better solution. One thing, however, is certain: Loving parents help their children.

Jehovah God—the most loving of parents—wants to help you too. If you carefully examine the guidelines we have considered and do what you can to put them into practice, God will answer your prayers in the best possible way!—Psalm 34:15; Matthew 7:7-11.

What Prayers Can Bring You

Peace of mind

"Let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) When you pour out your concerns to God, he will help you to stay calm and act wisely under stress.



Strength and comfort

"For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Philippians 4:13) Being the almighty God, Jehovah can give you the strength you need to deal with your challenges or to sustain you through your trials. (Isaiah 40:29) The Bible also calls Jehovah "the God of all comfort." He can comfort us "in all our trials."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.



Wisdom from God

"If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching, and it will be given him." (James 1:5) When we are under pressure, we do not always make the best decisions. If you pray for wisdom, God can remind you of the many helpful principles in his written Word, the Bible.



DOES GOD HEAR YOUR PRAYERS?

When you pray, do you think God really hears you?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- **God is listening.** The Bible assures us that “Jehovah is near to all those calling on him, to all who call on him in truth. . . . He hears their cry for help.”—Psalm 145:18, 19.
- **God wants you to pray to him.** The Bible invites us: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.”—Philippians 4:6.
- **God really cares about you.** God is fully aware of our concerns and anxieties, and he wants to help. “Throw all your anxiety on him,” says the Bible, “because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.



PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF *What Can the Bible Teach Us?*

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For more information about how to draw close to God, see chapter 17 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org

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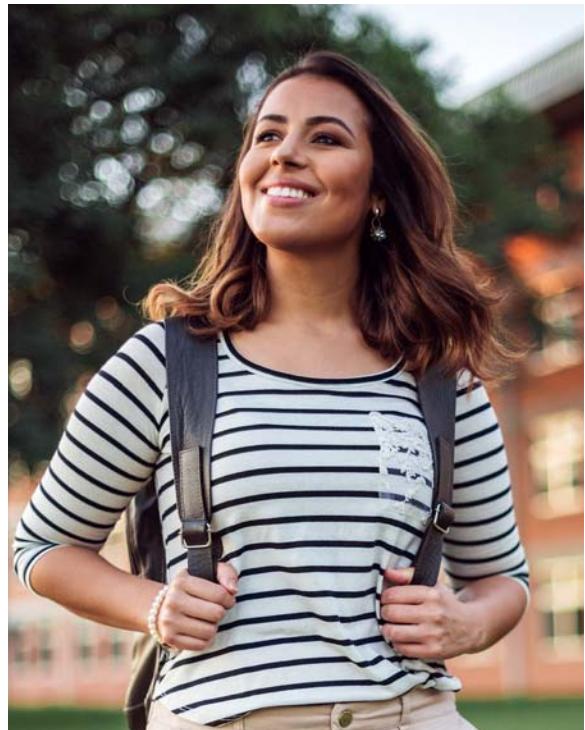
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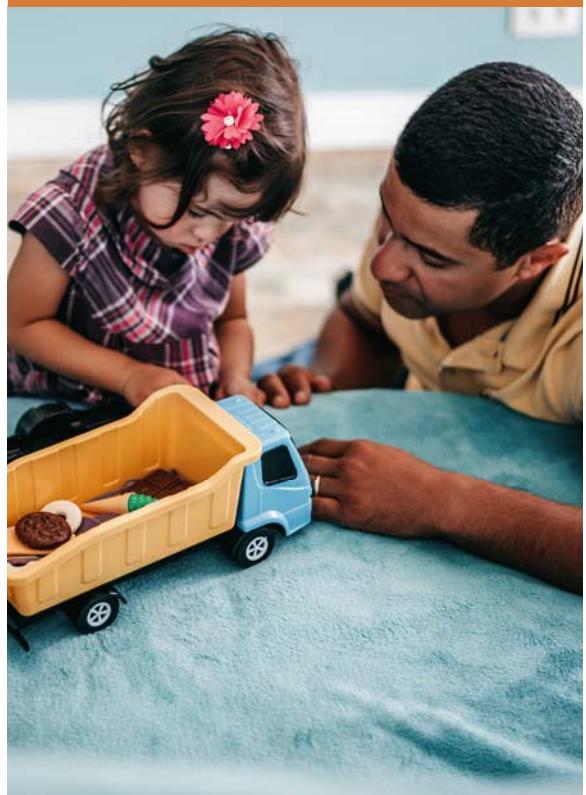
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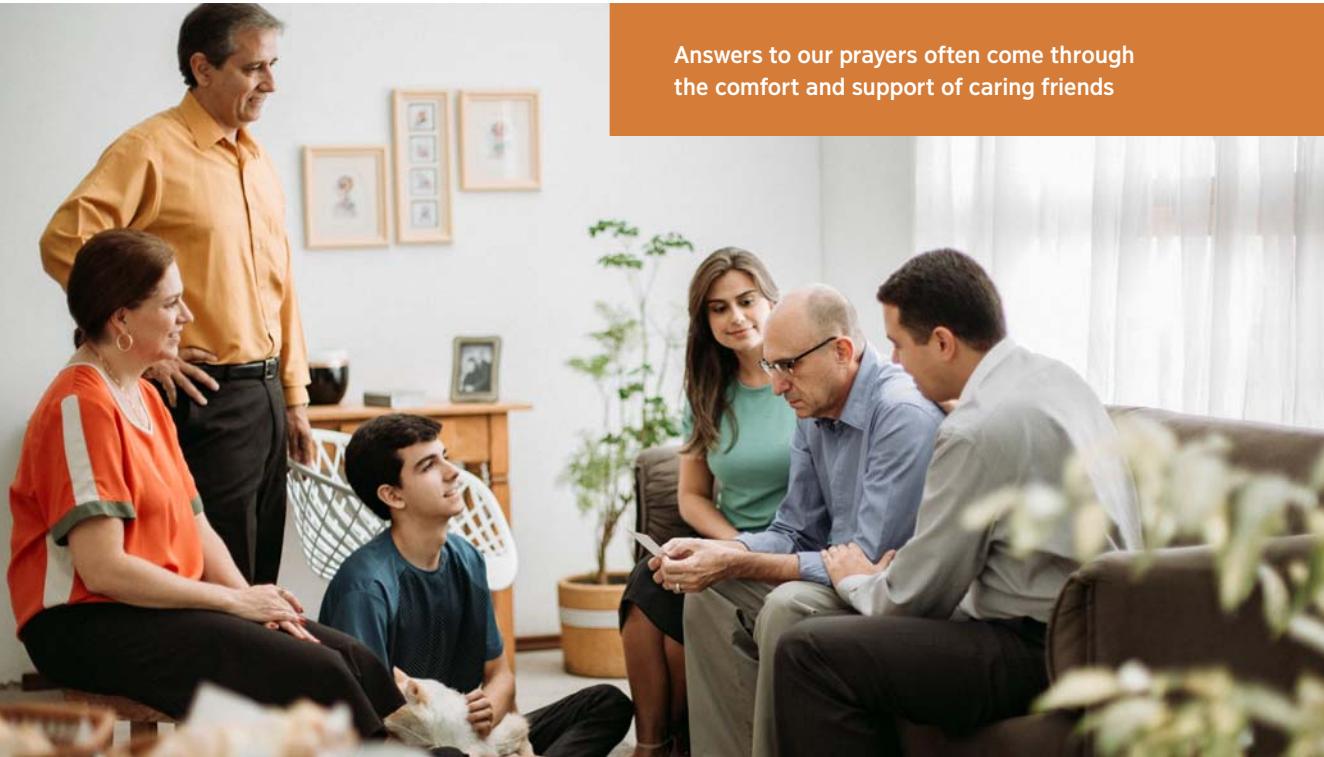
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Why Does God Not Answer All Prayers?

Our heavenly Father, Jehovah God, is willing and pleased to hear our sincere prayers. But there are things that would stop him from answering our prayers. What are these things, and what should we keep in mind when we pray? Here are some Bible guidelines.

“When praying, do not say the same things over and over again.”—Matthew 6:7.

Jehovah does not want us to repeat memorized prayers or read them out of a prayer book. Rather, he wants us to speak from the heart. Imagine how frustrating it would be to have a friend recite the same words to you day in and day out. Good friends are open and sincere. When we pray in our own words, we are saying something personal to our heavenly Father.

“When you do ask, you do not receive because you are asking for a wrong purpose.”—James 4:3.

We would certainly not expect God to answer our prayers if we were to ask for things we know he does not want us to do or to have. For example, would Jehovah grant a gambler’s request for good luck when He has clearly warned against greediness and the superstitious belief in luck? (Isaiah 65:11; Luke 12:15) How illogical to expect Jehovah to answer such prayers! For God to answer when we pray to him, we must make sure that our requests are in harmony with what he tells us in the Bible.



“The one refusing to listen to the law—even his prayer is detestable.”—Proverbs 28:9.

In Bible times, God did not answer those who rejected his righteous laws. (Isaiah 1:15, 16) His feelings have not changed. (Malachi 3:6) If we want God to answer our prayers, we must do what we can to live in harmony with his laws. What, though, if we did things in the past that are wrong? Does that mean Jehovah will never listen to us? Of course not! God will lovingly forgive us if we turn our life around and do our best to please him. —Acts 3:19.



“Whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.”—Hebrews 11:6.

Prayer is not a mere emotional outlet for us when we are under stress. It is an expression of our faith and part of our worship of God. If we do not “keep asking in faith,” says the disciple James, then we “should not expect to receive anything from Jehovah.” (James 1:6, 7) To build faith in God, we must take the time and effort to get to know him by studying the Bible. Doing so will help us to know his will and to pray with conviction.

DO NOT GIVE UP!

Though God does not answer all prayers, he does hear and answer the sincere prayers of millions of people. The Bible outlines steps you can take so that your prayers will be pleasing to God. The next article will explain.

How Can You Pray and Be Heard?

Jehovah God is the “Hearer of prayer.” (Psalm 65:2) We can speak to him anywhere and at any time, aloud or silently. Jehovah wants us to address him as “Father,” and he really is the best Father we can have. (Matthew 6:9) Lovingly, Jehovah teaches us how to pray and be heard by him.

PRAY TO JEHOVAH GOD IN THE NAME OF JESUS

“If you ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in my name.”—John 16:23.

Jesus’ words clearly show that Jehovah wants us to pray to him, not through images, saints, angels, or departed ancestors, but in the name of Jesus Christ. When we pray to God in Jesus’ name, we show that we recognize the vital role of Jesus. “No one comes to the Father except through me,” said Jesus.—John 14:6.

SPEAK FROM THE HEART

“Pour out your hearts before him.”—Psalm 62:8.

When we pray to Jehovah, we should speak as we would to a loving father. Instead of reading out of a book or reciting something memorized, we should speak to him respectfully and from the heart.

PRAY IN HARMONY WITH GOD’S WILL

“No matter what we ask according to his will, he hears us.”—1 John 5:14.

In the Bible, Jehovah God tells us what he will do for us and what he wants us to do for him. For our prayers to be acceptable to God, we need to pray “according to his will.” To do so, we need to study the Bible so that we can get to know him well. If we do, our prayers will be pleasing to him.



WHAT MIGHT WE PRAY FOR?

Pray for Your Needs. We can pray to God for our daily needs—food, clothing, and shelter. We might also pray for wisdom to make right decisions and for strength to endure our trials. We can pray for faith, for forgiveness, and for God's help.—Luke 11:3, 4, 13; James 1:5, 17.

Pray for Others. Caring parents are pleased when their children love one another. Jehovah too desires that his children on earth care about one another. It is appropriate to pray for our mate, our children, our family, and our friends. “Pray for one another,” wrote the disciple James.—James 5:16.

Express Thanks. Of our Creator, the Bible says: “He did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying you with food and filling your hearts with gladness.” (Acts 14:17) When we think about all that God has done for us, we will be moved to express our thanks to him in prayer. Of course, we should also show our gratitude to God by the way we live.—Colossians 3:15.

BE PATIENT AND KEEP PRAYING

At times, we may feel disheartened because of not getting an immediate answer to our sincere prayers. Should we conclude that God is not interested in us? By no means! Consider the following experiences that emphasize that we may simply need to keep praying.

Steve, mentioned in the opening article, admits, “Had it not been for prayer, I would have given up on life years ago.” What led to the change? He started to study the Bible and learned about the need to pray and to persist in it. “I pray to God to thank him for all the loving support I have received from my dear friends,” says Steve. “I am happier now than I’ve ever been.”

What about Jenny, who felt that she was not worthy of being heard by God? She says, “At my lowest point, I begged God to help me understand why I felt so worthless.” How did that help her? “Talking to God has helped me put things into perspective, to see that even if my heart condemns me, he does not. It has also helped me not to give up but to keep trying.” The result? “Prayer has helped me to see Jehovah as a real, loving, caring God, Father, and Friend, who will always be there for me and help me as long as I keep trying to do what he wants.”

Consider, too, the experience of Isabel. When she became pregnant, her doctors told her that her child would be born severely handicapped. She was devastated. Some even advised her to end the pregnancy. “I felt as if I were going to die from all the anguish in my heart.” What did she do? “I prayed and prayed to God for support,” she says. In time, she gave birth to a son, Gerard, and he was handicapped. Does Isabel feel that God answered her prayers? Yes, she does! In what way? “As I see my son, who is now 14 years old, enjoying life despite his disability,” says Isabel, “I realize that he is the best answer to my prayers, the greatest blessing Jehovah God has given me.”

Such heartfelt expressions make us think of the words of the psalmist: “You will hear the request of the meek, O Jehovah. You will make their hearts firm and pay close attention to them.” (Psalm 10:17) What wonderful reasons for persevering in prayer!

The Bible records many of Jesus’ prayers. The best known is surely the one he taught his disciples. What can we learn from it?



“I realize that he is the best answer to my prayers,” says Isabel when she sees her son Gerard enjoying life despite his disability

The Lord's Prayer—A Model for You

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer, often called the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13; see also Luke 11:2-4.) Over the centuries, this prayer has become so popular that many have memorized and repeated it word for word. Was that Jesus' intention for this prayer? It hardly seems likely because

earlier in that sermon, Jesus had told his disciples to avoid repetitive prayers. (Matthew 6:7) Rather, Jesus was teaching his followers how to pray and what to pray about. Let us see what we can learn from the model prayer.

“Our Father in the heavens”

We should address our prayers only to God himself.

“Let your name be sanctified”

God's name, Jehovah, should be honored and viewed as sacred.

“Let your Kingdom come”

God's Kingdom is a heavenly government with Jesus as King, and it will soon exercise its rule over the entire earth.

“Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth”

God's will is for humans to live forever on earth in peace and security.



“Give us today our bread for this day”

Jehovah is the one who provides the things we need to live.

“Forgive us our debts”

We all make many mistakes and need forgiveness.

Keeping those points in mind can help you to offer meaningful personal prayers.

What Prayers Can Do for You

Faced with a serious illness, Pamela sought professional medical help. However, she also prayed to God for strength to endure her ordeal. Did prayer help her?

“During my cancer treatment, I often felt a sense of dread,” Pamela explained. “But when I prayed to Jehovah God, a feeling of calm came over me and I could think clearly. I still suffer from chronic pain, yet prayer helps me to maintain a positive outlook. When people ask me how I feel, I say, ‘I don’t feel well, but I am in good spirits!’”

Of course, we do not have to wait until a life-threatening crisis comes on us before we pray. All of us face challenges, large and small, and we often feel we need help to deal with them. Can prayer help?

The Bible says: “Throw your burden on Jehovah, and he will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to fall.” (Psalm 55:22) What a comforting thought that is! So how can prayer help you? When you pray to God in the proper way, he will give you what you need to deal with your challenges.—See the box “What Prayers Can Bring You.”

WILL YOU BENEFIT?

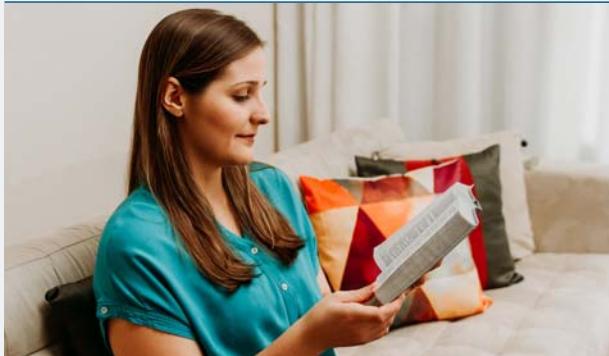
Jehovah, of course, does not force you to pray to him. Instead, he lovingly invites you to do so. (Jeremiah 29:11, 12) What, though, if in the past you felt that your prayers were not answered? Do not lose heart or give up. Loving parents may not help their children in the exact way or at the very moment that the children expect. Perhaps the parents have a better solution. One thing, however, is certain: Loving parents help their children.

Jehovah God—the most loving of parents—wants to help you too. If you carefully examine the guidelines we have considered and do what you can to put them into practice, God will answer your prayers in the best possible way!—Psalm 34:15; Matthew 7:7-11.

What Prayers Can Bring You

Peace of mind

"Let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) When you pour out your concerns to God, he will help you to stay calm and act wisely under stress.



Wisdom from God

"If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching, and it will be given him." (James 1:5) When we are under pressure, we do not always make the best decisions. If you pray for wisdom, God can remind you of the many helpful principles in his written Word, the Bible.

Strength and comfort

"For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Philippians 4:13) Being the almighty God, Jehovah can give you the strength you need to deal with your challenges or to sustain you through your trials. (Isaiah 40:29) The Bible also calls Jehovah "the God of all comfort." He can comfort us "in all our trials."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.



DOES GOD HEAR YOUR PRAYERS?

When you pray, do you think God really hears you?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- **God is listening.** The Bible assures us that “Jehovah is near to all those calling on him, to all who call on him in truth. . . . He hears their cry for help.”—Psalm 145:18, 19.
- **God wants you to pray to him.** The Bible invites us: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.”—Philippians 4:6.
- **God really cares about you.** God is fully aware of our concerns and anxieties, and he wants to help. “Throw all your anxiety on him,” says the Bible, “because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.



PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF *What Can the Bible Teach Us?*

What Can the
Bible Teach Us?



For more information about how to draw close to God, see chapter 17 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 BETTER
WORLD IS NEAR

Do current world events indicate that the end of the world is near? If so, can we do anything to survive the end of the world? What will happen after the end? The articles in this issue will reveal the Bible's comforting answers to those questions.



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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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We Need a Better World!

"We are a world in turmoil," stated António Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations. Would you not agree?

The news is full of distressing reports

Disease and pandemics
Natural disasters
Poverty and hunger
Pollution and global warming
Crime, violence, and corruption
Wars

Clearly, we need a better world. A world where there is

Perfect health
Safety and security for everyone
Abundant food
A healthy environment
Justice for all
Global peace

What, though, do we mean when we speak of a better world?

What will happen to the world we live in now?

What can we do to live in a better world?

This issue of *The Watchtower* will explain the Bible's comforting answers to these and related questions.

Is This World Going to End?

Perhaps you are aware that the Bible speaks of the end of the world. (1 John 2:17) Is it referring to the end of the human race? Will planet Earth become a lifeless wasteland or be destroyed completely?

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER TO BOTH OF THESE QUESTIONS IS NO!

What Will Not End?

MANKIND

What the Bible says: God “did not create [the earth] simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited.”

—ISAIAH 45:18.

PLANET EARTH

What the Bible says: “A generation is going, and a generation is coming, but the earth remains forever.”

—ECCLESIASTES 1:4.



WHAT IT MEANS: According to the Bible, the earth will never be destroyed and it will always be inhabited. So, what is meant by the end of the world?

CONSIDER: The Bible compares the coming end of this world to what happened in the days of Noah. At that time, the earth was “full of violence.” (Genesis 6:13) However, Noah was righteous. So God preserved Noah and his family, but He destroyed the wicked people by means of a flood. Referring to what happened back then, the Bible says: “*The world of that time suffered destruction when it was flooded with water.*” (2 Peter 3:6) That was the end of a world. Yet, what was destroyed? Not the earth, but the wicked people on the earth. Thus, when the Bible speaks of the end of the world, it is not referring to the destruction of the planet. Instead, it is referring to the end of wicked people on the earth and to the system of things they have put together.



What Will End?

PROBLEMS AND WICKEDNESS

What the Bible says: “Just a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more; you will look at where they were, and they will not be there. But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—**PSALM 37:10, 11.**

WHAT IT MEANS: The Flood of Noah’s day did not wipe out wickedness once and for all. After the Flood, wicked people once again made life miserable for everyone. Soon, though, God will bring an end to wickedness. As the psalmist said: “The wicked will be no more.” God will put an end to wickedness by means of his Kingdom—a world government that rules from heaven over a righteous human society.

CONSIDER: Will those presently ruling the earth welcome rule by God’s Kingdom? The Bible indicates that they will not. Foolishly, they will oppose God’s Kingdom. (Psalm 2:2) What will be the result? God’s Kingdom will replace all human governments, and “it alone will stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44) But why does human rulership need to end?

WANTED—An End to Human Rulership

WHAT IT MEANS: Humans were not created to rule themselves. They do a poor job of governing other people and solving their problems.

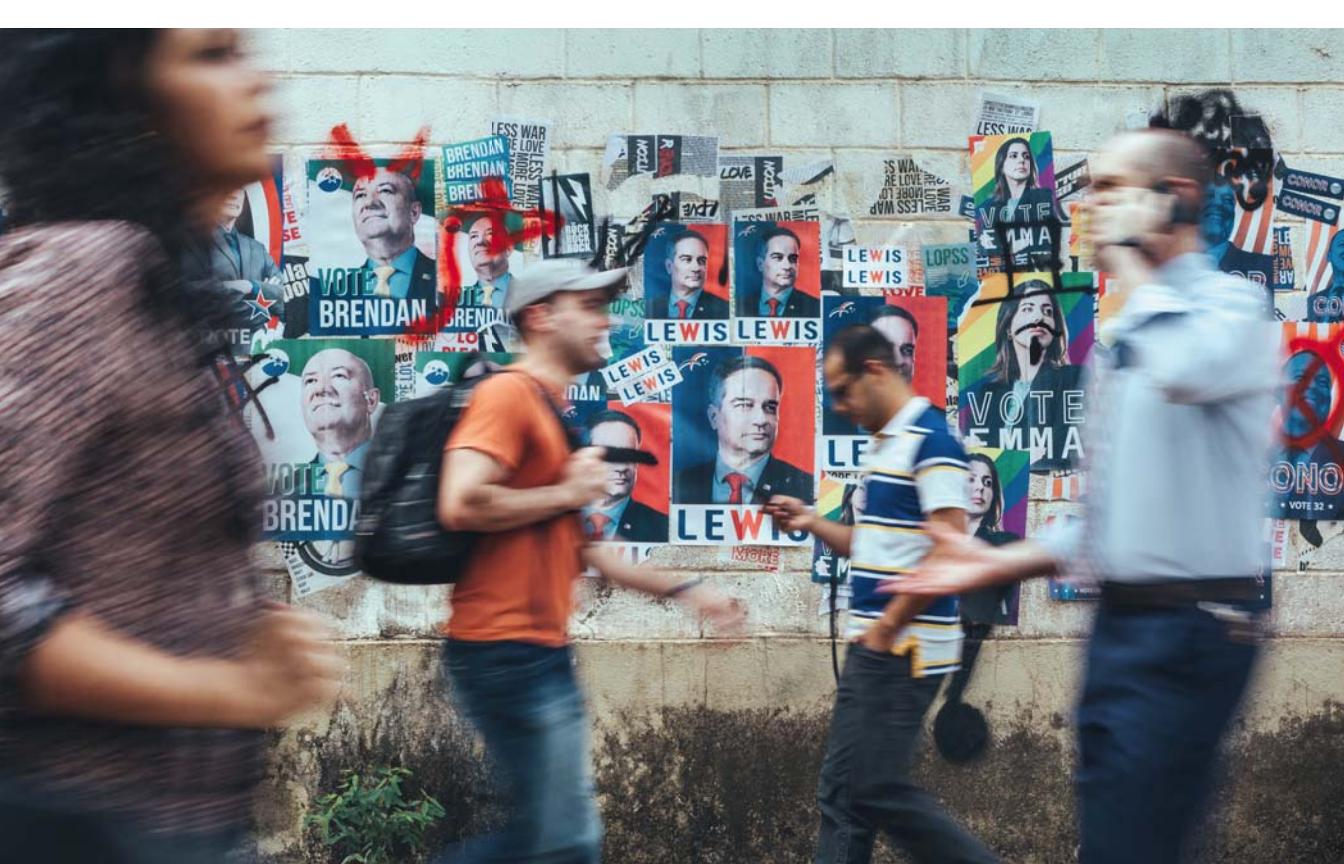
CONSIDER: Britannica Academic notes that individual governments seem unable to “handle the universal enemies of poverty, hunger, disease, natural disaster, and war or other violence.” It then continues: “Some . . . believe that only a form of world government can make decisive headway against those evils.” However, even if all human governments united, the world would still be ruled by imperfect humans who are unable to

What the Bible says: “It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.” —JEREMIAH 10:23.

overcome the difficulties mentioned above. God’s Kingdom is the only government that has the power to solve all global problems permanently.

Therefore, according to the Bible, the end of the world—the present wicked system of things—is not something that good people should fear. Instead, it is something to look forward to because this ruined old world will be replaced by God’s magnificent new world!

When will this all happen? The next article will explain the Bible’s answer.



When Will the End Come? What Jesus Said

As we learned in the preceding article, when the Bible speaks about the end of the world, it does not mean the end of the earth or mankind. Rather, it means the end of the present corrupt system of things and all those who support it. But does the Bible say when the end of this wicked system of things will take place?

CONSIDER TWO STATEMENTS JESUS MADE ABOUT THE END:

“Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour.”—**MATTHEW 25:13.**

“Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is.”—**MARK 13:33.**

So no one on earth knows exactly when this system of things will come to an end. However, God has set an “appointed time”—a definite “day and hour”—for the end to come. (Matthew 24:36) Does this mean that there is absolutely no way of knowing when the end is near? Not at all. Jesus told his disciples to look for a number of events that would indicate that the end was close at hand.



THE SIGN

These events would be the sign of “the conclusion of the system of things.” Jesus said: “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another.” (Matthew 24:3, 7) He also said that there would be “pestilences”—epidemic diseases. (Luke 21:11) Are you seeing the events that Jesus prophesied?

Devastating wars, famines, and earthquakes as well as relentless diseases have ravaged the earth in our day. In 2004, for example, a massive earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered a tsunami that killed some 225,000 people. In over one year, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in some 2.6 million deaths worldwide. Jesus said that events like these would indicate that the end of this system of things is near.

“THE LAST DAYS”

The Bible describes the time period just before the end as “the last days.” (2 Peter 3: 3, 4) Second Timothy 3:1-5 states that the last days would be marked by a steep moral decline. (See the box “Just Before the End of the World.”) Do you see people who exhibit selfish, greedy, fierce, and unloving traits today? This too is evidence that we are living very near the end of the world.

How long will the last days be? According to the Bible, only “a short period of time.” Then, God will destroy “those ruining the earth.”—Revelation 11:15-18, footnote; 12:12.

JUST BEFORE THE END OF THE WORLD

“In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having an appearance of godliness but proving false to its power.”

—2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5.

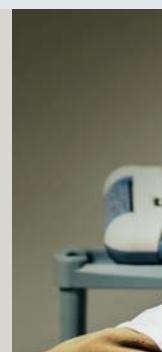
Wars

Between 2007 and 2017, deaths from armed conflict and terrorism rose by 118 percent



Illness

Some top killers are heart disease, stroke, lung disease, neonatal disorders, diarrheal diseases, cancer, tuberculosis



Hunger

In 2019, 8.9 percent of the world population was starving and 21.3 percent of children under five were malnourished and stunted



Global Preaching

Over 8.4 million qualified preachers (Jehovah’s Witnesses) distribute Bible literature in over 1,000 languages in 240 lands





THE PARADISE EARTH IS NEAR!

God has already set the day and hour when he will bring an end to this present wicked system of things. (Matthew 24:36) Yet, there is more good news—God “does not desire anyone to be destroyed.” (2 Peter 3:9) He is giving mankind the opportunity to conform to his standards. Why? Because he wants us to survive the end of this world and live in his new world, when the earth will be a paradise.

God has organized a global teaching program to help people learn how to become part of the new world under his Kingdom. Jesus said that the good news about God’s Kingdom would be preached “in all the inhabited earth.” (Matthew 24:14) Worldwide, Jehovah’s Witnesses spent over two billion hours in 2019 preaching and teaching people the Bible’s message of hope. Jesus said that this preaching campaign would be done throughout the earth before the end would come.

The time for human rule is almost over. But the good news is that you can survive the end of the world and be part of the Paradise earth that God has promised. The following article will discuss how you can live in that new world.

Jesus’ prophecy about “the last days” gives us reason for hope

How You Can Live in a New World

The preceding articles have shown that God will soon put an end to this ungodly human society with all its problems. We can be sure that this will happen. Why? Because God's Word, the Bible, has promised:

"The world is passing away."

—1 JOHN 2:17.

We can be certain that there will be survivors because the above Bible verse also promises:

"The one who does the will of God remains forever."

Therefore, the key to survival is doing God's will. To find out what God's will is, we must first come to know him.

SURVIVE THE END BY “COMING TO KNOW” GOD

Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God." (John 17:3) To survive the end and live forever, we need to 'come to know' God. That means much more than merely acknowledging that God exists or knowing a few facts about him. We need to be friends with him. As with any friendship that we want to flourish, we need to devote time to it. Maintaining a friendship with God is no different. Consider some vital truths we learn from the Bible that help us to develop and maintain a friendship with God.



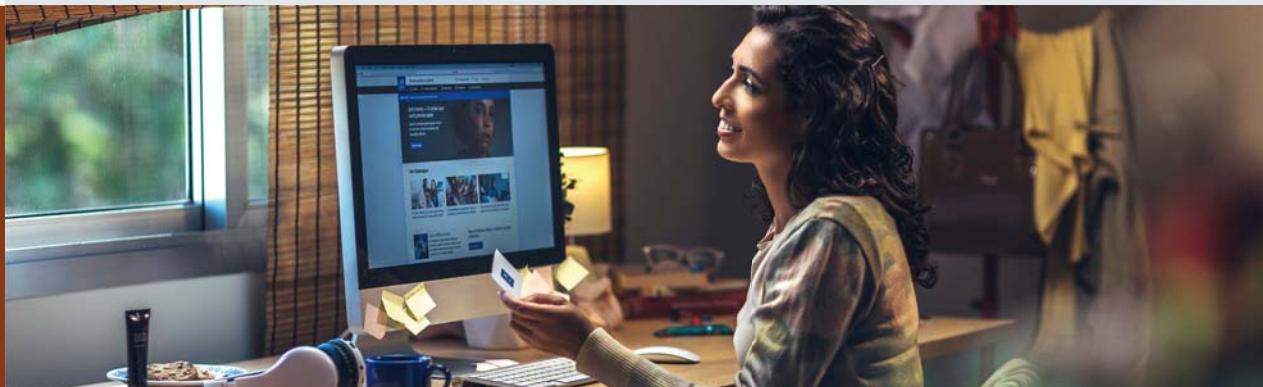
Truths We Learn From the Bible

We learn that God intended for us to live in Paradise.

He created the first humans, Adam and Eve, and placed them in a beautiful location called the garden of Eden. They were perfect, and God had provided everything they needed in order to enjoy a happy life. Their life could have been endless. As long as they remained friends with God, they would never die. But they chose to disobey a simple command God gave them.

We learn why we are now suffering hardships.

By disobeying God, the first man, Adam, lost the opportunity to live forever, both for himself and for the rest of mankind. The Bible explains: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.” (Romans 5:12) Just as a person might inherit a defect from his parents, all of Adam’s children inherited imperfection from him. As a result, we grow old and die.



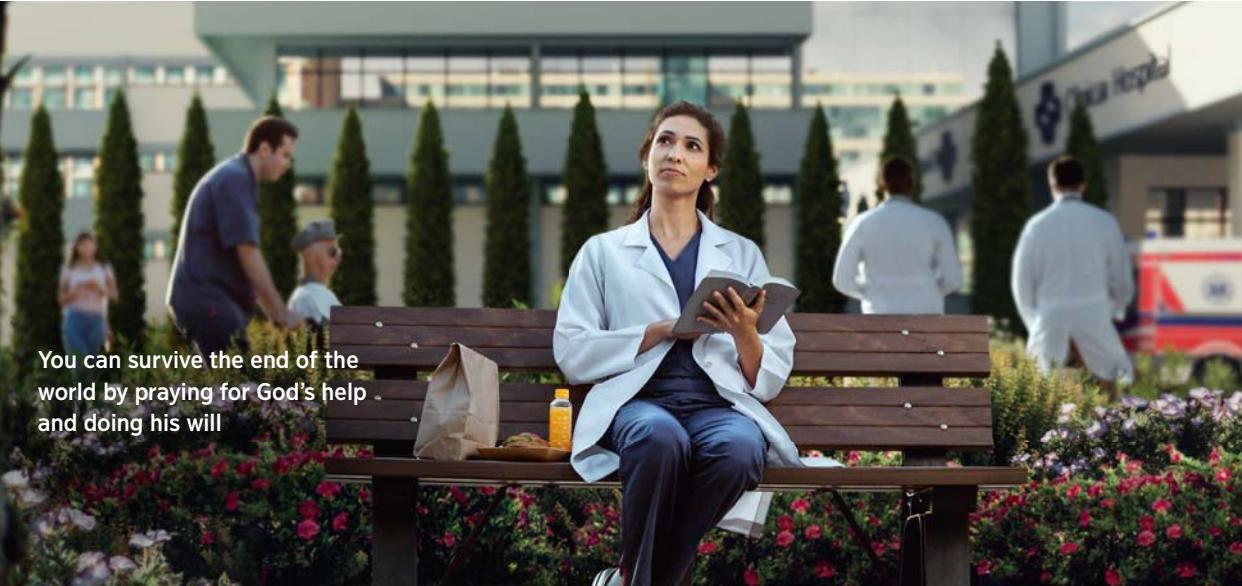
We learn what God has already done to help us.

The Bible says: “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) God sent Jesus to the earth to give his life in our behalf. Regarding that act of love, an 86-year-old Indian man named Prabhakar says: “It shows Jehovah’s* intense love for me. His love has given me the hope of everlasting life.”

We learn how we can show appreciation for what God has done for us.

The Bible says that we can show our appreciation for what God has done for us by “observing his commandments.” (1 John 2:3) Jehovah God lovingly shows us what we can do to enjoy life now. (Isaiah 48:17, 18, footnote) God does not want us to suffer. He promises that if we follow his instruction, we will not only enjoy a happy life now but also have the opportunity to live forever.

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



READ GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE, DAILY

We regularly eat food to stay alive. But Jesus said: “Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from Jehovah’s mouth.”—Matthew 4:4.

Today, we find Jehovah’s words in the pages of the Bible. As you study that sacred book, you will learn vital truths about mankind’s past, present, and future relationship with God.

PRAY TO GOD FOR HELP

What can you do if you want to follow God’s guidance but are finding it difficult to stop doing things that he says are wrong? In that case, coming to know God can help you in a special way.

Consider a woman whom we will call Sakura, who was living an immoral life. When she started to study the Bible, she learned

about God’s command to “flee from sexual immorality.” (1 Corinthians 6:18) Sakura prayed to God for strength and was able to stop this bad practice. But she still has to fight temptations. “If immoral thoughts come to mind,” she says, “I talk honestly to Jehovah in prayer, knowing that I cannot fight this by myself. The power of prayer has drawn me closer to Jehovah.” Like Sakura, millions are coming to know God. He is giving them the strength they need to make changes in their lives and live in a way that pleases him.—Philippians 4:13.

The better you come to know God, the more you will “come to be known by God” as a precious friend. (Galatians 4:9; Psalm 25:14) Then you will qualify for survival into God’s new world. But what will that new world be like? The following article will explain.

The Paradise New World That Is Near!

God created the earth so that righteous humans could live on it forever. (Psalm 37:29) He put the first human couple, Adam and Eve, in the beautiful garden of Eden, and he gave them and their descendants the responsibility to cultivate the earth and to take care of it.—Genesis 1:28; 2:15.

Today's world is far from the Paradise God meant it to be. However, God has not changed his mind. How will he fulfill his original purpose? As the preceding articles have shown, God will not destroy the earth itself. Rather, he will allow faithful humans to live on it. When God fulfills his promises, what will conditions on earth be like?

Global government

Soon, when God's new heavenly government exercises authority over all mankind, the earth will become a happy place where people can live together in harmony and do good and satisfying work. God has appointed Jesus Christ to rule over the earth. Unlike so many rulers today, Jesus will have the interests of his subjects at heart. His rulership will be based on love, and he will be a kind, merciful, and fair King.—Isaiah 11:4.

International unity

The earth's new human society will not be divided by nationality or ethnicity. Mankind will be one united people. (Revelation 7:9, 10) All humans living on earth will love God and love their neighbor, and they will cooperate peacefully to accomplish God's original purpose of taking care of their home, the earth.—Psalm 115:16.

Harmony with the natural environment

When God's Kingdom takes charge of the earth, the Creator will take full control of all aspects of the weather, keeping it in perfect balance. (Psalm 24:1, 2) When he was on earth, Jesus gave a glimpse of the power God gave him when he effortlessly calmed a frightening storm. (Mark 4:39, 41) Under Christ's rule, no one will have any reason to fear natural disasters. God's Kingdom will also restore the original harmony between nature and humans.—Hosea 2:18.





Perfect health and abundant food

Everybody will enjoy perfect health. No one will become ill, grow old, or die. (Isaiah 35:5, 6) People will enjoy a beautiful and clean environment like the one the first human couple enjoyed in the garden of Eden. In the new world, just as in Eden, the ground will produce food in abundance and all inhabitants of the earth will have plenty. (Genesis 2:9) Like God's ancient nation of Israel, everyone in the Paradise will "eat [their] bread to satisfaction."

—Leviticus 26:4, 5.

Real peace and security

Under God's global government, all people will enjoy peace and will treat one another kindly and fairly. There will be no wars, no abuse of power, and no need to struggle for basic needs. The Bible promises: "They will sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one will make them afraid."—Micah 4:3, 4.

Ample housing and satisfying work

Every family will have a home without fear of being displaced, and all the work that we do will be rewarding. As the Bible says, those living in God's new world "will not toil for nothing," or in vain.—Isaiah 65:21-23.

The best education

The Bible promises: "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:9) Members of the new human society will learn from the infinite wisdom of their Creator, Jehovah, and about the beautiful things he created. They will not use their knowledge to build weapons or to harm other humans. (Isaiah 2:4) Instead, they will learn how to live in peace with one another and how to care for the earth.—Psalm 37:11.

Unending life

God took great care to prepare the earth so that we can enjoy life to the full each day. He intends for humans to live on earth forever. (Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 45:18) To fulfill his original purpose, God "will swallow up death forever." (Isaiah 25:8) "Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore," the Bible promises. (Revelation 21:4) God will give all humans—both those whom he saves when he destroys this wicked world and the countless dead ones he will resurrect in the coming new world—the opportunity to live forever.—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.





You can prepare
now for the better
world soon to come

Even now, millions worldwide are preparing for mankind's new beginning so near at hand. Although imperfect, they are already trying to be the kind of people God would want in his new world. How? By learning about Jehovah God and the one whom he sent, Jesus Christ.—John 17:3.

Find out more about how you can survive the end of this world and live in the better world soon to come. **Accept a free Bible study from one of Jehovah's Witnesses, or try the free Online Bible Study Lessons on jw.org.**

IS THE END OF THE WORLD NEAR?

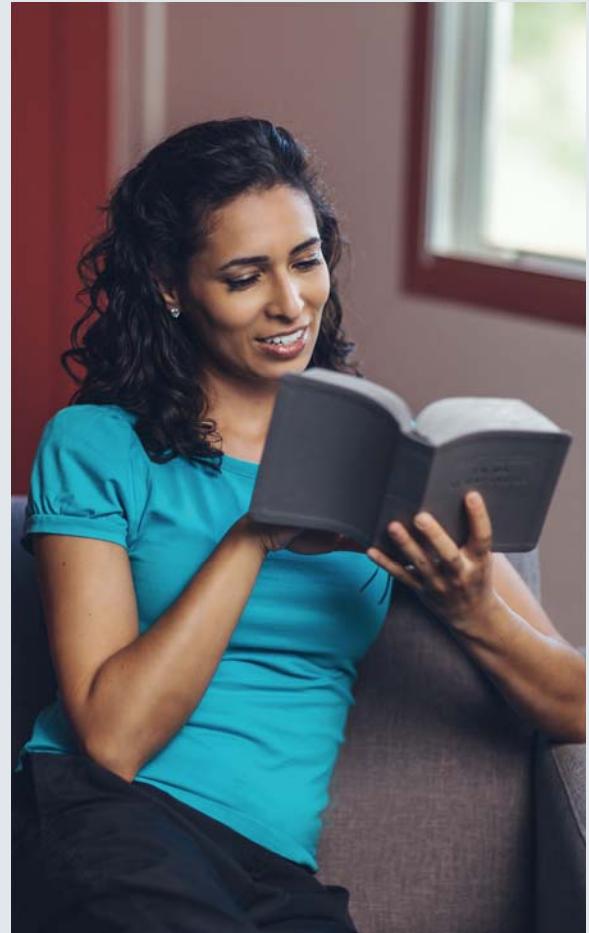
Despite countless doomsday predictions, the world has not ended—not yet! So is the end of the world a fantasy or a fact?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- How will it end?
- When will it happen?
- Can you survive?
- What will the world be like after the end?

The Bible's answers to these questions, as discussed in this issue, will surprise and comfort you.

Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you to learn more about God's purpose.



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To learn more about the secure future that God promises, start a Bible course with this brochure, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org

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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



A SECURE
FUTURE—HOW
CAN YOU FIND IT?

What can you do to find a secure future? The articles in this magazine will help you to examine your options. They will also help you to find the only source that can guarantee you a secure future.



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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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A Secure Future —Everyone's Desire

What kind of future do you desire? Like most people, you no doubt want a secure future for yourself and your family—one of happiness, good health, peace, and prosperity.

Many people, however, doubt that they will have the future they desire. They have seen sudden and unexpected events—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—upend society, devastate the economy, and threaten their life. As a result, they feel that their future is far from secure.

In view of the uncertainty, people are eagerly searching for something that will guide them to a better future. Some trust in such **unseen forces** as fate or fortune. Many pursue **education** and **wealth**, thinking that these things will guarantee that they get what they want. Others feel that **being a good person** is all they need to do to have a good life.

Will any of those options lead you to the future you desire? To find out, you need to consider these questions:

- **What really determines your future?**
- **Can education and money guarantee a better life?**
- **Will being a good person guarantee you a secure future?**
- **Where can you find a reliable guide to a secure future?**

This issue of *The Watchtower* can help you find the answers.

What Really Determines Your Future?

Many people believe that some unseen force controls their future. Based on this belief, they follow practices that they feel will improve their personal prospects.



WHAT MANY BELIEVE

ASTROLOGY: Some people believe that their future is fixed based on the way the stars were lined up at the moment of their birth. They consult astrological forecasts, or horoscopes, to find out what will befall them and then act to avoid harm or find success.

FENG SHUI: Others believe that the key to success is to bring their surroundings into harmony with unseen forces in nature. Lo Wing,* who lives in Hong Kong, says, “A feng shui master told me that putting a special crystal in a designated place in my store would help me earn more money.”

* In this article and the ones that follow, some names have been changed.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP: Still others believe that they must appease dead ancestors or various deities to gain their protection and blessing. Van, who lives in Vietnam, says, “I believed that by paying homage to my ancestors, I would enjoy a better life now and a secure future for me and my children.”

REINCARNATION: Many view existence as an endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. They believe that the good or bad they experience now is the result of events in a previous life.

Many, though, consider such beliefs as superstition. Yet, they still dabble in palmistry, horoscopes, Ouija® boards, tarot cards, and the like. They feel that perhaps there is a chance that such practices can help them know their future.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

Have those who trust in such beliefs and practices found a good life and a secure future?

Consider the experience of Hào, who lives in Vietnam. He turned to astrology, feng shui, and ancestor worship to guide him. Did he find success? Hào says, “I failed in my business, fell into debt, faced family conflicts, and was emotionally wrecked.”

Qiuming, from Taiwan, likewise believed in astrology, reincarnation, fate, feng shui, and ancestor worship. After examining these

subjects carefully, he said: “I realized that such teachings and customs are in conflict with each other and are confusing. I found that the astrological predictions were often incorrect. As for reincarnation, if you have no memory of your previous life, how can you change and do better in the next life?”

As Hào, Qiuming, and many others have come to realize, our future is not determined by fate, the stars, deceased ancestors, or rebirth. Does this mean that we have no control over our future?

“I realized that such teachings and customs are in conflict with each other and are confusing.”—QIUMING, TAIWAN

YOUR CHOICE MATTERS

Although many things that happen to us are beyond our control, experience tells us that our choices do affect our future. For example, why do we wash our hands or wear a face mask when an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, is spreading? Because choosing to do so can protect our life. Clearly, your choices matter.

Of course, we need to make wise choices if we want to get good results. Some 2,000 years ago, a wise teacher illustrated the point

this way: “Whatever a person is sowing, this he will also reap.”*

Many feel that the way to guarantee a better future is for them to pursue higher education and wealth. What have been the results for some who have made that choice?

* This statement is found in the Holy Bible at Galatians 6:7. The thought is expressed in such popular Oriental sayings as Plant melons, you'll get melons; plant beans, you'll get beans.

Can Education and Money Guarantee a Secure Future?



Many think that those who are well-educated and rich have a secure future. They believe that a university education can help a person become a better worker, a better family member, and a better citizen. They may also feel that a good education will lead to a better-paying job and that those who make a lot of money will be happy.

A CHOICE MANY MAKE

Consider the comments made by Zhang Chen, who is from China. He says, "I believed that I needed a university degree to get out of poverty and that a high-paying job would guarantee a happy and satisfying life."

To improve their chances of gaining a secure future, many are eager to attend famous universities, perhaps in other countries. This trend had increased noticeably until COVID-19 restricted international travel. A 2012 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development says: "Asians account for 52% of all students studying abroad."

Parents often make great sacrifices so that their children can attend university overseas. Qixiang, from Taiwan, recalls: "My parents were not well-off, but they sent all four of us children to college in the United States." To pay for such education, his family, like many others, had to go deep into debt.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

Education can improve life in some ways, but it does not always bring the results that students expect. For example, after years of sacrifice and incurring significant debt, many cannot find the job they wanted. A report by Rachel Mui in Singapore's *Business Times* says: "Graduate unemployment appears to be a growing issue." Jianjie, a doctorate holder who lives in Taiwan, says, "Many have no choice but to accept a job that has nothing to do with their degree."

Those who can obtain a job in their chosen profession may still find that their life has not turned out as they had hoped. After returning from university in the United Kingdom, Niran, who is from Thailand, found a job in his field. "As I expected, the degree helped me to get a job with a higher salary.

Many who pursued advanced education and wealth are left frustrated

However, the higher salary demanded more work and more time from me. Eventually, the company laid off most of its employees, including me. I realized that there is no security in any job."

Even those who are rich or have achieved the so-called good life still face family problems, health tragedies, and economic uncertainty. Katsutoshi, from Japan, admits, "I enjoyed many material things, but I was frustrated by competition, jealousy, and bullying." Lam, a woman who lives in Vietnam, says, "I see many people strive for a well-paying job to obtain financial security, but in reality, it has the opposite effect—inssecurity, health disorders, emotional exhaustion, and depression."



WHY EDUCATION AND MONEY ARE NOT ENOUGH

To be sure, people need a basic education and money to provide for themselves and their family. However, these are not enough to guarantee a secure future. Why not? Consider what the Holy Writings say.

HIGHER EDUCATION DOES NOT ALWAYS BRING SUCCESS.

“The swift do not always win the race, . . . nor do the intelligent always have the riches, nor do those with knowledge always have success, because time and unexpected events overtake them all.”

—ECCLESIASTES 9:11.

Those who seem most qualified to succeed often do not, and usually for reasons they cannot control. Economic instability, social injustice, and prejudice can prevent even the best educated people from doing what they want to do.

WEALTH MAY NOT LAST.

“Do not wear yourself out to gain wealth. Stop and show understanding. When you cast your eyes on it, it is not there, for it will surely sprout wings like an eagle and fly off into the sky.”

—PROVERBS 23:4, 5.

Any security that money provides is temporary. Upheavals in the financial world can wipe out a person’s life savings overnight. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, wildfires, and cyclones, can leave a person bankrupt and homeless.

MONEY OFTEN BRINGS PROBLEMS.

“The plenty belonging to the rich one does not permit him to sleep.”

—ECCLESIASTES 5:12.

Franklin, who lives in Hong Kong, experienced the truthfulness of that wise saying. He had advanced education and a well-paying job. Then he was promoted to be a manager. “The stress began to affect my health,” he said. “I worried so much that I could not sleep.” Eventually he reached a breaking point. “I started to question why I was doing this,” he recalled, “and it led me to think more about the purpose of life.”

Like Franklin, many have concluded that there is more to life than pursuing higher education and riches. Rather than focus their life on material things, some seek a better future by striving to be a good person and to do good to others. Will pursuing such a way of life guarantee a secure future? The next article offers the answer.

“Do not wear yourself out to gain wealth.”—PROVERBS 23:4

Will Being a Good Person Guarantee a Secure Future?

For centuries, many people have felt that being a good and moral person is the way to a secure future. For example, people in the Orient respected what the philosopher-teacher Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) said: “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.”*

A COURSE MANY FOLLOW

Many still believe that proper behavior is the key to a secure future. They try to be respectful, cultivate good manners, recognize their place in society, and maintain a good conscience. “I always believed that if I was honest and sincere,” says Linh, a woman in Vietnam, “I would be blessed in return.”

Some are motivated by their religious beliefs to do good. A man named Hsu-Yun, who lives in Taiwan, says, “I was taught that a person’s deeds while he is alive will determine whether he will enjoy endless bliss or suffer torment after he dies.”



* For a discussion of the influence of Confucian teaching, see chapter 7, paragraphs 31-35, of the book *Mankind’s Search for God*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.



WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

It is true that when we do good to others, we enjoy many benefits. However, many who sincerely try to be good to others find that doing so does not always lead to what they might expect. “I learned firsthand that those who do good are not always blessed in return,” says a woman named Shiu Ping, who lives in Hong Kong. “I tried my best to care for my family and to do good. But my marriage failed and my husband abandoned me and my son.”

Many have seen that religion has not always made people better. “I got involved in a religious organization and became a director of youth activities,” says Etsuko, a woman who lives in Japan. “I was shocked to see the loose morals, power struggles, and dishonest use of funds by those involved in my religion.”

“I tried my best to care for my family and to do good. But my marriage failed and my husband abandoned me and my son.”

—SHIU PING, HONG KONG

Some who are devout have felt disappointed when their good deeds went unrewarded. That was how Van, a woman from Vietnam, felt. “Every day I bought fruits, flowers, and food and offered them on the altars of my dead ancestors, hoping that I would enjoy blessings in the future,” she says. “Despite all the good deeds and religious rituals that I had performed for many years, my husband was struck with a debilitating disease. Then, while my daughter was studying abroad, she passed away at a young age.”

WHY BEING A GOOD PERSON IS NOT ENOUGH

Being a good person is important, but it is not enough to guarantee a secure future. Why not? Consider what the Holy Writings tell us.

NOT EVERYONE CHOOSES TO DO GOOD

“Just one sinner can destroy much good.”—**ECCLESIASTES 9:18.**

Even if you try very hard to be a good person, your future can be threatened by the selfish actions of others. For example, during a pandemic you may follow the advice of the authorities and avoid close contact with others. But what if some refuse to cooperate? Their conduct could undermine the health of those who try to do what is right.

PEOPLE CAN BE MISTAKEN ABOUT WHAT IS GOOD OR BAD

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”
—**PROVERBS 14:12.**

History is full of examples of people who pursued a course that they were convinced was good, only to find out that they were wrong. Good intentions do not shield someone from the consequences of bad decisions.

LIFE IS UNPREDICTABLE

“You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow.”—**JAMES 4:14.**

No matter how virtuous a person may be, his life can be cut short. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, many selfless volunteers lost their lives. Or consider the experience of Liting, a woman in China who lost her father in a car accident. She says: “I couldn’t understand how such a kind person could die. My father was hardworking, down-to-earth, and sincere. He was the only one in the vehicle who was killed.”

If being a good person offers no assurance of a secure future, what does? To answer this question, we need a reliable guide—a source of information that can answer our questions and point the way to a secure future. Where can we find such a guide?

Is There a Reliable Guide to a Secure Future?

As discussed in the preceding articles, people have tried to find a better future by putting their trust in such things as fate, education, wealth, and being a good person. Taking these approaches, however, is like using a faulty map to get to a destination. Does that mean there is no reliable guide for the future? No!

GUIDANCE FROM A SUPERIOR SOURCE

When making decisions, we usually consult someone who is older and wiser than we are. In a similar way, we can find sound guidance for our future from a Source who is far older and wiser than we are. The counsel from this One has come to us in a collection of sacred writings that began to be produced about 3,500 years ago. This collection of holy writings is a book called the Bible.

Why can you trust the Bible? Because its Author is the oldest and wisest Person in the universe. He is described as “the Ancient of Days” who is “from everlasting to everlasting.” (Daniel 7:9; Psalm 90:2) He is “the Creator of the heavens, the true God, the One who formed the earth.” (Isaiah 45:18) He identifies himself by his personal name, Jehovah.—Psalm 83:18.

Because the Bible is from the Creator of all mankind, it does not favor one culture or race over another. Its counsel is timeless and has benefited people in all lands. It is avail-



able in more languages and has been more widely distributed than any other book.* This means that people everywhere can easily understand it and be guided by it. These facts support the Bible’s own statement:

“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.

Just as a caring parent provides guidance for his children, Jehovah God is a loving Father who offers us help through his Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) You can trust his Word; after all, he made us and knows what course of life is best for us.

* For details regarding the translation and distribution of the Bible, go to www.jw.org and look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > HISTORY & THE BIBLE.

GUIDANCE THAT IS RELIABLE

We can trust that the Bible is a reliable guide for the future because some 2,000 years ago, it accurately foretold world events and people's behavior that we see today.

EVENTS

"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another food shortages and pestilences." —LUKE 21:10, 11.

BEHAVIOR

"In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."

—2 TIMOTHY 3:1-4.



What do you conclude when you see that the Bible so long ago accurately described what is happening today? No doubt you will agree with Leung, from Hong Kong, who says: "Bible prophecies were written long ago. It is impossible for any human to have predicted these things so accurately. The Bible has to be inspired by someone far superior to us."

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled.* These prove that the Bible really is God's Word. "I am God, and there is no one like me," says Jehovah. "From the beginning I foretell the outcome." (Isaiah 46:9, 10) With good reason, therefore, you can rely on what the Bible says about the future.

* For more details, see chapter 9 of the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. It is available online at www.jw.org. Look under LIBRARY > BOOKS & BROCHURES.

GUIDANCE THAT BENEFITS YOU NOW AND FOREVER

When you follow the guidance found in the Holy Scriptures, you benefit yourself. Consider some examples.

BALANCED VIEW OF MONEY AND WORK

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

FAMILY LIFE

“Each one of you must love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband.”—**EPHESIANS 5:33.**

HUMAN RELATIONS

“Let go of anger and abandon rage; do not become upset and turn to doing evil.”—**PSALM 37:8.**

Applying what the Bible says benefits you now and also opens up to you a bright future. In the Bible, we find God’s promise of a wonderful future that includes

PEACE AND SECURITY

“They will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—**PSALM 37:11.**

HOUSING AND FOOD FOR ALL

“They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage.”—**ISAIAH 65:21.**

NO MORE SICKNESS OR DEATH

“Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—**REVELATION 21:4.**

What do you need to do to be assured of such a future? Consider the next article.



You Can Choose Your Future

Some 3,500 years ago, Jehovah God told those who worshipped him what they must do to have a secure future: “I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the curse; and you must choose life so that you may live, you and your descendants.”—Deuteronomy 30:19.

To have a bright future, those people had to make the right choice. Today we have the same options. The Bible explains how to choose a secure future: “By loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice.”—Deuteronomy 30:20.

HOW CAN WE LOVE JEHOVAH AND LISTEN TO HIS VOICE?

LEARN FROM THE BIBLE: To love Jehovah, you first need to learn about him from the Bible. As you do, you will discover that he is a loving God who wants the best for you. He invites you to pray to him “because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) The Bible promises that if you make the effort to get close to him, “he will draw close to you.”—James 4:8.

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARN: To listen to God means to follow his wise guidance found in the Bible. As you do, “your way will be successful and then you will act wisely.”—Joshua 1:8.

To learn more, visit our website, jw.org, where you can read the Bible online, take an online Bible study course,* or request one-on-one help to understand the Bible.

Make the choice now to let the Bible guide you to a secure future!

* Currently available in seven languages, including Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese.



THE WAY TO A SECURE FUTURE

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE WAY TO A SECURE FUTURE?

WOULD IT BE:

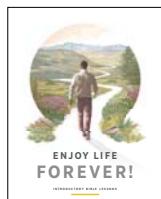
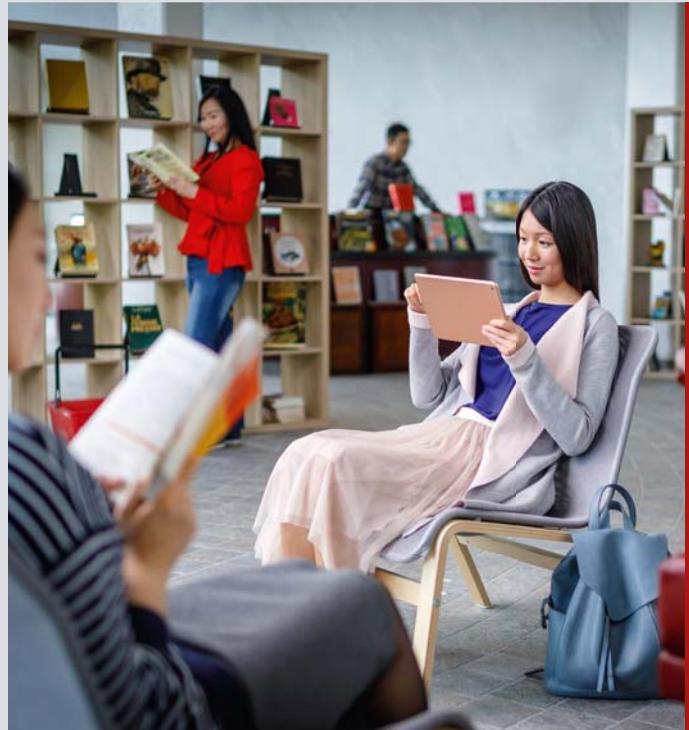
- Higher education?
- Wealth?
- Being a good person?
- Something else?

The Holy Writings say:

"Wisdom is good for you. If you find it, you will have a future."

—PROVERBS 24:14.

In the Holy Writings, you will find words of wisdom that can lead you to a secure future.



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