

AUGUST 1, 2014

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A photograph of a man in a blue sweater looking up at tall, green trees in a forest. The trees are tall and slender, with dense green foliage. The man is in the lower right corner, looking upwards. The background is a dense forest of tall trees.

IS GOD INTERESTED
IN YOU?

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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DOES GOD PAY ATTENTION TO YOU?

“I am helpless and poor; may Jehovah pay attention to me.”*

—DAVID OF ISRAEL, 11TH CENTURY B.C.E.

Was it reasonable for David to expect God to pay attention to him? Does God pay attention to *you*? Many people struggle to believe that an almighty God is interested in them. Why?

One reason is that God is a much higher life-form than mere humans. As seen from his lofty position, entire nations “are like a drop from a bucket, and as the film of dust on the scales they are regarded.” (Isaiah 40:15) One skeptical modern-day writer went so far as to conclude that it is “the height of conceit to believe that there is a divine being who takes a personal and immediate interest in your doings.”

On the other hand, some people feel that their conduct makes them unworthy of God’s attention. For example, a middle-aged man named Jim relates: “I constantly prayed for peace and self-control, but sooner or later, my anger always returned. Finally, I concluded that I was wicked to the core and that God was unable to help me.”

Is God so distant from humans that he fails to notice us? How does he really feel about his imperfect creatures? Without divine revelation, no human can rightly speak for God and answer those questions. However, God’s inspired message to humankind—the Bible—assures us that he is not a distant entity devoid of concern for individuals. “In fact,” the Bible states, “he is not far off from each one of us.” (Acts 17:27) In the following four articles, we will consider what God tells us about his interest in individuals and how he has shown such interest in real people just like you.

* Psalm 40:17; Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.



“The nations are like
a drop from a bucket.”
—ISAIAH 40:15

“God’s eyes are upon
the ways of a man, and
He sees all his steps.”

—JOB 34:21.

GOD WATCHES OVER YOU

WHY SOME HAVE DOUBTS: According to a recent study, our galaxy alone may contain at least 100 billion planets. Given the immense scale of the universe, many people ask, ‘Why should the almighty Creator watch what lowly humans do on a tiny planet?’

WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES: God did not simply give us the Bible and then lose interest in us. Rather, Jehovah assures us: “I will give you advice with my eye upon you.”—Psalm 32:8.

Consider Hagar, an Egyptian woman of the 20th century B.C.E. Hagar was disrespectful to her employer, Sarai, so Sarai humiliated her, and Hagar ran away to the wilderness. Now

The younger the
child, the more he
needs his parent’s
attention

that Hagar had made a mistake, did God lose interest in her? The Bible reports: “Jehovah’s angel found her.” That angel reassured Hagar, stating: “Jehovah has heard your affliction.” Hagar then said to Jehovah: “You are a God of sight.”—Genesis 16:4-13.

The “God of sight” watches you too. To illustrate: A loving mother is especially watchful of her little children, since the younger the child, the more he needs his parent’s attention. Similarly, God especially watches over us when we are lowly and vulnerable. “I reside in the high and holy place,” Jehovah says, “but also with those crushed and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of those being crushed.”—Isaiah 57:15.

Nevertheless, you may wonder: *How* does God watch me? Does he judge me by my appearance, or does he look beneath the surface and really understand who I am?



GOD UNDERSTANDS YOU

WHY SOME HAVE DOUBTS: Many people feel that God sees humans only as sinners—unclean and unworthy of his attention. Kendra, who suffered from depression, felt guilt-ridden because she could not measure up perfectly to God’s requirements. As a result, she said, “I stopped praying.”

WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES: Jehovah looks beneath your imperfections and understands who you really are. “He well knows how we are formed,” says the Bible, “remembering that we are dust.” What is more, he does not deal with us “according to our sins,” but he mercifully forgives us when we repent.—Psalm 103:10, 14.

Consider David, the Israelite king mentioned in the first article of this series. In prayer to God, David said: “Your eyes even saw me as an embryo; all its parts were written in your book . . . Search through me, O God, and know my heart.” (Psalm 139:16, 23) Yes, David was convinced that even though he sinned—gravely at times—Jehovah could discern his repentant heart.

Jehovah understands you better than any human does. “Mere man sees what appears to the eyes,” the Bible says, “but Jehovah sees into the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) God knows what makes you tick—how heredity, the way you grew up, your environment, and your personality all shape the person you are. He sees and values the person you strive to be, even though you make mistakes.

How, though, does God use his profound understanding of ‘the real you’ to comfort you?

“O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me.”

—PSALM 139:1.

“Your eyes even saw me as an embryo.”

—PSALM 139:16



“God, who comforts those
who are downhearted,
comforted us.”

—2 CORINTHIANS 7:6.

GOD CAN COMFORT YOU



WHY SOME HAVE DOUBTS: Even when they desperately need comfort, some people feel that it is selfish to ask God to intervene and help them cope with their problems. “When I look at the sheer number of people in the world—and the serious problems they face,” says a woman named Raquel, “my concerns seem so insignificant that I hesitate to ask God for help.”

WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES: God has already intervened in a remarkable way to help and comfort humans. Everyone on earth today has inherited sin—a chronic failure to measure up perfectly to God’s requirements. However, God “loved us and

“The Son of God . . .
loved me and handed
himself over for me.”

—GALATIANS 2:20

sent his Son [Jesus Christ] as a means of appeasement for our sins.” (1 John 4:10; footnote) Through Jesus’ sacrificial death, God makes it possible for us to have forgiveness of sins, a clean conscience, and the hope of eternal

life in a peaceful new world.* But is that sacrifice merely for the human race as a whole, or does it reflect God’s interest in you personally?

Consider the apostle Paul. He was so moved by the sacrifice of Jesus that he wrote: “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and handed himself over for *me*.” (Galatians 2:20) True, Jesus died even before Paul became a Christian. Yet, Paul viewed that sacrifice as God’s *personal* gift to him.

The sacrificial death of Jesus is God’s personal gift to *you* too. That gift proves how precious you are to God. It can give you “everlasting comfort and good hope” and thus “make you firm in every good deed and word.”—2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

Yet, Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice almost 2,000 years ago. What evidence is there that God is reaching out to you *today*?

* To learn more about Jesus’ sacrifice, see chapter 5 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

GOD REACHES OUT TO YOU

WHY SOME HAVE DOUBTS: Many who believe in God feel distant from him. “I just viewed him as the God who created everything,” admits Christina, a woman from Ireland who attended church every week. “But I didn’t know him. Not once did I feel close to him.”

WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES: When we feel lost, Jehovah does not give up on us. Jesus illustrated God’s care for us this way: “If a man has 100 sheep and one of them strays, will he not leave the 99 on the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying?” The lesson? “Likewise, it is not a desirable thing to my Father who is in heaven for even one of these little ones to perish.”—Matthew 18:12-14.

Every “one of these little ones” is precious to God. How does God “search for the one that is straying”? According to the scripture quoted at the outset, Jehovah *draws* people to him.

Consider how God took the initiative to draw sincere individuals. In the first century C.E., God sent the Christian disciple Philip to intercept an Ethiopian official’s chariot and discuss the meaning of a Bible prophecy that the official was reading. (Acts 8:26-39) Later, God directed the apostle Peter to visit the home of a Roman officer named Cornelius, who had been praying and striving to worship God. (Acts 10:1-48) God also guided the apostle Paul and his companions to a river outside the city of Philippi. There, they met “a worshipper of God” named Lydia, and “Jehovah opened her heart wide to pay attention.”—Acts 16:9-15.

In each case, Jehovah made sure that those who were seeking him had an opportunity to know him. Who today call on people in their homes and in public areas to share the Bible’s message about God? Many would answer, “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Ask yourself, ‘Could it be that God is using them to reach out to me?’ We urge you to pray to God to help you respond to his efforts to draw you to him.* ■

* For more information, watch the video *Why Study the Bible?* at www.jw.org.

“No man can come to me
unless the Father, who
sent me, draws him.”
—JOHN 6:44.



Who today call on
people in their homes
and in public areas to
share the Bible’s
message about God?



AS TOLD BY ANTOINE TOUMA

YEAR BORN

1960

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

LEBANON

HISTORY

KUNG FU EXPERT



I was fighting my own war against injustice and violence

MY PAST: I grew up in Rmaysh, near the border between Israel and Lebanon, during a time of civil war. I have vivid memories of land-mine explosions and innocent victims with missing limbs. Life was hard, and crime and violence were widespread.

Our family belonged to the Maronite Church, one of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Father was always busy providing materially for our family of 12, but Mother made sure that the rest of us went to church. In time, I began to feel that the church, like society in general, failed to support the weak.

During my teenage years, I developed an interest in kung fu. I went through rigorous training and became skilled at delivering hand and foot blows and at using various martial arts weapons. I thought to myself, 'I cannot stop the war, but I can at least try to stop violent people.' Whenever I saw two people fighting, I immediately interfered. I was quick-tempered by nature, and it did not take much to make me angry. People all over southern Lebanon were afraid of me, as I was fighting my own war against injustice and violence.

In 1980, I joined a kung fu club in Beirut. Bombs, shells, and rockets fell daily, but I still went for my training. My life was all about eating, sleeping, and living like Bruce Lee, a Chinese-American actor and kung fu champion. I copied his hairstyle, his way of walking, and his style of shouting when he performed kung fu. I never smiled.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: My goal was to become a kung fu professional in China. One evening, as I was training hard in preparation for the trip to China, I heard a knock on the door. A friend had come by with two of Jehovah's Witnesses. Dressed in a black training suit, with sweat rolling down my body, I told them, "I know nothing

about the Bible.” Little did I know that from that moment on, my life was going to change.

The Witnesses showed me from the Bible why humans on their own can never succeed in completely eliminating injustice and violence. They explained that Satan the Devil is the real cause of such problems. (Revelation 12:12) I was impressed by the peace and confidence that the Witnesses radiated. And I was touched when they taught me that God has a name. (Psalm 83:18) They also showed me 1 Timothy 4:8, which reads: “Physical training is beneficial for a little, but godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and the life that is to come.” Those words came to have a great impact on my life.

Sadly, I lost contact with the Witnesses, since my family told them not to come back. Even so, I made up my mind to stop practicing kung fu and to start studying the Bible. My brothers did not like the idea, but I was determined to find Jehovah’s Witnesses again and study the Bible with them.

I continued looking for the Witnesses but could not find them. In the meantime, I was deeply saddened by the sudden death of my father, as well as other family tragedies. I had started working at a construction company, and one day a coworker by the name of Adel stopped me and asked why I looked so sad. He began to talk about the Bible’s hope of a resurrection. For the next nine months, this loving, kind Witness patiently studied the Bible with me.

As the study progressed, I began to see the need for making big changes in my personality. It was not easy. I was always irritable and easily provoked. From the Bible I learned how to control my temper and not act on every impulse. For example, Matthew 5:44 contains Jesus’ counsel: “Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you.” And Romans 12:19



My wife and I are very happy in the ministry. We love to teach others about Jehovah

warns: “Do not avenge yourselves, . . . for it is written: ‘“Vengeance is mine; I will repay,” says Jehovah.’” Those scriptures and others helped me slowly to gain peace within myself.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Although my family initially opposed my decision to study with Jehovah’s Witnesses, they have come to respect the Witnesses. In fact, one of my brothers has joined me in worship of Jehovah, and until her death, Mother defended our faith to others.

I have also been blessed with a wonderful, loyal wife, Anita, who is my dear partner in the full-time ministry. Since the year 2000, Anita and I have lived in Eskilstuna, Sweden, where we help teach the Bible to people who speak Arabic.

My heart still goes out to people who suffer because of violence. But knowing the real reason for it—and knowing that God soon will put an end to it—gives me real joy and peace.—Psalm 37:29. ■



“Please Listen to This Dream”

JOSEPH looked longingly toward the east, wishing he could break away from the caravan and make a run for it. Somewhere beyond those hills, at no great distance, lay his home in Hebron. His father, Jacob, would be settling in for the evening, utterly unaware of what had befallen his favorite son. But Joseph could not get to him now; for all the young man knew, he might never see that dear old face again. The traders eyed him as they urged their camels along the well-worn track of the road heading south. They owned Joseph now, and they would not let him out of their sight. To them, this boy was like their precious cargo of fragrant gums and oils—valued merchandise that would fetch a profit in faraway Egypt.

Joseph could not have been much more than 17 years old. Imagine him turning to squint into the western sky, where the sun was nearing the horizon of the Great Sea, as he tried to fathom how his world had fallen apart. It was hard to believe that his own brothers had come close to murdering him and had then sold him as a slave. It must have been a struggle for Joseph to hold back his tears. He could not guess what his future would hold.

How did Joseph get into such a terrible predicament? And what can we learn from the faith of a young man who was victimized and rejected by members of his own family?

A COMPLICATED FAMILY BACKGROUND

Joseph came from a very large family—but not a happy and united one. The Bible’s portrait of Jacob’s family stands as vivid proof of the negative effects of polygamy—an entrenched practice that God tolerated among his people until his Son restored the original standard of monogamy. (Matthew 19:4-6) Jacob had at least 14 children by four different women—his two wives, Leah and Rachel, and their maidservants, Zilpah and Bilhah. From the start, Jacob was in love with his beautiful Rachel. He never felt such an attachment to Leah, Rachel’s older sister, whom he had been tricked into marrying. A bitter rivalry persisted between the two women, and that jealousy car-



ried over to the children of the household.—Genesis 29:16-35; 30:1, 8, 19, 20; 37:35.

Rachel was barren for a long time, and when she finally gave birth to Joseph, Jacob treated this son of his old age as special. For example, when the family were on their way to a dangerous meeting with Jacob's murderous brother, Esau, Jacob made sure that Rachel and little Joseph were given the safest position at the rear of the household group. That tense day must have made a deep impression on Joseph. Imagine how he felt that morning as he wondered, wide-eyed, why his aged but vigorous father was now walking with a limp. How amazed he must have been to learn the reason: His father had struggled the night before with a mighty angel! And why? Because Jacob wanted a blessing from Jehovah God. Jacob's reward was the change of his name to Israel. A whole nation would bear his name! (Genesis 32:22-31) In time, Joseph learned that the sons of Israel were to father the tribes of that nation!

Later, young Joseph faced tragedy firsthand when the dearest person in his young life left him all too soon. His mother died while giving birth to his younger brother, Benjamin. His father grieved deeply over the loss. Imagine Jacob gently wiping the tears from Joseph's eyes, comforting him with the same hope that had once comforted Jacob's grandfather Abraham. How

touched Joseph must have been to learn that Jehovah would one day restore his mother to life! Perhaps Joseph came to have even deeper love for the generous "God . . . of the living." (Luke 20:38; Hebrews 11:17-19) In the wake of the loss of his wife, Jacob always had tender feelings for those two boys, his sons by Rachel.—Genesis 35:18-20; 37:3; 44:27-29.

Many children would be spoiled or corrupted by such special treatment; but Joseph learned from the many good qualities of his parents, and he developed strong faith as well as a keen sense of right and wrong. At the age of 17, he was working as a shepherd, assisting some of his older brothers, when he noticed some wrongdoing on their part. Was he tempted to keep the matter quiet so as to gain their favor? In any case, he did what was right. He reported the matter to his father. (Genesis 37:2) Perhaps that brave act confirmed Jacob's high opinion of this beloved son. What an excellent example for Christian youths to think about! When tempted to conceal the serious sin of another—perhaps a sibling or a friend—it is wise to imitate Joseph and make sure that the matter is known to those who are in a position to help the wrongdoer.—Leviticus 5:1.

We can also take a lesson from Joseph's family life. While true Christians today are free from the practice of polygamy, there are nonetheless

Joseph lost his freedom but not his faith



many blended families among them, with step-parents, stepchildren, and stepsiblings. All can learn from Jacob's family that favoritism and partiality undermine family unity. Wise parents with blended families do all they can to convince their children and stepchildren that each one is loved and is blessed with unique gifts and that each one can add to the happiness of the family. —Romans 2:11.

JEALOUSY TAKES ROOT

Perhaps because of Joseph's courageous stand for what was right, Jacob bestowed an honor on the boy. He had a special garment made for his son. (Genesis 37:3) It has often been called a striped coat or a coat of many colors, but there is scant evidence for such renderings. Likely, it was a long, elegant robe, perhaps reaching to the extremities of the arms and legs. It was probably the kind of garb that a nobleman or a prince might wear.

Jacob surely meant well, and Joseph must have been touched by this sign of his father's regard and affection. But that garment would bring him a great deal of trouble. For one thing, remember that the boy worked as a shepherd. That meant rugged manual labor. Imagine the youth wearing such a regal garment while trudging through long grass, climbing over rocks, or trying to disentangle a lost lamb from a thornbush. Worse, though, how would this sign of Jacob's special favor affect Joseph's relationship with his brothers?

The Bible answers: "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they began to hate him, and they could not speak peaceably to him."^{*} (Genesis 37:4) Their jealousy may be understandable, but Joseph's brothers were unwise to give in to that

^{*} Some researchers suggest that Joseph's brothers interpreted their father's gift to Joseph as evidence that he intended to confer the right of the firstborn on this boy. They knew that Joseph was the first son of Jacob's favored wife—the one he had intended to marry first. Further, Jacob's firstborn, Reuben, had lain down with his father's concubine, disgracing his father and effectively forfeiting his own birthright.—Genesis 35:22; 49:3, 4.



Jacob favored Joseph because his son was faithful and righteous

poisonous emotion. (Proverbs 14:30; 27:4) Have you ever found yourself seething with envy when someone received attention or honor that you wanted? Remember Joseph's brothers. Their jealousy led them to commit deeds that they would come to regret deeply. Their example serves to remind Christians that it is far wiser to "rejoice with those who rejoice."—Romans 12:15.

Joseph surely sensed his brothers' animosity. So did he stash his fancy robe out of sight when his brothers were near? He might have been tempted to do so. Remember, though, that Jacob wanted the robe to be a sign of favor and love. Joseph wanted to live up to his father's trust in him, so he loyally wore the garment. His example is useful for us. Although our own heavenly Father is never partial, he does at times single out

his loyal servants and favor them. Furthermore, he asks them to stand out as different from this corrupt and immoral world. Like Joseph's special robe, the conduct of true Christians makes them different from those around them. Such conduct sometimes incites jealousy and animosity. (1 Peter 4:4) Should a Christian hide his true identity as a servant of God? No—no more than Joseph should have hidden his robe.—Luke 11:33.

JOSEPH'S DREAMS

It was not long before Joseph had two extraordinary dreams. In the first dream, Joseph saw himself and his brothers, each binding a sheaf of grain. But then his brothers' sheaves encircled his sheaf and bowed down to it as it stood erect. In the second dream, the sun, the moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to Joseph. (Genesis 37:6, 7, 9) What should Joseph do about those strange and vivid dreams?

The dreams came from Jehovah God. They were prophetic in nature, and God meant for Joseph to pass along the message they contained. In a sense, Joseph was to do what all the later prophets did when they related God's messages and judgments to His wayward people.

Joseph tactfully said to his brothers: "Please listen to this dream that I had." His brothers understood the dream, and they did not like it one bit. They answered: "Are you really going to make yourself king over us and dominate us?" The account adds: "So they found another reason to hate him, because of his dreams and what he said." When Joseph related the second dream to his father as well as his brothers, the reaction was not much better. We read: "His father rebuked him and said to him: 'What is the meaning of this dream of yours? Am I as well as your mother and your brothers really going to come and bow down to the earth to you?'" However, Jacob kept thinking the matter over. Might Jehovah be communicating with the boy?—Genesis 37:6, 8, 10, 11.

Joseph was neither the first nor the last servant of Jehovah to be asked to relay a prophetic

message that would prove to be unpopular and even lead to persecution. Jesus was the greatest of such message bearers, and he told his followers: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20) Christians of all ages may learn much from the faith and courage of young Joseph.

HATRED COMES TO A HEAD

Not long afterward, Jacob sent young Joseph on a journey. The older sons were tending the flocks up north near Shechem, where they had recently made bitter enemies. Naturally, Jacob was concerned about his sons, so he sent Joseph to check on their welfare. Can you imagine Joseph's feelings? He knew that his brothers hated him more than ever! How would they like it when he came to them as their father's spokesman? Nonetheless, Joseph obediently set out.—Genesis 34:25-30; 37:12-14.

It was quite a trek—in all, perhaps four or five days of walking. Shechem lay about 50 miles (80 km) to the north of Hebron. But at Shechem, Joseph learned that his brothers had moved on to Dothan, which lay another 14 miles (22 km) or so to the north. When Joseph finally neared Dothan, his brothers saw him coming from a distance. Immediately their hatred boiled to the surface. The account reads: "They said to one another: 'Look! Here comes that dreamer. Come, now, let us kill him and pitch him into one of the waterpits, and we will say that a vicious wild animal devoured him. Then let us see what will become of his dreams.'" Reuben, however, persuaded his brothers to throw Joseph into a pit alive, hoping that he could rescue the boy later on.—Genesis 37:19-22.

Unsuspecting, Joseph approached them, no doubt hoping for a peaceful meeting. Instead, his brothers attacked him! Roughly, they stripped off his special robe, dragged him to a dried-out waterpit, and pushed him in. Down Joseph fell! Recovering from the shock, he struggled to his feet, but he could never climb out on his own. He

saw only a circle of sky as his brothers' voices receded. He cried out to them, pleading, but they ignored him. Callously, they ate a meal nearby. While Reuben was absent, they again considered killing the boy, but Judah persuaded them to sell him to passing merchants instead. Dothan was near the trade route to Egypt, and it was not long before a caravan of Ishmaelites and Midianites came by. Before Reuben returned, the deed was done. For 20 shekels, they had sold their brother as a slave.*—Genesis 37:23-28; 42:21.

So we find ourselves back at our starting point. As Joseph was taken south along the road to Egypt, he seemed to have lost everything. He was cut off! For years, he would know nothing of his family—nothing of Reuben's anguish when he returned to find Joseph gone; nothing of Jacob's

* Even in this minute detail, the Bible record proves accurate. Documents from the same time period reveal that 20 shekels was the going price for slaves in Egypt.

grief when he was deceived into believing that his beloved Joseph was dead; nothing of his aged grandfather Isaac, who still lived; and nothing of his beloved younger brother, Benjamin, whom he would miss dearly. But was Joseph left with nothing at all?—Genesis 37:29-35.

Joseph still had something that his brothers could never take from him: faith. He knew much about his God, Jehovah, and nothing could rob him of that—not the loss of his home, not the hardships of captivity on the long journey to Egypt, and not even the humiliation of being sold as a slave to a wealthy Egyptian named Potiphar. (Genesis 37:36) Joseph's faith and his determination to stay close to his God only grew stronger through such hardships. In future articles, we will see how that faith made Joseph ever more useful to his God, Jehovah, as well as to his troubled family. How wise we would be to imitate the faith of Joseph! ■

Joseph stood up for what was right, yet his brothers hated him



Who made God?

Picture a father talking with his seven-year-old son. He says, “Long, long ago, God made the earth and everything in it, and he made the sun, the moon, and the stars.” The boy thinks about this for a few moments and then asks, “Daddy, who made God?”

“Nobody made God,” the father replies. “He has always existed.” That simple statement satisfies the child for now. As he grows older, however, the question continues to intrigue him. He finds it hard to comprehend how anyone could be without a beginning. Why, even the universe had a beginning. ‘Where did God come from?’ he wonders.

How does the Bible answer? Essentially, in much the same way as did the father in our example. Moses wrote: “O Jehovah, . . . before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the productive land, **from everlasting to everlasting**, you are God.” (Psalm 90:1, 2) Likewise, the prophet Isaiah exclaimed: “Do you not know? Have you not heard? Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, **is a God for all eternity!**” (Isaiah 40:28) Similarly, the letter of Jude refers to God as existing “for all past eternity.”—Jude 25.

Those scriptures show us that God is “the King of eternity,” as the apostle Paul describes him. (1 Timothy 1:17) This means that God has always existed, no matter how far back in time we cast our gaze. And he will always exist in the future. (Revelation 1:8) Thus, his eternal existence is a fundamental attribute of the Almighty.

Why do we find this idea difficult to grasp? Because our limited life span gives us a completely different concept of time from that of Jehovah. Because God is eternal, to him a thousand years are like a day. (2 Peter 3:8) To illustrate: Could a grasshopper, which lives as an adult for only about 50 days, fathom our life span of 70 or 80 years? Hardly! Yet, the Bible explains that we are like grass-

hoppers in comparison with our Grand Creator. Even our ability to reason is dwarfed by his. (Isaiah 40:22; 55:8, 9) So it is not surprising that there are aspects of Jehovah’s nature that escape full human understanding.

Although the concept of an eternal God may be hard to grasp, we can see that it makes sense. If someone else had created God, that person would be the Creator. Yet, as the Bible explains, Jehovah is the one who “created all things.” (Revelation 4:11) Furthermore, we know that the universe at one time did not exist. (Genesis 1:1, 2) Where did it come from? Its Creator had to exist first. He also existed before there were any other intelligent beings, such as his only-begotten Son and the angels. (Job 38:4, 7; Colossians 1:15) Clearly, then, he existed alone first. He could not have been created; nothing was in existence that could have created him.

Our own existence and that of the entire universe testifies to the existence of an eternal God. The One who put our vast universe in motion, the One who established the laws to control it, must have always existed. Only he could have breathed life into everything else.—Job 33:4. ■



Do all religions honor God?

Listening to the world news, you have probably noticed that bad things are sometimes done in the name of religion. Not all religion originates with the true God. (Matthew 7:15) Indeed, much of mankind has been misled.—**Read 1 John 5:19.**

Nevertheless, God takes note of sincere people who love what is good and true. (John 4:23) God is inviting such people to learn the truth from his Word, the Bible.—**Read 1 Timothy 2:3-5.**

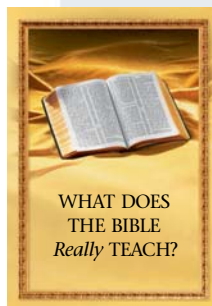
How can you recognize true religion?

Jehovah God is uniting people from many religious backgrounds by teaching them the truth and by teaching them to love one another. (Micah 4:2, 3) Thus, you can recognize practicers of true religion by the way they care for one another.—**Read John 13:35.**

True worshippers base their faith and their way of life on the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) They also honor God's name. (Psalm 83:18) And they advocate God's Kingdom as the only hope for mankind. (Daniel 2:44) They imitate Jesus by letting their "light shine," doing good to their neighbors. (Matthew 5:16) True Christians can, therefore, be recognized by their neighborly visits to people's homes for the purpose of sharing the good news of God's Kingdom.—**Read Matthew 24:14; Acts 5:42; 20:20.**



Jehovah God is uniting all sorts of people by means of true worship.
—Psalm 133:1



For more information, see chapter 15 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

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