

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHY BE
HONEST?

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 DO YOU THINK?

Would the world be a better place if everyone lived by this Bible principle?

"We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—Hebrews 13:18.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses how honesty touches every aspect of our life.

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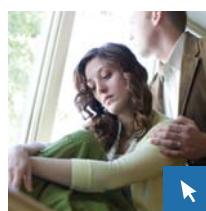
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Is Honesty Outdated?

Hitoshi worked in the accounting office of an employment agency in Japan. While reviewing a financial account with his superior, Hitoshi was told that he was expected to make a falsified report. Hitoshi explained that his conscience would not let him do dishonest work. As a result, Hitoshi's superior threatened to fire him, and he ultimately lost his job.

In the months that followed, Hitoshi became downhearted over his employment prospects. During one job interview, for instance, Hitoshi mentioned that he could not engage in dishonest work. The interviewer responded, "Your way of thinking is strange!" Hitoshi's family and friends encouraged him to remain firm in his resolve to be honest, yet he began to have some doubts. For instance, he said, "I wondered if being honest about my faith was a good idea."

Hitoshi's experience is a disturbing reminder that not everyone prizes honesty. In fact, some may even view it as a liability, particularly in the business community. "I'm surrounded by people who are dishonest," said a working woman in South Africa, "and sometimes the pressure to conform is very great."

One form of dishonesty that is particularly widespread today is lying. Some years ago, a study by Robert S. Feldman, a psychologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, determined that 60 percent of adults lie at least once during a ten-minute conversation. "It was a very surprising result," says Feldman. "We didn't expect lying to be such a common part of daily life." Is it not strange that most people abhor the idea of being lied to yet there are few practices more common than lying?

Why are lying, stealing, and other forms of dishonesty so common today? How does dishonesty affect society as a whole? And more important, how can we avoid getting caught up in these dishonest practices?



How Dishonesty Affects You

“There are always difficult situations that can be solved with a little dishonesty.”—Samantha, South Africa.

Do you agree with that statement? Like Samantha, all of us have faced difficult situations at one time or another. How we react to situations that tempt us to be dishonest can reveal what values we hold dear. For example, if saving face is paramount to us, we would likely view being dishonest as just another tool used to accomplish the task. When the truth comes to light, however, dishonesty often brings negative consequences. Consider the following.

DISHONESTY DESTROYS TRUST

Relationships are built on trust. When two people trust each other, they feel safe and secure. But trust does not happen overnight. People build trust when they spend time together, engaging in honest communication and acting unselfishly. Trust can be shattered, however, by just one act of dishonesty. And when trust has been broken, it can be very difficult to rebuild.

Have you ever been deceived by someone you thought was a good friend? If so, how did you feel? Likely you felt hurt, even betrayed. That certainly is understandable. There is little doubt that dishonesty can destroy the fabric of precious relationships.

DISHONESTY BREEDS DISHONESTY

A study by Robert Innes, a professor of economics at the University of California, found that “dishonesty is indeed contagious.” Thus, dishonesty could be likened to a virus—the more contact you have with a person who is deceitful, the greater your risk of being “infected” with dishonesty yourself.

How can you avoid falling into the trap of dishonesty? The Bible can help you. Please consider a few Bible principles.

Forms of Dishonesty

Lying

WHAT IS IT? Saying something false to someone who is entitled to know the truth. Lying can include misrepresenting or distorting facts in order to mislead a person, omitting key information to deceive someone, and exaggerating the truth in order to give a false impression.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: “Jehovah detests a devious person, but His close friendship is with the upright.” (Proverbs 3:32) “Now that you have put away deceit, each one of you speak truth with his neighbor.”—Ephesians 4:25.



Slander

WHAT IS IT? Uttering false and malicious statements that injure a person's reputation.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: “A troublemaker causes dissension, and a slanderer separates close friends.” (Proverbs 16:28) “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out, and where there is no slanderer, quarreling ceases.”—Proverbs 26:20.



Fraud

WHAT IS IT? Inducing someone to part with money or property on false pretenses.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: “You must not defraud a hired worker who is in need and poor.” (Deuteronomy 24:14, 15) “The one who defrauds the lowly one insults his Maker, but whoever shows compassion to the poor glorifies Him.”—Proverbs 14:31.



Stealing

WHAT IS IT? Taking property from a person without permission.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS: “Let the one who steals steal no more; rather, let him do hard work, doing good work with his hands, so that he may have something to share with someone in need.” (Ephesians 4:28) “Do not be misled. . . . Thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners will not inherit God's Kingdom.” —1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.



Why It Pays to Be Honest

“We trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things.”—Hebrews 13:18.

In the Bible, the original Greek word that is sometimes translated “honesty” literally means “something that is intrinsically good.” It can also carry the meaning of something beautiful to behold in a moral sense.

Christians take seriously the apostle Paul’s inspired words: “We wish to conduct ourselves honestly *in all things*.” What does that involve?

THE STRUGGLE WITHIN

Most people glance at themselves in a mirror every morning before going out in public. Why? Because they want to look their best. But there is something much more important than having a stylish haircut or fashionable clothes. Indeed, the person we are on the inside can either add to or detract from our outward appearance.

God’s Word frankly admits that we are inclined to do what is bad. “The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up,” says Genesis 8:21. Thus, to be honest, we must fight against our inborn sinful tendencies. The apostle Paul gave a vivid description of his own fight against sin, saying: “I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I see in my body another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin’s law that is in my body.”—Romans 7:22, 23.

For example, when our heart urges us to do what is bad and we have a strong inclination to be dishonest, we do not have to be a slave to our heart’s impulses. We still have a choice in the matter. When we choose to reject a bad thought, we can remain honest despite the dishonesty surrounding us.



WINNING THE BATTLE

To be honest, we need a strong moral code. Sadly, however, many people spend more time deciding on their personal ‘dress code’ than they do on thinking about a personal moral code. As a result, they justify the amount of dishonesty that will suit their situation. The book *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty* put it this way: “Essentially, we cheat up to the level that allows us to retain our self-image as reasonably honest individuals.” Is there, though, a reliable standard that can help us decide for ourselves how much—if any—dishonesty is acceptable? Thankfully, there is.

Millions of people the world over have found that the Bible perfectly fills that need. The Bible has a moral code that is beyond compare. (Psalm 19:7) It gives reliable guidance on such matters as family life, employment, morality, and spirituality. It has stood the test of time. Its

laws and principles apply to all national groups, races, tribes, and peoples. By peering into the Bible, meditating on what it says, and applying its counsel, we can train our heart to be honest and upright.

Still, there is more to winning the battle against dishonesty than gaining an accurate knowledge of the Bible. After all, we live in a morally depraved world that pressures us to accept its corrupt standards. That is why we need to pray to God for his help and support. (Philippians 4:6, 7, 13) By doing so, we can have the courage to stand up for what is right and to be honest in all things.

REWARDS OF HONESTY

Hitoshi, quoted in the opening article, profited from having a reputation of being an honest worker. He now works for an employer who appreciates his honesty. “I am thankful,” says Hitoshi, “that I was able to find work that allows me to keep a clean conscience.”

Others have found the same to be true. Consider some examples of those who have benefited by applying the Bible principle to “conduct ourselves honestly in all things.”

Clean Conscience

A circular portrait of Cheryl Ireland, a woman with short brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera.
“I left school at age 13 in order to work with thieves. As a result, 95 percent of my income was obtained by dishonest means. Later, I married, and my husband and I began studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. We learned that Jehovah* God hates dishonest practices, so we decided to change our lifestyle. In 1990 we dedicated our lives to Jehovah and got baptized as Jehovah’s Witnesses.”—Proverbs 6: 16-19.

“In the past, my house was full of stolen goods, but now it is free from such things; and

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

this gives me a clean conscience. Thinking back over my many years of dishonesty, I am grateful to Jehovah for his great mercy. It is so satisfying to go to sleep each night knowing that Jehovah is now pleased with me.”—Cheryl, Ireland.



“When my boss found out that I had turned down a bribe from a potential customer, he said to me: ‘Your God makes you such a trustworthy person! It truly is a blessing to have you here in our company.’ To be honest in all things enables me to have a clean conscience before Jehovah God. It also allows me to help my family and others to do the same.”—Sonny, Hong Kong.



Peace of Mind

“I work as an executive assistant at an international bank. In this business, honesty is often shoved aside for the sake of gaining wealth. The widespread view is, ‘What’s the harm in a little dishonesty if it promotes wealth and helps the economy?’ But by being honest, I have peace of mind. I am resolved to remain honest and face whatever consequences may come. My employers know that I will not lie to them or for them.”—Tom, United States.



Self-Respect

“My supervisor at work encouraged me to lie about some missing supplies at work, but I refused. When the thieves were finally revealed, my employer thanked me for being honest. Being honest in a dishonest world calls for courage. But in the end, we can gain the trust and respect of others.”—Kaori, Japan.

A clean conscience, peace of mind, and self-respect—such rewards show that it really does pay to be honest. Do you not agree? ■



AS TOLD BY ALAIN BROGGIO

YEAR BORN
1971

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
FRANCE

HISTORY
**INVOLVED WITH VIOLENT CRIME,
IMMORALITY, AND DRUGS**



Give me just one year of peace and happiness

MY PAST: My family lived in Tellancourt, a village in north-eastern France. My father was French, and my mother is Italian. When I was eight years old, we moved to a poor working-class suburb of Rome, Italy. There, home life became difficult. My parents argued violently because of their financial problems.

When I was 15 years old, my mother encouraged me to get out of the house and make some friends. So I began to leave home for longer and longer periods of time. Soon I fell into bad company. One day a man, who seemed friendly, approached me. He offered me drugs, which I took because I wanted to appear grown-up. I was quickly drawn into an underworld of drugs and immorality. On many occasions, I was violated sexually. Life became unimportant to me; I did not care if I lived or died. I was desperately lonely. At age 16, I attempted suicide by drinking a bottle of whiskey and jumping into a lake. I wound up in a coma for three days.

I began to appreciate life, but I also became violent and devious. I would offer people sex, drug them in their home, and then steal anything they had that was valuable. Large crime syndicates used me to traffic drugs around Italy. I was frequently in trouble with the police. My life seemed pointless and out of control. However, I did believe that there had to be a reason for my existence. I prayed to God, asking him to give me just one year of peace and happiness.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: When I was 24 years old, I decided to move to England. Because of my activities with drug dealers, my life was in danger. Before I left, I visited my mother and was surprised to see a man named Annunziato Lugarà talking to her about the Bible.* Knowing his criminal history, I became afraid and asked him why he was there. He told me about the major changes he had made in his life in order to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he made me promise

* See the article "The Bible Changes Lives—I Never Went Anywhere Without My Gun," as told by Annunziato Lugarà, in the July 1, 2014, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 8-9.

At last, I have the stable family life that I always craved, and I have the loving Father that I always wanted

to speak to the Witnesses when I arrived in England. I agreed to do so. However, once I arrived there, I quickly reverted to my previous lifestyle.

One day, I met a Witness who was offering the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines on a busy London street. Remembering my promise to Annunziato, I asked the Witness if I could have a Bible study.

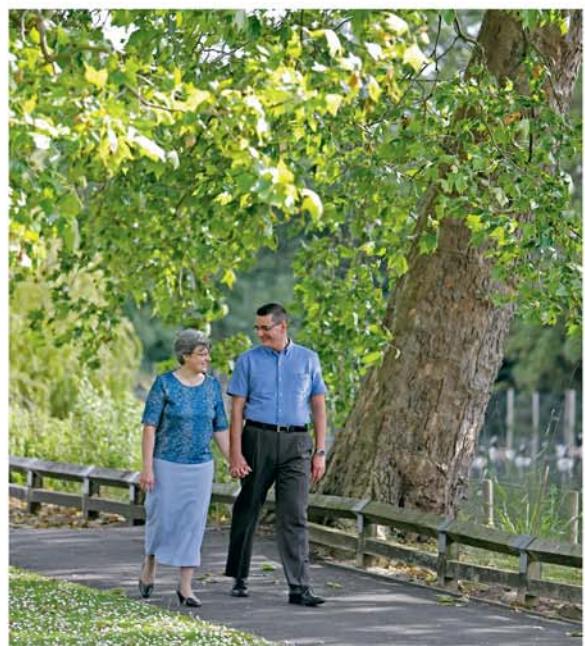
What I learned from the Bible truly amazed me. For example, I was moved by the passage recorded at 1 John 1:9, which says concerning God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us.” That verse had a dramatic effect on me because I felt very dirty on account of my lifestyle. I immediately started to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Witnesses welcomed me warmly. When I saw the closeness of their friendships—something I had always longed for—I wanted to be a part of their familylike congregation.

Although I did not have a lot of difficulty quitting drugs and leaving my immoral lifestyle, I found it much harder to refine my personality. I saw that I needed to treat people with respect and consideration. In fact, I am still fighting some bad traits. But with Jehovah’s help, I have made progress. Within six months of beginning to study the Bible, I was baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. That was in 1997.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: After baptism, I married a young woman named Barbara who had also recently become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. When one of my old friends saw how much I had changed, he started to study the Bible. In time, he

became a Witness, and so did his sister. Then my grandmother’s sister, who was over 80 years of age, began to study and was baptized before she died.

I now serve as an elder in a local congregation, and my wife and I are full-time ministers, helping to teach the Bible to Italian-speaking people in London. At times, I get depressed about my former lifestyle, but Barbara is an enormous support to me. At last, I have the stable family life that I always craved, and I have the loving Father that I always wanted. I asked God for one year of peace and happiness, but he has given me so much more! ■



DID YOU KNOW?

In Bible times, how were scrolls made, and how were they used?



LATER LEATHER AND VELLUM SCROLLS OF THE BIBLE BOOK OF ESTHER, FROM THE 18TH CENTURY C.E.

© The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

The Gospel of Luke speaks of Jesus' opening the scroll of Isaiah, reading from it, and then rerolling it. At the end of John's Gospel, John too spoke of a scroll, saying that he was not able to include in his scroll all the signs that Jesus had performed.—Luke 4:16-20; John 20:30; 21:25.

How were scrolls made? Pieces of such materials as leather, parchment, or papyrus were glued together to form a strip, or a roll. This could then be wrapped around a rod with the written face on the inside. The writing appeared in short vertical columns across the width of the roll. If the scroll was long, it would have rods at both ends, which the reader would use to unroll the text with one hand and roll it up with the other, until the desired place was found.

"A scroll had the advantage of being long enough [often about 33 feet (10 m)] to contain a whole book in a small volume, once it was rolled up," says *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. It is estimated that the Gospel of Luke, for example, would have required a roll some 31 feet (9.5 m) in length. In some cases, a scroll's top and bottom edges were trimmed, rubbed smooth with pumice stone, and dyed. ■

Who may have been the “chief priests” who were mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures?

From the inception of the Israelite priesthood, only one man at a time served in the capacity of high priest, which initially was a lifelong appointment. (Numbers 35:25) Aaron was the first to serve in this capacity. Subsequently, the honor generally passed from father to oldest son. (Exodus 29:9) Many of Aaron's male descendants served as priests, but only relatively few as high priests.

When Israel came under foreign domination, non-Israelite rulers appointed and removed Jewish high priests at will. It appears, however, that new appointees were almost always chosen from a select number of privileged families, mostly from the line of Aaron. The expression “chief priests” evidently refers to principal members of the priesthood. The chief priests may have included the heads of the 24 divisions of the priesthood; prominent members of high-priestly families; and former high priests who had been deposed, such as Annas.—1 Chronicles 24:1-19; Matthew 2:4; Mark 8:31; Acts 4:6. ■





How to Overcome Feelings of Insecurity

NOTHING seems more helpless than a newborn baby. When we came into the world our security depended entirely on our parents. When we learned to walk, we met strangers who towered over us like giants. They frightened us unless our parents were close at hand. But we felt safe when we grasped the hand of our mother or father.

During childhood, our well-being depended on the love and encouragement that our parents gave us. When we realized that our parents loved us, it reinforced our sense of security. When they assured us that we were doing well, we felt more confident and we made progress.

As we got a bit older, close friends also provided additional security. We felt comfortable in their presence, and they made the school environment seem less intimidating.

Those thoughts, of course, describe the ideal childhood. Some youngsters find few close friends, and too many children receive scant parental support. "Whenever I see pictures of united families doing things together, I think to myself, 'I wish I had enjoyed that when I was a young

girl,'" confesses Melissa.* Perhaps you feel the same way.

PROBLEMS OF AN INSECURE UPBRINGING

Maybe you lacked confidence during your formative years. Perhaps you received little love and encouragement. Possibly, you remember the constant fights between your parents that led to the breakup of their marriage—a separation you may have mistakenly blamed on yourself. Or even worse, perhaps one of your parents abused you verbally or physically.

How may an insecure child react? Some turn to drugs or binge drinking during their teenage years. Others join gangs in search of a sense of belonging. Insecure teenagers may jump into a romantic relationship, seeking love and affection. But these relationships rarely last long, and the breakup often causes even more insecurity.

Vulnerable teenagers who avoid such major pitfalls may still grow up with little sense of self-worth. "I became convinced that I was useless,

* All names have been changed.

The Face of Insecurity

"When my drunken father used to explode in anger, his appearance changed. He became like a wolf baring its teeth before attacking its prey without mercy. And I was like a frightened lamb, cowering out of sight, hoping he wouldn't see me. I lived this nightmare almost every day."—Caroline's memories of her childhood.

"I felt I couldn't trust anyone. It seemed as if I were lost on top of a mountain shouting for help, but there was nobody who could hear me, no one who could lead me to safety."

—Eva, a recently divorced woman.

"My father would often yell at me, 'You're bad. Nobody will ever love you!' For years I have tried to convince myself that I am not a bad person and that others really like me. I felt like a puppy with its tail between its legs, always looking for a kindly pat, but never getting one."—Mark, whose father demeaned him.

"I sometimes look at an attractive woman and compare her to a beautiful orchid that people would love to have in their home. But I am more like a common weed that wouldn't interest anyone."—María, a young woman who struggles with feelings of inferiority.

"When I was just 12 years old, my parents emigrated to another country and left me behind to care for my two younger sisters. I felt so lonely. I wanted somebody to look after me and to tell me I was doing well. But I felt I was lost in a big, dark forest. Although I carried on day by day, I wanted to find an escape from this forest. I wanted to feel secure and happy."—Rachel, a daughter of immigrant workers.

since that is what my mother told me time and time again," explains Ana. "I can't remember receiving any commendation or affection from her."

Our upbringing is not the only cause of insecurity. We may feel insecure as a result of a traumatic divorce, the trials of old age, or even concern about our appearance. Whatever the cause, it can rob us of happiness and damage our relationships with others. What can we do to overcome those feelings?

GOD DOES CARE ABOUT US

We need to know that help is available. We all have someone who can help us, someone who wants to help us—God himself.

This is the message God set out through his prophet Isaiah: "Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you, I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10, 13) How comforting to think that God figuratively wants to take us by the hand! We have no need to feel anxious!

The Bible describes worshippers of God who felt anxious but who learned to hold God's hand. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, felt that she was a failure, since she could not have a baby. She was often ridiculed for her barrenness. As a result, Hannah lost her appetite and often wept. (1 Samuel 1:6, 8) But after she poured out her feelings to God, she no longer felt miserable.—1 Samuel 1:18.

The psalmist David also felt insecure at times. For years, King Saul tried to hunt him down. David survived several attempts on his life, and he sometimes felt he was drowning in his problems. (Psalm 55:3-5; 69:1) Despite this, he wrote: "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Jehovah, make me dwell in security."—Psalm 4:8.

Both Hannah and David threw their emotional burdens on Jehovah, and they found that he did sustain them. (Psalm 55:22) How can we do the same today?



THREE WAYS TO FEEL MORE SECURE

1. Learn to trust in Jehovah as a Father.

Jesus urged us to get to know his Father, “the only true God.” (John 17:3) “He is not far off from each one of us,” the apostle Paul assures us. (Acts 17:27) “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you,” wrote James.—James 4:8.

Knowing that we have a heavenly Father who loves and cares for us is a vital step in overcoming feelings of anxiety. True, it may take time to build this trust, but many have found that doing so really helps. “When Jehovah became my Father, I finally had someone to whom I could express my inner feelings,” says Caroline. “This brought me so much relief!”

“Jehovah is the one who helped me to feel secure when I was left all alone without my parents,” recalls Rachel. “I could talk to him and ask him to help me with my problems. And he did help me.”*

* Jehovah’s Witnesses offer free Bible studies to those who would like to draw closer to God.

2. Find a spiritual family.

Jesus taught his disciples to think of one another as brothers and sisters. “All of you are brothers,” he told them. (Matthew 23:8) He wanted his true disciples to love one another and become what we could call a large spiritual family.—Matthew 12:48-50; John 13:35.

Congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses sincerely try to provide the warmth and comfort of a true spiritual family. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Many have found that congregation meetings can serve as a soothing ointment that cures their emotional cuts and bruises.

“I had a special friend in my local congregation, who understood the pain I was suffering,” recalls Eva. “She listened to me, read to me, and prayed with me. She made sure I was not alone. She helped me talk things through and unburden myself. Thanks to her support, I began to feel more secure.” “I found a ‘mother and father’ in the congregation,” Rachel adds. “They really made me feel loved and secure.”



3. Show love and kindness to others.

Showing love and kindness to others builds lasting friendships. Jesus said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20: 35) And we will doubtless discover that the more love we show, the more we receive. “Practice giving, and people will give to you,” Jesus told his disciples.—Luke 6:38.

By giving and receiving love, we feel much more secure. As the Bible points out, “love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:8) “I know that some negative views I have about myself are simply not true,” María admits. “I escape from this frame of mind by helping others and forgetting myself. I always feel satisfied when I do something for others.”

SECURITY FOR EVERYONE

The above steps are not a ‘magic formula’ that provides instant, lasting relief. But they can make a big difference. “I still have feelings of insecurity,” Caroline admits. “But now I have more self-worth. I know God cares for me, and I have many close friends who also make me feel secure.” Ra-

chel feels the same way. “From time to time, sadness overwhelms me,” she says. “But I have spiritual brothers and sisters I can turn to for advice, ones who help me see things positively. And above all, I have a heavenly Father whom I talk to every day. That makes all the difference.”

There is also a lasting solution. The Bible describes a coming new world, where each one of us will feel secure. God’s Word promises: “They will sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one will make them afraid.” (Micah 4:4) At that time, nobody will make us feel unprotected, nor will anyone do us harm. Even deep-rooted traumas of the past “will not be called to mind.” (Isaiah 65:17, 25) God and his Son, Christ Jesus, will establish “true righteousness.” The result “will be lasting tranquillity and security.”—Isaiah 32:17. ■

The Bible describes a coming new world, where each one of us will feel secure

Do Not Be Anxious

BIBLE PRINCIPLE: “Stop being anxious about your lives.”
—Matthew 6:25.

What does it mean? Jesus spoke those words in his Sermon on the Mount. According to one Bible dictionary, the Greek verb rendered “to be anxious” can refer to “the natural reaction of man to poverty, hunger and other troubles which befall him in his daily life.” Anxiety often involves being worried about things that may take place in the future. It is normal and proper to be concerned about our material needs and the welfare of our loved ones. (Philippians 2:20) But when Jesus said, “never be anxious,” he was advising his followers to avoid undue worry—an excessive fear of tomorrow that can take the joy out of living today.—Matthew 6:31, 34.

Is it practical today? We are wise to heed Jesus’ advice. Why? Some reference works suggest that when people worry a great deal, their sympathetic nervous system is in a constant state of activation and that this condition “is associated with medical problems that include ulcers, heart disease, and asthma.”

Jesus gave a compelling reason for avoiding undue anxiety: *It is pointless.* “Who of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life span?” asked Jesus. (Matthew 6:27) Focusing on our worries will not extend our life by even a fraction of a second, let alone improve it. Besides, things often do not turn out as we feared. One scholar put it this way: “Worry about the future is wasted effort, and the future of reality is seldom as bad as the future of our fears.”

How can we avoid anxiety? First, *trust in God.* If God provides food for birds and clothes flowers with beauty, will he not provide the necessities of life for humans who make his worship a priority in their life? (Matthew 6:25, 26, 28-30) Second, *take one day at a time.* “Never be anxious about the next day,” said Jesus, “for the next day will have its own anxieties.” Would you not agree that “each day has enough of its own troubles”?—Matthew 6:34.

By heeding Jesus’ wise advice, we can spare ourselves physical harm. More than that, we will find an inner calm—what the Bible calls “the peace of God.”—Philippians 4:6, 7. ■





What happens when we die?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that we live on in another form, while others feel that death is the end of everything. **What do you believe?**

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"The dead know nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) When we die, we cease to exist.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- The first man, Adam, returned to the dust when he died. (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) Likewise, all others who die return to the dust.—Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20.
- People who die are acquitted of, or pardoned for, their sins. (Romans 6:7) There is no further punishment for sin after a person dies.

Can the dead live again?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"There is going to be a resurrection."
—Acts 24:15.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Bible often compares death to sleep. (John 11:11-14) God can awaken the dead, just as we can awaken a person from sleep. —Job 14:13-15.
- The Bible records several resurrections, thus giving us a solid basis for believing that the dead will be raised up.—1 Kings 17:17-24; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:39-44.



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

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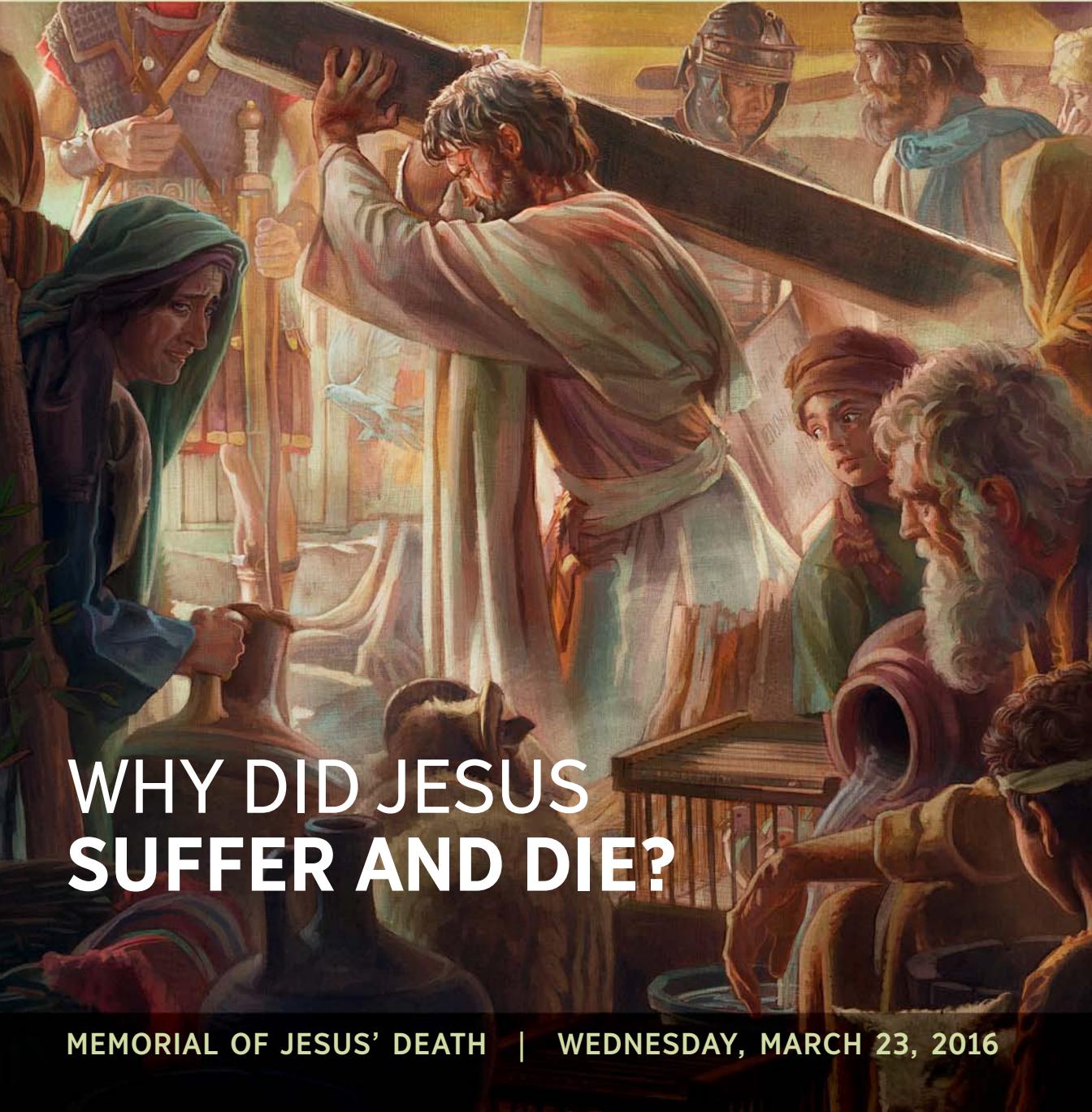
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHY DID JESUS
SUFFER AND DIE?

MEMORIAL OF JESUS' DEATH | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2016

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 DO YOU THINK?

Can you really benefit from the very well-known statement: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son"? —John 3:16.

This issue of *The Watchtower* explains how Jesus' suffering and death can benefit you.

Why Did Jesus Suffer and Die?

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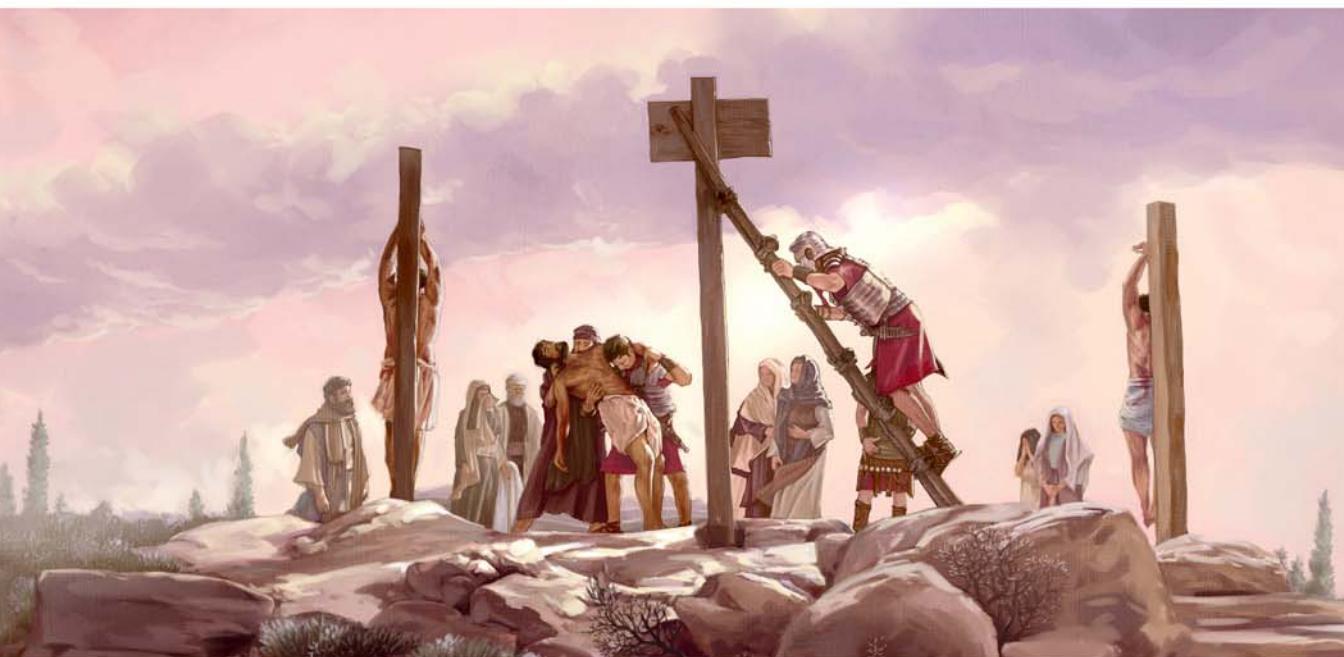
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OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

[Did Jesus Die on a Cross?](#)

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS >
BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)



DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

In the spring of 33 C.E., Jesus the Nazarene was executed. He had been falsely charged with sedition, savagely beaten, and nailed to a stake. He died in excruciating pain. But God raised him back to life, and 40 days later, Jesus ascended to heaven.

This extraordinary account comes to us from the four Gospels of the Christian Greek Scriptures, commonly called the New Testament. Did those things really happen? That is a pertinent and serious question. If they did not, Christian faith is valueless and the hope of eternal life in Paradise is nothing more than a wishful dream. (1 Corinthians 15:14) On the other hand, if those events really did happen, then there is a bright future for mankind, one in which you can share. So, are the Gospel accounts fact or fiction?

WHAT THE FACTS SHOW

Unlike fanciful legends, the Gospel writings reflect painstaking accuracy and attention to detail. For example, they abound with names of real places, many of which can be visited today. They tell about real people, whose existence has been corroborated by secular historians.—Luke 3:1, 2, 23.

Jesus himself is mentioned by secular writers of the first and second centuries.* His manner of

* Tacitus, born about 55 C.E., wrote that “Christus, from whom the name [Christians] had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.” Jesus is also referred to by Suetonius (first century); Jewish historian Josephus (first century); and Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia (early second century).

Why Is There Not More Secular Support?

Given the profound influence that Jesus had on the world, should we expect more in the way of contemporary non-Biblical corroboration? Not necessarily. For one thing, the Gospels were written almost 2,000 years ago. Few other writings of that time have survived. (1 Peter 1:24, 25) Then, too, it is unlikely that Jesus' many opposers would write anything that would lend credibility to the reports about him.

Regarding Jesus' resurrection, Peter, one of his apostles, explained: “God raised this one up on the third day and allowed him to become manifest, *not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God, to us*, who ate and drank with him after his rising from the dead.” (Acts 10:40, 41) Why not to all the people? Matthew's Gospel tells us that when the religious enemies heard reports of Jesus' resurrection, they schemed to suppress them.

—Matthew 28:11-15.

Does this mean that Jesus wanted his resurrection to be kept secret? No, for Peter went on to say: “He ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness that this is the one decreed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.” True Christians have done and are doing just that.—Acts 10:42.

death, as described in the Gospels, agrees with Roman executional methods of the time. Moreover, events are related in a factual and candid manner—even portraying some of Jesus' disciples unfavorably. (Matthew 26:56; Luke 22:24-26; John 18:10, 11) All these factors strongly indicate that the Gospel writers were honest and accurate in what they wrote about Jesus.

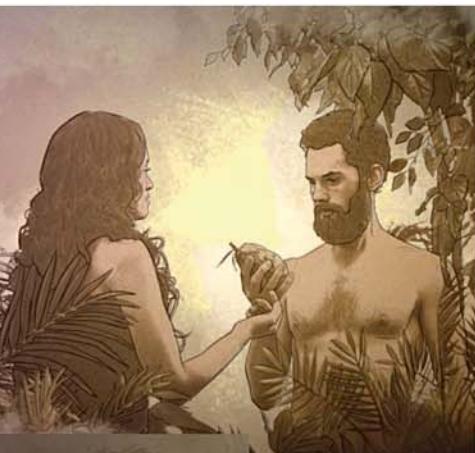
WHAT ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION?

While it is generally accepted that Jesus lived and died, some would question his resurrection. Even his apostles did not believe the initial report of his having returned to life. (Luke 24:11) All doubt was removed, however, when they and other disciples saw the resurrected Jesus on separate occasions. In fact, in one case, there were more than 500 eyewitnesses present.—1 Corinthians 15:6.

At the risk of being arrested and killed, the disciples courageously proclaimed Jesus' resurrection to all—even to the very ones who had executed him. (Acts 4:1-3, 10, 19, 20; 5:27-32) Would so many disciples have been so bold if they were not absolutely sure that Jesus had really been resurrected? In fact, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is the driving force behind the impact that Christianity has had on the world both then and now.

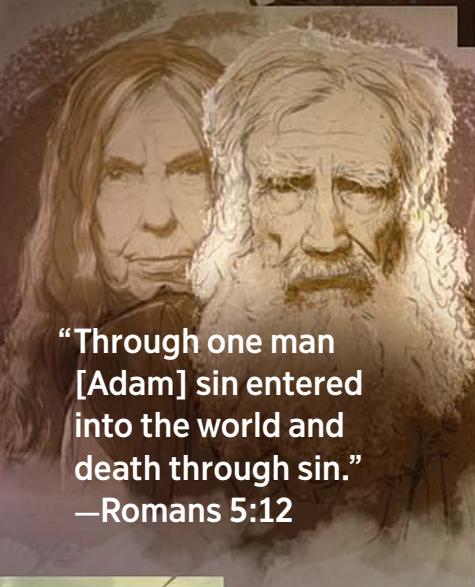
The Gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection bear all the necessary marks of an authentic historical record. Carefully reading them will convince you that these events really happened. Your conviction can be further strengthened when you understand *why* they took place. The next article will explain.

WHY DID JESUS SUFFER AND DIE?



“Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin.”

—Romans 5:12



What would you say if you were asked, “Do you want to live forever?” Most people would probably say that they want to but that they feel it is unrealistic to consider it. Death is a normal part of life, they say, the natural outcome of our existence.

Suppose, though, that the question were turned around and you were asked, “Are you ready to die?” Under normal circumstances, most people would answer no. The point? In spite of the trials and hardships we face, our normal and natural desire is to live. The Bible shows that God created humans with the desire and the will to live. In fact, it says that “he has even put eternity in their heart.”—Ecclesiastes 3:11.

The reality, though, is that humans do not live forever. So, what went wrong? Furthermore, has God done anything to remedy the situation? The Bible’s answers are heartening, and they have a direct bearing on why Jesus suffered and died.

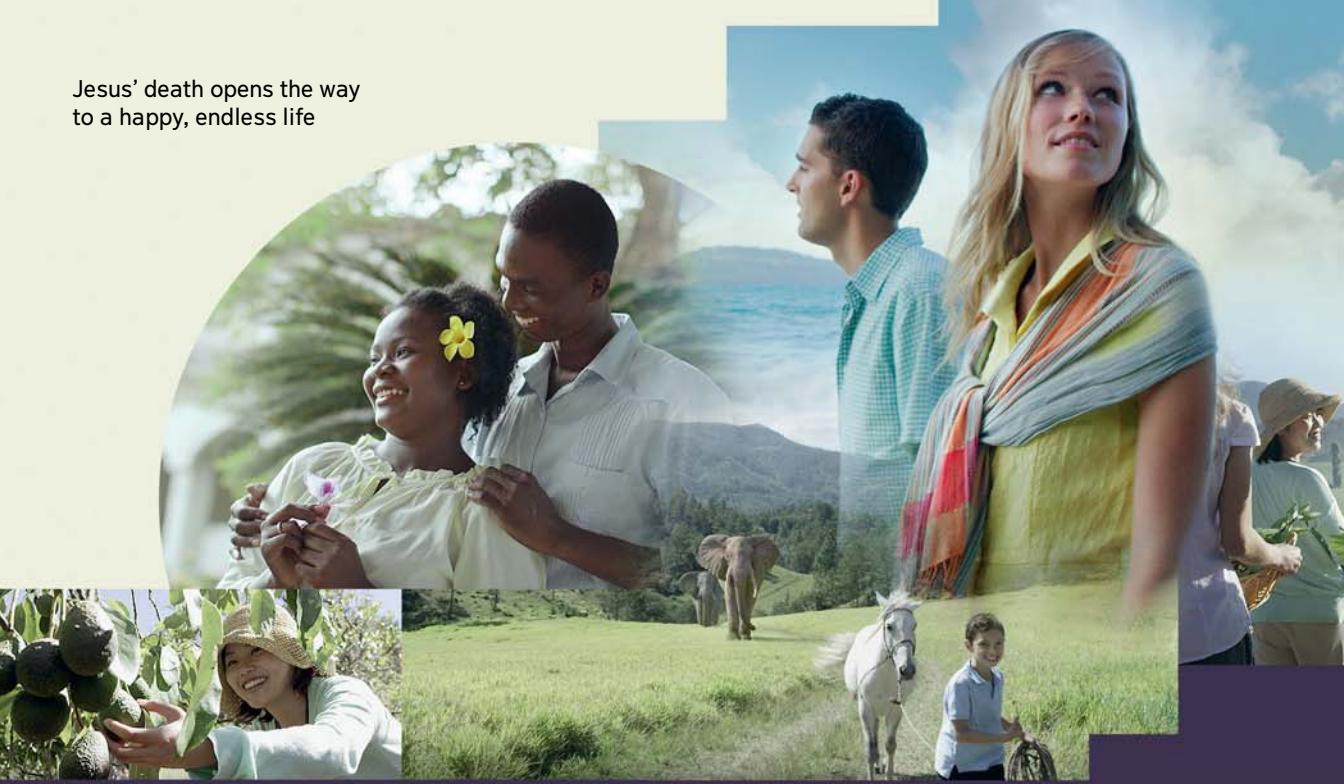
WHAT WENT WRONG

The first three chapters of the Bible book of Genesis tell us that God set before the first human couple, Adam and Eve, the prospect of unending life and told them what they would have to do to gain it. Then the account describes how they failed to obey God and lost that prospect. The story is told simply—so simply that some are quick to dismiss it as folklore. But Genesis, like the Gospels, gives every indication of being a factual, historical record.*

What has been the result of Adam’s failure to obey? The Bible answers this way: “Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) By disobeying God, Adam sinned. He thus lost the prospect of endless life and eventually died. Being his descendants, we have inherited his sinful condition. As a result, we are subject to sickness, old age, and death. This explanation of why we die is in harmony with what we know today about heredity.

* See “The Historical Character of Genesis,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 922, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Jesus' death opens the way
to a happy, endless life



But has God done anything to remedy the situation?

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Yes, God made arrangements to redeem, or buy back, what Adam had lost for his descendants, namely, the prospect of endless life. How did God accomplish that?

"The wages sin pays is death," says the Bible at Romans 6:23. This means that death is the consequence of sin. Adam sinned, so he died. Likewise, we sin and are therefore subject to sin's wages, death. But we were born in this sinful condition through no fault of our own. So God lovingly sent his Son, Jesus, to accept 'the wages of sin' for us. How does this work?

Since one man, the perfect man Adam, brought sin and death on us through disobedience, a perfect man obedient even till death was needed to release us from that burden. The Bible explains it this way: "Just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one person

many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19) Jesus was that "one person." He left heaven, became a perfect man*, and died in our behalf. As a result, it is possible for us to have a righteous standing with God and gain the prospect of endless life.

WHY JESUS SUFFERED AND DIED

Why, though, was it necessary for Jesus to die to accomplish this? Could not Almighty God have simply issued a decree that Adam's descendants be allowed to live forever? He certainly had the authority to do so. But that would have disregarded his stated law that the wages of sin is death. That law is no petty rule that can be dismissed or changed for convenience. It is fundamental to true justice.—Psalm 37:28.

Had God set justice aside in this instance, people might have wondered whether he would do so in other matters as well. For example, would he be

* God's transfer of his Son's life from heaven to the womb of Mary caused conception, and God's holy spirit shielded Jesus from inheriting imperfection from Mary.—Luke 1:31, 35.



“Keep Doing This”

On the night before he surrendered his life, Jesus gathered with his faithful apostles and instituted the Memorial of his death. He said to them: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) In obedience to that command, Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide gather annually on the anniversary of Jesus’ death. Last year, 19,862,783 attended this event.

This year, the Memorial of Jesus’ death falls on **Wednesday, March 23**, after sundown. You and your family and friends are warmly invited to attend and listen to a Bible-based talk. It will explain why Jesus’ death was significant and how it can benefit you personally. Attendance is free; no collections will be taken. Please ask Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area for the time and location. Or you may consult our website, www.jw.org.

fair in determining who among Adam’s offspring qualify for eternal life? Could he be trusted to keep his promises? God’s adherence to justice in working out our salvation is assurance to us that he will always do what is right.

By Jesus’ sacrificial death, God opened the way to endless life in Paradise on earth. Note Jesus’ words as recorded at John 3:16: “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.” Jesus’ death is thus an expression not only of God’s unfailing justice but, more specially, of his great love for humans.

However, why did Jesus have to suffer and die in the painful way that was described in the Gospels? By subjecting himself to the extreme test and remaining faithful, Jesus refuted once and for all the Devil’s claim that humans would not remain loyal to God when under trial. (Job 2:4, 5) That claim might have seemed valid after Satan induced perfect Adam to sin. But Jesus—who

was Adam’s perfect equivalent—remained obedient despite severe suffering. (1 Corinthians 15:45) He thus proved that Adam too could have obeyed God if he had chosen to do so. By enduring under trial, Jesus left us a model to follow. (1 Peter 2:21) God rewarded his Son’s perfect obedience, granting Jesus immortal life in heaven.

HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT

Jesus’ death really occurred. The way to unending life is open. Do you want to live forever? Jesus indicated what we need to do when he said: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.”—John 17:3.

The publishers of this magazine invite you to learn more about Jehovah, the true God, and about his Son, Jesus Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you. You can also receive helpful information by visiting our website, www.jw.org. ■



Should Christians Worship at Shrines?

EVERY year, more than six million people travel to an isolated cedar forest on the Shima Peninsula in Japan. They come to the Grand Shrine of Ise, where the Shinto sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, has been worshipped for some two thousand years. The worshippers first purify themselves by washing their hands and mouth. Then, standing before the shrine's *haiden* (worship hall), they follow a ritual in which they bow, clap, and pray to the goddess.* Shinto allows its adherents to practice other faiths, and some Buddhists, professed Christians, and others see no conflict in performing the Shinto rituals at this shrine.

Many of the world's major religions have shrines,[#] and countless millions of people visit them. In professed Christian lands, there are numerous churches and shrines dedicated to Jesus, Mary, and the saints. Others like them are established in locations where Biblical events or "miracles" of more recent times are said to have taken place or where religious relics are kept. Many people go to the shrines because they believe that their prayers are more likely to be heard if offered in a sacred place. For others, reaching a shrine is the culmination of a long pilgrimage they

have made to demonstrate their religious devotion.

Are prayers and petitions more likely to be heard and answered if they are offered at a shrine? Will God be pleased by the devotion of those who make pilgrimages to shrines? More to the point, should Christians worship at shrines? The answers to these questions will not only tell us how we should view worshipping at shrines but also help us to understand the kind of worship that truly pleases God.

WORSHIP "WITH SPIRIT AND TRUTH"

A conversation that Jesus had with a Samaritan woman reveals God's view of worship at sacred places or shrines. Jesus was traveling through Samaria and stopped to rest at a well near the city of Sychar. He struck up a conversation with a woman who came to draw water from the well. As they talked, the woman pointed out a major religious difference between the Jews and the Samaritans. "Our forefathers worshipped on this mountain," she said, "but you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where people must worship."—John 4:5-9, 20.

The mountain that the woman referred to was Mount Gerizim, located about 30 miles (50 km) north of Jerusalem. There the Samaritans once

* Rituals may differ at various Shinto shrines.

[#] See the box "What Is a Shrine?"

◀ Visitors at the Grand Shrine
of Ise, Japan, and the Grotto
of Massabielle, Lourdes, France

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had a temple where they celebrated festivals such as the Passover. However, instead of focusing on this controversial difference between them, Jesus said to the woman: “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” (John 4:21) What an astounding comment, especially coming from a Jew! Why would the worship at God’s temple in Jerusalem cease?

Jesus continued: “The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for indeed, the Father is looking for ones like these to worship him.” (John 4:23) For centuries, the Jews viewed the magnificent temple in Jerusalem as the center of their worship. They journeyed there three times a year to make sacrifices to their God, Jehovah. (Exodus 23:14-17) But Jesus said that all of this would be changed and that “true worshippers” would worship “with spirit and truth.”

The Jewish temple was a tangible structure at a specific geographic location. But spirit and truth are not material, nor are they limited to any physical place. Thus, Jesus was explaining that true Christian worship would not be centered in or dependent on any material structure or physical location, whether Mount Gerizim, the temple in Jerusalem, or any other sacred place.

In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus also mentioned that “the hour” for this change in God’s worship was “coming.” When would that be? The hour came when Jesus, by his sacrificial death, ended the Jewish system of worship based on the Law of Moses. (Romans 10:4) Yet, Jesus also said: “The hour . . . is now.” Why? Because as the Messiah, he was already gathering disciples who would obey the command he stated next: “God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) What, then, does it mean to worship with spirit and truth?

What did Jesus mean when he said that we must worship “with spirit and truth”?



When Jesus mentioned worshipping with spirit, he was not speaking of a particularly spirited, animated, or enthusiastic form of worship. Rather, he was talking about being guided by God’s holy spirit, which among other things guides our understanding of the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12) And the truth Jesus referred to is an accurate knowledge of Bible teachings. Therefore, rather

What Is a Shrine?

Originally the word “shrine” represented a case that held sacred relics. The meaning has since broadened; it now refers to a place considered sacred, religiously or otherwise. Religious shrines are dedicated to the worship of a deity or the veneration of a “holy” person. They often house images and relics that are believed to be associated with miracles, visions, or apparitions from the spirit realm. Today a shrine may be a temple, a church, or a niche where a person worships. Some set up a shrine in their home. Home shrines, in both Oriental and Western lands, are small altars where people pray, meditate, or make offerings.

Not all shrines are intended to be places for religious worship. For example, worldwide, families and friends of victims of fatal automobile accidents commonly make ‘roadside shrines’ in remembrance of their loved ones. Other shrines are more secular in nature and commemorate famous battles or those who died in war or in some other tragedy. Although such shrines give people an opportunity to meditate and mourn, they often reflect the religious beliefs and practices of those who set them up.

than being rendered at any special place, our worship will be acceptable to God if it conforms to what the Bible teaches and is guided by the holy spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SHRINES

How, then, should Christians view pilgrimages to and worship at shrines? Taking into account Jesus’ command that true worshippers worship God with spirit and truth, it is clear that worship rendered at any shrine or sacred place has no special value to our heavenly Father. Additionally, the Bible tells us how God views the veneration of idols in worship. It says: “Flee from idolatry” and “guard yourselves from idols.” (1 Corinthians 10: 14; 1 John 5:21) Therefore, a true Christian would not worship at any place that is viewed as holy in itself or one that encourages idolatry. Thus, on account of the very nature of shrines, true Christians refrain from worshipping at them.

This, however, does not mean that God’s Word forbids having a preferred location for prayer, study, or meditation. A meeting place that is orderly and dignified is conducive to learning and discussing spiritual things. Neither is it wrong to make a memorial, such as a tombstone, for a deceased person. This may simply be an expression of remembrance or affection for the deceased. However, considering such a location as a holy place or venerating images or relics there would be completely contrary to Jesus’ words.

Therefore, you do not need to go to a shrine in hopes that God is more likely to hear your prayer there. Nor will God be pleased with you or give you special blessings for making a pilgrimage to a shrine. The Bible tells us that Jehovah God, the “Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples.” But this does not make God distant from us. We can pray to him and be heard anywhere because “he is not far off from each one of us.”—Acts 17:24-27. ■





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Heeding Advance Warning Can Save Your Life!

ON December 26, 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Simeulue, an island off the northwest coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. All eyes on the shore looked out to sea. The tide was receding beyond normal. Instantly, everyone started running for the hills, shouting, “*Smong! Smong!*” the local word for tsunami. Within 30 minutes, powerful waves came crashing onto the coast, destroying most of the homes and villages.

Simeulue Island was the first location to be hit by that devastating tsunami. Yet, of the 78,000 residents, only 7 died. Why comparatively so few?* A saying among the islanders is: ‘If a strong tremor occurs and the sea withdraws, run to the hills, for the sea will soon rush ashore.’ From past experience, the people of Simeulue had learned to recognize an approaching tsunami by the change in the sea. Heeding the advance warning saved their lives.

The Bible speaks of an approaching disaster, a “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.” (Matthew 24:21) But this is not the end of planet Earth by irresponsible human activities or some catastrophic natural event—for it is God’s purpose that the earth remain forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:4) Rather, the coming tribulation is an

act of God to “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.” It will be the end of all wickedness and suffering. (Revelation 11:18; Proverbs 2:22) What a blessing that will be!

Furthermore, unlike tsunamis, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions, the coming destruction will not result in the death of innocent people. “God is love,” says the Bible, and God, whose name is Jehovah, promises that “the righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.” (1 John 4:8; Psalm 37:29) How, though, can you survive the great tribulation and enjoy the promised blessings? The key is: Heed the advance warning!

BE ALERT TO THE CHANGING TIDE

We cannot determine the specific date of the end of all wickedness and suffering, for Jesus said: “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” Nonetheless, Jesus encouraged us to “keep on the watch.” (Matthew 24:36; 25:13) For what? The Bible gives us a description of world conditions that would exist *before* God brings the end. Just as the sudden shifting of the tide alerted the residents of Simeulue to an approaching tsunami, the dramatic shifting of the tide of world events would signal to us that the end is near. The accompanying box highlights some of the dramatic changes the Bible speaks of.

* This 2004 tsunami claimed the lives of over 220,000 people—one of the most destructive tsunamis in recorded history.

DRAMATIC WORLD EVENTS SIGNALING THAT THE END IS NEAR



GLOBAL WAR AND ESCALATING CHAOS

"You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom . . . All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress." —Matthew 24:6-8.



DISEASE AND HUNGER WORLDWIDE

"In one place after another food shortages and pestilences."
—Luke 21:11.



WIDESPREAD LAWLESSNESS AND RELIGIOUS CONFUSION

"Many false prophets will arise and mislead many; and because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold." —Matthew 24:11, 12.

Granted, taken individually, some of the events or conditions listed in the box have occurred in the past to some extent. But Jesus said that upon seeing “*all these things*,” we would know that the end is close at hand. (Matthew 24:33) Ask yourself, ‘When in history have all the things described (1) taken place on a global scale, (2) occurred at the same time, and (3) progressed to an unprecedented extent?’ Clearly, we are living in such a time.

AN EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE

“Early warning systems . . . do save lives,” said one former U.S. president. Following the 2004 tsunami, a warning system was installed in the affected region in an effort to prevent similar loss of life from occurring in the future. Similarly, God has made provision for advance warning to be giv-

en before the end comes. The Bible foretold: “This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, *and then the end will come.*” —Matthew 24:14.

Last year alone, Jehovah’s Witnesses spent well over 1.9 billion hours preaching the good news in 240 lands and in more than 700 languages. This modern-day development offers strong proof that the end is near. Moved by love for their neighbor, Jehovah’s Witnesses spare no effort as they warn others of God’s day of judgment that is fast approaching. (Matthew 22:39) The fact that you can benefit from this information is evidence of Jehovah’s love for you. Remember, “[God] does not desire anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) Will you respond to God’s love and heed the advance warning?



MORAL AND SOCIAL BREAKDOWN ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE

"In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . 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."—**2 Timothy 3:1-4.**



GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S KINGDOM PREACHED WORLDWIDE

"This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."—**Matthew 24:14.**



CRITICS DENY THAT THE END IS NEAR

"In the last days ridiculers will come with their ridicule, . . . saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as they were from creation's beginning.'"—**2 Peter 3:3, 4.**

FLEE TO SAFETY!

Recall that the residents of Simeulue's coastal villages fled to higher ground for safety the moment they saw the tide receding; they did not wait until it returned. Their decisive action meant their survival. To survive the coming tribulation, you too need to flee to higher ground, so to speak, before it is too late. How? The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write about a stirring invitation that is being extended during "the final part of the days," the time in which we now live. It says: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah . . . He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths."—**Isaiah 2:2, 3.**

Going to the top of a mountain affords you an elevated view and a place of safety. In a similar way, getting to know God's ways through the pag-

es of the Bible is helping millions of people worldwide today to make beneficial changes in their lives. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) By so doing, they begin to "walk in [God's] paths" and enjoy his favor and protective care.

Will you respond to that invitation and avail yourself of God's loving protection in these critical days? We urge you to examine carefully the Scriptural evidence of the "last days" presented in the box accompanying this article. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area would be happy to provide any assistance you may need to get a clear understanding of the scriptures provided as well as how to apply them. Or you may find answers to your questions by visiting our website, www.jw.org. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED. ■

CHAPTERS AND VERSES

WHO PUT THEM IN THE BIBLE?

IMAGINE that you are a Christian living in the first century. Your congregation has just received a letter from the apostle Paul. As you listen to it being read, you notice that Paul often quotes from “the holy writings,” that is, the Hebrew Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:15) ‘I would really like to see the text he is quoting from,’ you say to yourself. But that would not have been easy. Why not?

NO CHAPTERS OR VERSES

Consider what the manuscripts of “the holy writings” that were available in Paul’s day looked like. One is shown here—a portion of the book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls. What do you see? Solid blocks of text! No punctuation. And none of the numbered chapters and verses that we use today.

Bible writers did not divide their message into chapters or verses. They just wrote down the whole message God gave them so that the readers could also get the whole message, not just tiny parts of it. Is that not what you want when you get an important letter from someone you love? You read the whole letter, not just bits and pieces of it.

The lack of chapters or verses, however, did pose a problem. Paul could only identify his quotations with such words as “just as it is written” or “just as Isaiah foretold.” (Romans 3:10; 9:29) And it would have been difficult to find those quotations unless you were very familiar with all “the holy writings.”

Furthermore, those “holy writings” were not one simple message from God. By the end of the first century C.E., they consisted of a collection of 66 separate books! That is why most Bible readers today are glad to have numbered chapters and verses that help them find specific information, such as the many quotations in Paul’s letters.

‘So,’ you might ask, ‘who put those chapter and verse numbers in the Bible?’

WHO ADDED THE CHAPTERS?

English cleric Stephen Langton, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, is credited with adding the chapter divisions to the Bible. He did this early in the 13th century C.E., when he was a teacher at the University of Paris in France.

Before Langton’s day, scholars had experimented with different ways of dividing the Bible into smaller sections or chapters, mainly, it seems, for reference purposes. You can imagine how much easier it would have been for them to find a passage if they had to search through only one chapter rather than a whole book, such as the book of Isaiah with its 66 chapters.

All of that, however, created a problem. The scholars produced many different and incompatible systems. In one of them, Mark’s Gospel was divided into almost 50 chapters, not the 16 we have now. In Paris in Langton’s day, there were students from many countries, and they brought with them



Courtesy of Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Bibles from their native lands. However, lecturers and students could not share references. Why? Because the chapter divisions in their manuscripts simply did not match.

So Langton developed new chapter divisions. His system “caught the imagination of readers and scribes,” states *The Book—A History of the Bible*, and it “spread rapidly across Europe.” He gave us the chapter numbering we find in most Bibles today.

WHO ADDED THE VERSES?

Some 300 years later, in the middle of the 16th century, renowned French printer-scholar Robert Estienne made things even easier. His aim was to popularize Bible study. He realized how valuable it would be to have a uniform system of both numbered chapters *and* numbered verses.

Estienne did not come up with the idea of dividing the Bible text into verses. Others had done that already. Centuries earlier, Jewish copyists, for example, had divided the whole Hebrew Bible, or the part of the Bible commonly called the Old Testament, into verses but not into chapters. Again, as with the development of chapters, there was no uniform system.

Estienne divided the Christian Greek Scriptures, or what is called the New Testament, into a new set of numbered verses and combined them

with those already in the Hebrew Bible. In 1553, he published the first complete Bible (an edition in French) with basically the same chapters and verses that most Bibles use today. Some people were critical and said that the verses broke the Bible text into fragments, making it appear as a series of separate and detached statements. But his system was quickly adopted by other printers.

A BOON FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

It seems to be such a simple idea—numbered chapters and verses. This gives each verse in the Bible a unique “address”—like a postal code. True, the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired by God, and they do at times break up the Bible text in strange places. But they make it easier for us to pinpoint quotes and to highlight or share individual verses that may have special meaning for us—just as we highlight expressions or phrases that we specially want to remember in a document or a book.

Convenient though the chapter-and-verse divisions are, always keep in mind the importance of getting the big picture—understanding the whole message God gave. Cultivate the habit of reading the context rather than just isolated verses. Doing so will help you to become more and more familiar with all “the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation.”—2 Timothy 3:15. ■

How Chapters and Verses Are Designated

A chapter-and-verse reference lets you know where to find any passage of scripture. In this magazine, the reference “Isaiah 40:13,” for example, identifies the following:

- (a) the book, Isaiah
- (b) the chapter, 40
- (c) the verse, 13

There, we find Isaiah’s words: “Who has taken the measurements of the spirit of Jehovah, and who can instruct him as his adviser?” Paul’s use of these words can now be found easily at Romans 11:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:16.

ISAIAH

40 “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God.

2 “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, And proclaim to her that her compulsory service has been fulfilled, That her guilt has been paid off.”

13 Who has taken the measurements of the spirit of Jehovah, And who can instruct him as his adviser?
14 With whom did he consult to gain . . .



Who or what is the Devil?

WOULD YOU SAY that the Devil is . . .

- A spirit person?
- A symbol of the evil inside a person?
- A product of human imagination?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

The Devil conversed with and “tempted” Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-4) So the Devil is not imaginary, nor is he just a symbol of evil. He is a wicked spirit person.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Devil was originally a holy angel, but “he did not stand fast in the truth.” (John 8:44) He became a liar and rebelled against God.
- Other angels joined Satan’s rebellion.
—Revelation 12:9.
- The Devil blinds many people to his existence.
—2 Corinthians 4:4.



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information,
see chapter 10 of this book,
published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

Also available at www.jw.org

Can the Devil control people?

SOME PEOPLE SAY that control by the Devil is a hoax, while others dread being possessed by evil spirits. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) The Devil exerts great influence over mankind, but he does not control every human.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Devil uses deception to increase his influence.—2 Corinthians 11:14.
- Wicked spirits can in some cases take control of people.—Matthew 12:22.
- With God’s help, you can successfully “oppose the Devil.”—James 4:7.

LANGUAGE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

For mailing address, see page 2



THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHEN A
LOVED ONE DIES

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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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Visit www.jw.org or send your request to one of the addresses below.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Will these words ever be fulfilled?

"God . . . will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more."

—Revelation 21:3, 4.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses how God will fulfill that promise and what it can mean for you.

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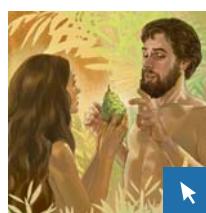
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READ MORE ONLINE



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When a Loved One Dies

“God knows best, baby.
...Don’t ... you ... cry.”

Those words were whispered
into the ear of a woman
named Bebe. She was at the
funeral of her father, who
had died in a car accident.

Bebe had been very close to her father. The remark came from a well-meaning family friend, but Bebe found it more cutting than comforting. “His death wasn’t for the best,” she kept repeating to herself. It was clear that when Bebe recounted the incident in a book years later, she was still grieving.

As Bebe came to see, it can take a long time for someone to overcome grief, especially when the bereaved person was very close to the deceased. In the Bible, death is aptly described as “the last enemy.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) It breaks into our lives with irresistible force, often when we are completely unprepared, and it robs us of those we hold dear. None of us are immune to its ravages. So it is not surprising if we feel at a loss when it comes to coping with death and its aftermath.

Perhaps you have wondered: ‘How long does it take to get over grief? How can a person cope with grief? How can I comfort others who have been bereaved? Is there any hope for our loved ones who have died?’

Is It Wrong to Grieve?

Have you ever had a brief bout with illness? Perhaps you recovered so quickly that you have practically forgotten the episode. Well, grief is not like that. “There is no such thing as ‘getting over’ grief,” writes Dr. Alan Wolfelt in his book *Healing a Spouse’s Grieving Heart*. However, he adds: “Over time and with the support of others, your grief will soften.”

As an example, consider how the patriarch Abraham reacted when his wife died. The Bible says that “Abraham began to mourn and to weep over Sarah.” The expression “began to” suggests that it took some time for him to cope with his loss.* Another example is Jacob, who was deceived into believing that his son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. He grieved for “many days,” and his family members were unable to comfort him. Several years later, the death of Joseph still weighed heavily on his mind.—Genesis 23:2; 37:34, 35; 42:36; 45:28.

* Abraham’s son Isaac also experienced prolonged grief. As we note in the “Imitate Their Faith” article in this issue, Isaac was still grieving over the loss of his mother, Sarah, three years after her death.—Genesis 24:67.

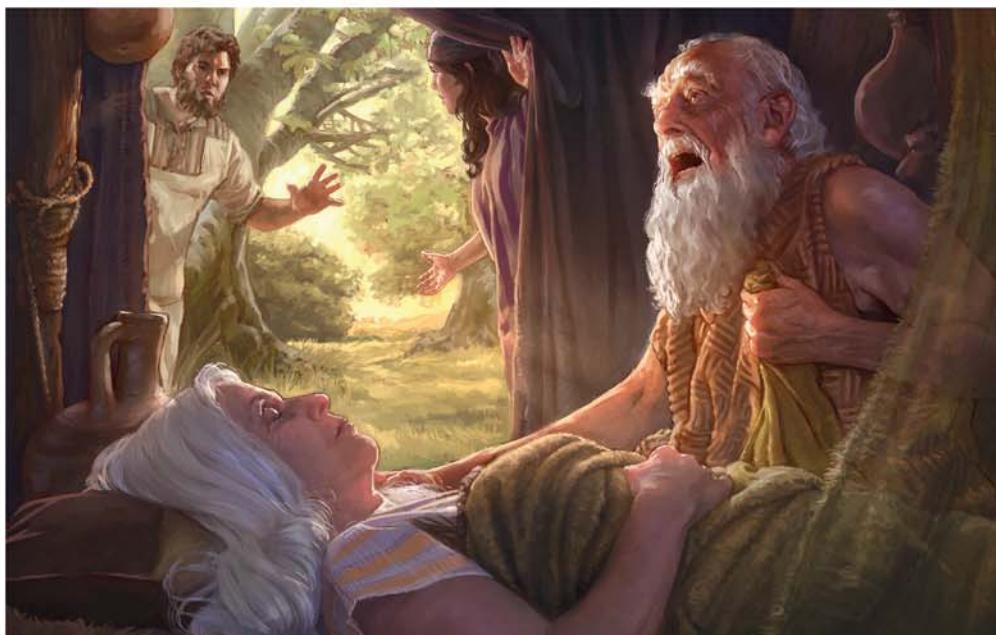
Abraham mourned the loss of his beloved Sarah

The same is true today of many who mourn the death of someone very close. Consider the following two examples.

“My husband, Robert, died on July 9, 2008. The morning of the fatal accident was no different from any other day. After breakfast, as we always did when he was leaving for work, we gave each other a kiss, a cuddle, and an ‘I love you.’ Six years later the pain in my heart is still there. I don’t think I will ever get over my loss of Rob.”—Gail, aged 60.

“Although I have been without my dear wife for more than 18 years, I still miss her and grieve over my loss. Whenever I see something in nature that is attractive, my thoughts go to her, and I cannot help wondering how she would have enjoyed seeing what I am seeing.”—Etienne, aged 84.

Clearly, such painful and long-lasting feelings are only natural. Each person grieves in his or her own way, and it would be unwise to judge the way another person responds to tragedy. At the same time, we may need to hold off from condemning ourselves if our reaction to loss seems excessive. How can we cope with grief?



Dealing With Your Grief

There is no shortage of advice on this subject. Not all of it, however, is helpful. For instance, you may find that some will advise you not to cry or show your feelings in any way. Others may push you to do the opposite and expose all your feelings. The Bible presents a more balanced view, one that is supported by modern research.

In some cultures it is considered unmanly for a male to cry. But is there a real need to feel ashamed about shedding tears, even in public? Mental-health experts acknowledge that tearfulness is a normal part of grieving. And grieving may, in time, help you to move on despite the enormity of your loss. Suppressing grief, however, may do more harm than good. The Bible lends no support to the notion that it is wrong or unmanly to shed tears of grief. Think of Jesus, for example. At the death of his dear friend Lazarus, Jesus openly wept, even though he had the power to bring the dead back to life!—John 11:33-35.

Bouts of anger are often part of grieving, especially in cases of sudden, unexpected death. There are many reasons why a bereaved person may feel angry, such as when thoughtless and unfounded comments are made by a respected person. “I was only 14 years old when my father died,” explains a South African man named Mike. “At the funeral, the Anglican minister said that God needs good people and takes them early.* This angered me because we desperately needed our father. Now, 63 years later, it still hurts.”

And what about guilt? Especially in the case of unexpected death, the bereaved person may repeatedly think, ‘It might not have happened if only I had done this or that.’ Or maybe your last

encounter with the deceased involved an argument. This may add to your feeling of guilt.

If you are being plagued by such feelings of guilt and anger, it is important not to bottle up these emotions. Rather, speak to a friend who will listen and reassure you that such irrational feelings are common to many bereaved ones. The Bible reminds us: “A true friend shows love at all times, and is a brother who is born for times of distress.”—Proverbs 17:17.

The best Friend a bereaved person can have is our Creator, Jehovah God. Pour out your heart to him in prayer because “he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) Moreover, he promises that all who do so will have their thoughts and feelings soothed by “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) Also, allow God to help you heal by means of his consoling Word, the Bible. Make a list of comforting scriptures. (See accompanying box.) You may even want to memorize a few of them. Having such thoughts to ponder over may be especially

COMFORTING BIBLE VERSES

- God feels for you in your pain.
—Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7.
- God patiently listens to the prayers of his servants.—Psalm 86:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
- God misses people who have died.
—Job 14:13-15.
- God promises to resurrect the dead.
—Isaiah 26:19; John 5:28, 29.

* This is not a Bible teaching. The Bible reveals three causes of death.—Ecclesiastes 9:11; John 8:44; Romans 5:12.

helpful at night when you are alone and find it hard to sleep.—Isaiah 57:15.

Recently, a 40-year-old man, whom we will call Jack, lost his beloved wife to cancer. Jack says that at times he feels intense loneliness. But he has found help in prayer. “When I pray to Jehovah,” he explains, “I never feel alone. I often wake up during the night and cannot get back to sleep. After reading and meditating on comforting thoughts from the Scriptures and then pouring out the feelings of my heart in prayer, I sense a calmness and a transcending peace come over me, putting my mind and heart at rest and enabling me to sleep.”

A young woman named Vanessa lost her mother to illness. She too has experienced the power of prayer. “In my most difficult times,” she says, “I would just call on God’s name and break down in tears. Jehovah listened to my prayers and always gave me the strength I needed.”

Some bereavement counselors advise those who are struggling with grief to get involved in helping others or to volunteer their time in some community service. Doing so can bring joy and may ease a person’s grief. (Acts 20:35) Many bereaved Christians have found that working to help others has brought them great comfort.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Comforting Those Who Mourn



Have you ever felt helpless when someone near to you was grieving over the loss of a loved one? Sometimes we may feel unsure of what to say or do—so we wind up saying and doing nothing. But there are practical, helpful things that we can do.

Often, all that is needed is your presence along with a simple expression, such as “I am so sorry.” In many cultures, giving the person a hug or a gentle squeeze of the arm is an effective way to show you care. If the bereaved one wants to talk, listen sympathetically. Best of all, do something for the bereaved family, perhaps performing a chore the grieving one has not been able to care for, such as cooking a meal, caring for the children, or helping with funeral arrangements if that is desired. Such actions may speak louder than the most eloquent words.

In time, you may be moved to talk about the deceased, perhaps focusing on some good qualities or happy experiences. Such conversation may even bring a smile to the bereaved person’s face. For example, Pam—who lost her husband, Ian, six years ago—says: “People sometimes tell me good

things that Ian did that I never knew about, and that makes my heart feel good."

Researchers report that many bereaved people receive a lot of initial help but that their needs are soon forgotten as friends get busy again with their own lives. Therefore, make a point of contacting a bereaved friend on a regular basis after the loss.* Many grieving ones deeply appreciate this opportunity to relieve themselves of prolonged feelings of grief.

Consider the example of Kaori, a young Japanese woman who was devastated by the loss of her mother followed by the loss of her older sister 15 months later. Thankfully, she received ongoing support from loyal friends. One named Ritsuko is much older than Kaori and offered to be her close friend. "To be honest," says Kaori, "I wasn't happy about that. I didn't want anyone to take the place of my mother, and I didn't think that anyone could. However, because of the way Mama Ritsuko treated me, I came to feel close to her. Every week, we went out in the evangelizing work together and went to Christian meetings together. She invited me to have tea with her, brought me meals, and wrote me letters and cards many times. Mama Ritsuko's positive attitude had a good influence on me."

Twelve years have passed since Kaori's mother died, and today she and her husband are full-time evangelizers. "Mama Ritsuko," Kaori says, "continues to show her concern. When I go back home, I always visit her and enjoy her upbuilding association."

Another example of someone who benefited from ongoing support is Poli, one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Cyprus. Poli had a kind husband, Sozos, who set a good example as a Christian shepherd by often inviting orphans and widows to their home for association and a meal. (James 1: 27) Sadly, at the age of 53, Sozos died of a brain tumor. "I lost my loyal husband with whom I had spent 33 years of marriage," says Poli.

* Some have even marked the date of the death on their calendar as a reminder to offer comfort when it may be most needed—on or near the date of the loss.



Find practical ways to offer help to the bereaved

After the funeral, Poli moved to Canada with her youngest son, 15-year-old Daniel. There, they began associating with a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. "The friends in my new congregation," recalls Poli, "did not know anything about our past and our difficult circumstances. But that did not stop them from approaching us and embracing us with their kind words and practical help. How precious that help was, especially at that time, when my son needed his father most! Those taking the lead in the congregation showed a great deal of personal interest in Daniel. One in particular made sure to include Daniel when enjoying association with friends or when going out to play ball." Both mother and son are doing well today.

To be sure, there are many ways we can offer practical help and comfort to those who mourn. The Bible also comforts us by means of a thrilling hope for the future.

The Dead Will Live Again!

You may recall that Gail, mentioned earlier in this series, doubts whether she will ever get over the death of her husband, Rob. However, she is looking forward to seeing him again in God's promised new world. "My favorite scripture," she says, "is Revelation 21:3, 4." It reads: "God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

Gail says: "This promise says it all. My feelings really go out to people who have lost someone they love but who are not aware of this hope of seeing their loved one again." Gail acts in harmo-

ny with her beliefs by doing volunteer work as a full-time evangelizer, sharing with her neighbors God's promise of a future when "death will be no more."

"Unbelievable!" you may say. But consider the example of a man named Job. He had been desperately ill. (Job 2:7) Though Job wished he were dead, he still had faith in God's power to resurrect him back to life on earth. He confidently said: "O that in the Grave you would conceal me . . . You will call, and I will answer you. You will long for the work of your hands." (Job 14:13, 15) Job was confident that his God would miss him and would long to restore him to life.

Soon, God will do just that—for Job and countless others—when this earth is transformed into a paradise. (Luke 23:42, 43) "There is going to be a resurrection," the Bible confirms at Acts 24:15. "Do not be amazed at this," Jesus assures us, "for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Job will see that promise fulfilled. He will have the prospect of regaining "his youthful vigor," and his flesh will forever remain "fresher than in youth." (Job 33:24, 25) The same will happen to all who respond with appreciation to God's merciful provision of a resurrection to life on earth.

If you have suffered the loss of someone dear to you, the information we have discussed may not completely take away your grief. But by meditating on God's promises found in the Bible, you can find real hope and the strength to keep going.—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

Would you like to learn more about how to cope with grief? Or do you have related questions, such as "Why does God allow evil and suffering?" Please visit our website, jw.org, to see how the Bible gives comforting, practical answers. ■

Job was confident that he would live again



Who was Joseph's father?

Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, was the adoptive father of Jesus. But who was Joseph's father? Jesus' genealogy in Matthew's Gospel names a certain Jacob, whereas Luke's says that Joseph was "son of Heli." Why the seeming discrepancy? —Luke 3:23; Matthew 1:16.

Matthew's account reads: "Jacob became father to Joseph," employing a Greek term indicating clearly that Jacob was Joseph's natural father. So Matthew was tracing Joseph's natural genealogy, the kingly line of David, through which the legal right to the throne passed to Joseph's adoptive son, Jesus.

On the other hand, Luke's account says: "Joseph, son of Heli." That expression, "son of," can be understood as "son-in-law of." A similar case is found at Luke 3:27, where Shealtiel, whose real father was Jeconiah, is listed as "son of Neri." (1 Chronicles 3:17; Matthew 1:12) Shealtiel was likely married to an unnamed daughter of Neri, thus becoming his son-in-law. Joseph was in the same sense "son" of Heli, as he married Heli's daughter Mary. So Luke traces Jesus' natural lineage "according to the flesh," through his biological mother, Mary. (Romans 1:3) The Bible thus gives us two distinct and useful genealogies for Jesus. ■

What textiles and dyes were available in Bible times?

Sheep's wool was widely used for fabrics in the ancient Middle East as was hair from goats and camels. The most common textiles were woolen, and the Bible frequently refers to sheep, shearing, and woolen clothing. (1 Samuel 25:2; 2 Kings 3:4; Job 31:20) Flax, used to produce linen, was grown in Egypt and Israel. (Genesis 41:42; Joshua 2:6) The Israelites of Bible times may not have grown cotton, but the Scriptures mention use of this fiber in Persia. (Esther 1:6) Silk was a costly luxury material, likely imported only by traveling merchants from the Far East.—Revelation 18:11, 12.

"Wool came in a variety of natural colors, from clear white to dark brown with many shades between," says the book *Jesus and His World*. In addition, wool was often dyed. An expensive purple dye was extracted from certain mollusks, and various plants, roots, leaves, and insects were used to produce dyes in such colors as red, yellow, blue, and black. ■



DYED WOOL FOUND IN A CAVE NEAR THE DEAD SEA, DATED FROM BEFORE 135 C.E.

Photographer: Clara Amit, COURTESY OF THE ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY



AS TOLD BY
JOSEPH EHRENBODEN

YEAR BORN
1960

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
FRANCE

HISTORY
**VIOLENT DRUG ADDICT,
DISRESPECTED WOMEN**



I learned to respect women and myself

MY PAST: I was born in Mulhouse, northeastern France, in a working-class suburb renowned for its violence. My childhood memories are of violent disputes among families in the area. In our family, women were looked down on and rarely consulted by men. I was taught that a woman's place was in the kitchen, looking after the men and the children.

My childhood was not easy. When I was ten, my father died as a result of his alcoholism. Five years later, one of my older brothers committed suicide. The same year, I witnessed a murder during a family feud, and I was deeply shocked. Family members taught me how to use knives and guns and to fight whenever the occasion required it. A disturbed young man, I started to cover my body with tattoos and to drink.

By 16 years of age, I was drinking between 10 and 15 bottles of beer each day, and before long I started taking drugs. To pay for my vices, I sold scrap metal and resorted to theft. By age 17, I had already done prison time. In total, I received 18 sentences for theft and violence.

During my early 20's, my situation worsened. I smoked up to 20 marijuana joints a day and took heroin and other illicit substances. Several times, I nearly died of overdoses. I started dealing drugs, so I was constantly armed with knives and guns. Once, I tried to shoot a man, but fortunately the bullet ricocheted off his belt buckle! When I was 24, my mother died, and my rage increased. Frightened pedestrians would cross the street when they saw me approaching. Because of fights, I often spent my weekends at the police station or in the hospital having my wounds stitched up.

At 28, I got married. As you might expect, I did not treat my wife with respect. I insulted her and beat her. We did not do anything together as a couple. I thought it was enough just to shower her with stolen jewelry. Then, something unexpected happened. My wife started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. After her first study, she stopped smoking, refused to accept any more stolen money, and gave me back her jewelry. I was furious. I opposed her Bible study and would blow

cigarette smoke in her face. I also ridiculed her throughout our neighborhood.

One night, in a drunken stupor, I set fire to our apartment. My wife saved me and our five-year-old daughter from the flames. When I sobered up, I was riddled with guilt. Deep inside, I felt that God could never forgive me. I remembered once hearing a priest say that the wicked go to hell. Even my psychiatrist told me: "It's over for you! You are beyond redemption."

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: After the fire, we moved in with my wife's parents. When the Witnesses came to visit my wife, I asked them, "Can God forgive me for all my sins?" They showed me 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 in the Bible. That passage lists forms of conduct that God condemns, but it adds: "That is what some of you were." Those words assured me that it was possible to change. Then the Witnesses reassured me that God loved me by showing me 1 John 4:8. Encouraged, I asked the

Witnesses to study the Bible with me twice a week, and I began attending their Christian meetings. I prayed to Jehovah constantly.

Within a month, I decided to quit drugs and alcohol. I soon felt that a war had erupted in my body! I suffered from terrible nightmares, headaches, cramps, and other withdrawal symptoms. Yet, at the same time, I sensed that Jehovah was holding me by the hand and strengthening me. I felt as the apostle Paul did. Concerning the help that God gave him, Paul wrote: "For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Philippians 4:13) In time, I was also able to quit smoking tobacco.—2 Corinthians 7:1.

Besides helping me to get control of my life, the Bible also improved our family. My attitude toward my wife changed. I started to show her more respect and to say "please" and "thank you." I also started being a real father to our daughter. After studying the Bible for one year, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and got baptized, following my wife's example.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am certain that Bible principles saved my life. Even my non-Witness family members recognize that I would probably have died from substance abuse or would have been killed in a fight.

My family life was completely transformed by Bible teachings that pointed out my responsibilities as a husband and father. (Ephesians 5:25; 6:4) We started doing things together as a family. Now, rather than confine my wife to the kitchen, I happily support her in her activities as a full-time evangelizer. And she is happy to support me in my role as a congregation elder.

Jehovah God's love and mercy have deeply touched my life. I have a strong desire to talk about his qualities to those considered hopeless cases, for many viewed me as one. I know that the Bible has the power to help *anyone* find a clean and purposeful life. Not only has the Bible taught me to love and respect others, both men *and* women, but it has also allowed me to respect myself. ■



I enjoy helping others to find purpose in life

“I Am Willing to Go”

REBEKAH looked out over the rugged landscape as the shadows lengthened. After weeks of travel, she was finally getting used to the swaying gait of the camel as she sat perched high atop its back. Her childhood home in Haran was far behind her, hundreds of miles to the northeast. She might never see her family again. Questions about her future surely flooded her mind—especially now as she neared her journey’s end.

The caravan had passed through much of Canaan and was traversing harsher terrain, the Negeb. (Genesis 24:62) Rebekah likely saw sheep. The country here might be too wild and arid for extensive farming, but it provided ample pasturage for grazing. It was familiar ground to her elderly guide. He was bursting with good news to tell his master—Rebekah was to become Isaac’s wife! Rebekah must have wondered, though, what kind of life she would lead in this land. What would her groom, Isaac, be like? They had never even met! Would he be pleased when he saw her? And how would she feel about him?

In many parts of the world today, arranged marriages may seem strange. In other regions, such unions are common. Whatever your background, you may agree that Rebekah was heading into the unknown. She was, in fact, a woman of remarkable courage and faith. We need both qualities when we face changes in life. There are other beautiful and rare qualities associated with Rebekah’s faith.

“I WILL ALSO DRAW WATER FOR YOUR CAMELS”

The great change that came into Rebekah’s life began in a way that may have seemed fairly ordinary to her. She grew up in or near Haran, a city



in Mesopotamia. Her parents were different from most people in Haran. They did not worship the moon-god Sin. Rather, their God was Jehovah.—Genesis 24:50.

Rebekah grew up to be a very beautiful young woman, but she was no passive, vain beauty. She was spirited, and she remained morally pure. Her family was prosperous enough to have servants, but Rebekah was not coddled or treated like a princess; she was raised to work hard. Like so many women of those times, Rebekah had some heavy chores to do, including fetching water for the family. Early in the evening, she would hoist a vessel onto her shoulder and head off to the spring.—Genesis 24:11, 15, 16.

One evening, after she had filled her jar, an elderly man ran up to meet her. He said to her: “Please give me a little sip of water from your jar.” It was such a modest request and so politely made! Rebekah could see that the man had traveled far. So she quickly swung her water jar from her shoulder and let the man drink, not a mere sip, but a real drink of the fresh, cool water. She noticed that he had a train of ten camels kneeling nearby and that the trough had not yet been filled to water them. She could see that his kind eyes were watching her attentively, and she wanted to be as generous as she could. So she said: “I will also draw water for your camels until they are done drinking.”—Genesis 24:17-19.

Note that Rebekah offered not merely to give the ten camels a drink but to water them until they were satisfied. If very thirsty, one camel might drink over 25 gallons (95 L) of water! If all

ten camels were that thirsty, Rebekah faced hours of hard work. As matters turned out, it seems unlikely that the camels were extremely thirsty.* But did Rebekah know that when she made her offer? No. She was willing, even eager, to work as hard as need be to show hospitality to this elderly stranger. He accepted her offer. Then he watched her intently as she ran back and forth, filling and refilling her jar and emptying it into the trough again and again.—Genesis 24:20, 21.

Rebekah's example speaks eloquently to us today. We live in an age when selfishness seems to reign supreme. As foretold, people have become "lovers of themselves," unwilling to go out of their way for others. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Christians who seek to fight the influence of that trend do well to contemplate the Bible's picture of that young woman so long ago, running back and forth to the well.

* It was already evening. The account contains no indication that Rebekah was detained at the well for hours. It does not imply that her family was asleep by the time she finished or that anyone came to see why her errand was taking so long.

Rebekah surely noticed the elderly man's gaze upon her. There was nothing improper in his look; it suggested amazement, wonderment, and joy. When Rebekah was done at last, he gave her gifts—precious jewelry! Then he asked: "Please tell me, whose daughter are you? Is there any room at your father's house for us to spend the night?" When she told him of her family, his joy intensified. Perhaps in a rush of enthusiasm, she added: "We have both straw and much fodder and also a place to spend the night"—a considerable offer, as there were others traveling with the old man. Then she ran off ahead of him to tell her mother what had happened.—Genesis 24:22-28, 32.

Clearly, Rebekah was raised to be hospitable. Here is another value that seems to be on the wane today—and another reason to imitate the faith of this kindhearted young woman. Faith in God should lead us to be hospitable. Jehovah is hospitable, for he is generous to all, and he wants his worshippers to follow suit. When we are hospitable even to those who may never repay us,

Rebekah was industrious and hospitable



we please our heavenly Father.—Matthew 5:44-46; 1 Peter 4:9.

"YOU MUST TAKE A WIFE FOR MY SON"

Who was that old man at the well? He was a servant of Abraham, the brother of Rebekah's grandfather. Thus, he was welcome in the home of Bethuel, Rebekah's father. This servant's name was probably Eliezer.* The hosts offered him a meal, but he refused to eat until he had disclosed the reason for his visit. (Genesis 24:31-33) We may imagine him speaking excitedly, for he had just seen powerful evidence that his God, Jehovah, was blessing him on this vital mission. How so?

Imagine Eliezer telling his story as Rebekah's father, Bethuel, as well as her brother Laban, listened with rapt attention. He told them that Jehovah had blessed Abraham greatly in Canaan and that Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac, who was to inherit everything. Abraham had given this servant a commission of great importance: He was to seek a wife for Isaac among Abraham's relatives in Haran.—Genesis 24:34-38.

Abraham made Eliezer take an oath that he would not select a wife for Isaac from among the women of Canaan. Why? Because the Canaanites neither respected nor worshipped Jehovah God. Abraham knew that Jehovah intended in due time to punish those people for their wicked practices. Abraham did not want his beloved son, Isaac, to be bound to those people and their immoral ways. He also knew that his son had a vital role to play in fulfilling God's promises.—Genesis 15:16; 17:19; 24:2-4.

Eliezer went on to tell his hosts that when he arrived at the well near Haran, he prayed to Jehovah God. He asked Jehovah, in effect, to choose the young woman for Isaac to marry. How? Eliezer asked God to ensure that the girl He wanted Isaac to wed would come to the well. When asked for a

drink, she should volunteer not only to give Eliezer a drink but to water his camels as well. (Genesis 24:12-14) And who had come along and done precisely that? Rebekah! Imagine how she might have felt if she overheard the story Eliezer told her family members!

Bethuel and Laban were moved by Eliezer's account. They said: "This is from Jehovah." As was the custom, they concluded a marriage covenant, betrothing Rebekah to Isaac. (Genesis 24:50-54) Does that mean, though, that Rebekah had no say in the matter?

Weeks earlier, Eliezer had raised that very issue with Abraham, asking: "What if the woman is unwilling to come with me?" Abraham had responded: "This will release you from your oath." (Genesis 24:39, 41) In the house of Bethuel too, the young woman's preferences mattered. Eliezer was so enthusiastic about the success of his mission that on the following morning, he asked if he could return to Canaan with Rebekah immediately. The family, however, wanted her to remain with them for at least another ten days. Finally, they resolved the matter this way: "Let us call the young woman and inquire of her."—Genesis 24:57.

Here, then, was a great crossroads in Rebekah's life. What would she say? Would she play on the sympathy of her father and brother, pleading for a release from this journey into the unknown? Or would she view it as a privilege to have a part in events that were clearly being guided by Jehovah? When she answered, she revealed how she felt about this sudden, perhaps daunting, change in her life. She simply said: "I am willing to go."—Genesis 24:58.

What a remarkable spirit she had! Today, our customs regarding marriage may be quite different, but we can still learn much from Rebekah. What mattered most to her was, not her own preferences, but those of her God, Jehovah. When it comes to marriage today, God's Word still offers the best guidance available—regarding the kind of mate to choose and how to become a good husband or wife. (2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; Ephesians 5:

* Eliezer is not named in this account, but he was likely the servant involved. Abraham once intended to bequeath all his property to Eliezer in case there was no natural heir, so he was surely the eldest and most trusted of Abraham's servants. That is also how the servant in this account is described.—Genesis 15:2; 24:2-4.

28-33) We do well to follow Rebekah's example and seek to do things God's way.

"WHO IS THAT MAN THERE?"

Bethuel's family blessed their beloved Rebekah. Then she and her childhood nurse, Deborah, along with some servant girls, set off with Eliezer and his men. (Genesis 24:59-61; 35:8) Before long, Haran was far behind them. The journey was a long one, 500 miles (800 km) or so, and it lasted perhaps three weeks. It was likely not a comfortable trip. Rebekah had seen camels aplenty in her life, but we cannot assume that she was an experienced camel rider. The Bible portrays her family as shepherd folk, not as traders who drove caravans of camels. (Genesis 29:10) Novice camel riders often complain of discomfort—even after a very short ride!

At any rate, Rebekah looked ever forward, no doubt trying to learn all she could from Eliezer about Isaac and his family. Picture the old man talking to her by an evening campfire, telling her of Jehovah's promise to His friend Abraham. God would raise up from Abraham's family line an offspring who would bring blessings to all mankind. Think of the awe that filled Rebekah's heart when she realized that Jehovah's promise would be fulfilled through her own husband-to-be, Isaac—hence, through her as well!—Genesis 22:15-18.

Finally, the day came that we described at the outset of this article. As the caravan traversed the Negeb and twilight began to fall over the land, Rebekah saw a man out walking in the fields. He looked thoughtful, contemplative. "She quickly got down from the camel," we read—perhaps not even waiting for the beast to kneel down—and she asked her guide: "Who is that man there walking in the field to meet us?" When she learned that it was Isaac, she covered her head with her shawl. (Genesis 24:62-65) Why? Evidently the gesture was a sign of respect for her future husband. That kind of submission may strike some today as old-fashioned. Really, though, men as well as women may take a lesson from Rebekah's humility, for



Rebekah showed a humility that is rare and precious

who of us does not need more of that lovely quality?

Isaac, a man of about 40, was still grieving the loss of his mother, Sarah, who had died about three years earlier. We may infer, then, that Isaac was a man of warm and tender feelings. What a blessing for such a man to be given a wife who was so industrious, hospitable, and humble! How did the two get along? The Bible says simply: "He fell in love with her."—Genesis 24:67; 26:8.

Even for us, some 39 centuries later, it is easy to love Rebekah. How can we help but admire her courage, her industriousness, her hospitality, and her humility? All of us—young and old, men and women, married and single—do well to imitate her faith! ■

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



God's name (highlighted) as it appears in an ancient Bible manuscript

Shrine of the Book, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Does God have a name?

SOME PEOPLE SAY that he has no name, others say that it is God or Lord, and still others say that he has dozens of names. **What do you think?**

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—Psalm 83:18.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- Although God has many titles, he has given himself only one name.—Exodus 3:15.
- God is not a mystery; he wants us to get to know him.—Acts 17:27.
- Knowing God's name can be the first step to having a friendship with him.—James 4:8.

Is it wrong to pronounce God's name?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"You must not take up the name of Jehovah your God *in a worthless way*." (Exodus 20:7) The only time it is wrong to use God's name is if this is done disrespectfully.—Jeremiah 29:9.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- Jesus knew and used God's name.
—John 17:25, 26.
- God invites us to address him by name.
—Psalm 105:1.
- God's enemies try to make people forget his name.—Jeremiah 23:27.

What Does the
Bible Really Teach?



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information,
see chapter 1 of this book,
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE BIBLE
A STORY OF SURVIVAL

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 DO YOU THINK?

If the Bible is from God, should it be able to endure any threat to its existence?

The Bible itself says: “**The green grass dries up, the blossom withers, but the word of our God endures forever.**”

—Isaiah 40:8.

This series of articles discusses the Bible's fascinating story of survival.

The Bible—A Story of Survival

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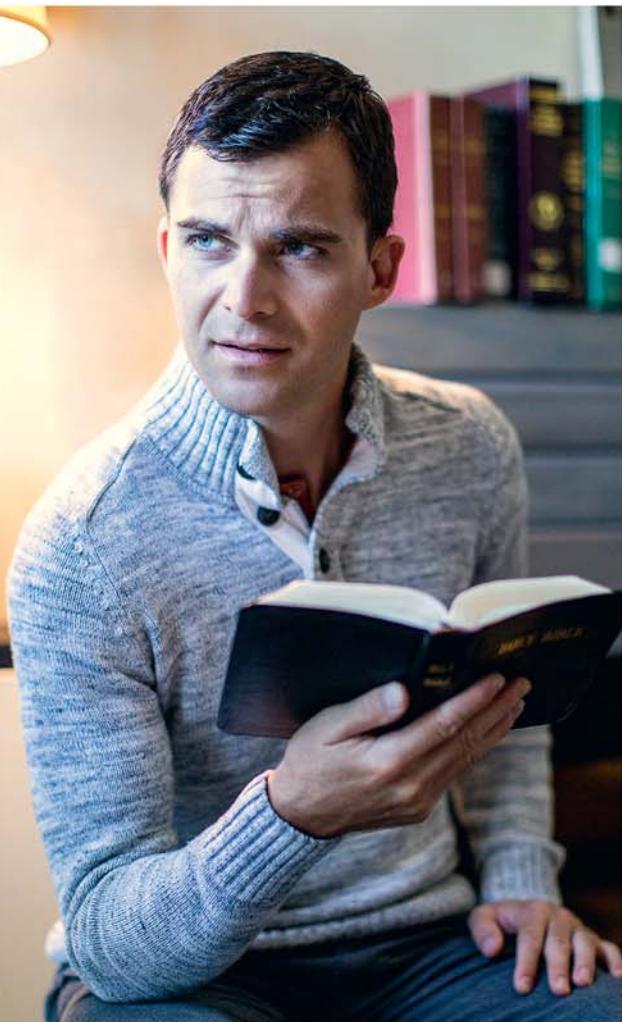
OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

**Is the Bible a Record
of God's Thoughts?**

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS >
BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

A Story That Matters

The Bible stands alone among religious texts. No other book has shaped the beliefs of so many people over such a long period of time. On the other hand, no other book has prompted so much scrutiny and criticism.



For instance, some scholars doubt that modern Bibles are reliable copies of the original writings. “We simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the original text accurately,” says one professor of religious studies. “We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.”

Others question the authenticity of the Bible because of their religious background. Faizal, for example, was taught by his non-Christian family that the Bible is a holy book but that it had been changed. “As a result, I was somewhat suspicious when people wanted to talk to me about the Bible,” he says. “After all, they didn’t have the original Bible. It had been changed!”

Does it matter whether or not the Bible has been changed? Well, consider these questions: Can you trust the Bible’s comforting promises for the future if you do not know whether those promises were in the original text? (Romans 15:4) Would you use Bible principles to make important decisions about your employment, family, or worship if modern Bibles were merely flawed copies recorded by humans?

Although the original books of the Bible have disappeared, we can consult ancient copies—including thousands of Bible manuscripts. How did those manuscripts survive decay, opposition, and attempts to tamper with the text? How can their survival build your confidence in the authenticity of the modern Bible available to you? Consider the answers to those questions in the following story of survival.

The Bible Survived Decay

THE THREAT: Papyrus and parchment were the primary writing materials used by Bible writers and copyists.* (2 Timothy 4:13) How did those materials put the Bible's survival in jeopardy?

Papyrus tears, discolors, and weakens easily. "A sheet can eventually decay into a skeleton of fibres and a handful of dust," say Egyptologists Richard Parkinson and Stephen Quirke. "When in storage, a roll can grow mould or rot with the damp and can be eaten by rodents or insects, particularly by white ants, when it is buried." Some papyri, after their discovery, were exposed to excessive light or humidity, accelerating their deterioration.

Parchment is more durable than papyrus, but it too degrades if mishandled or exposed to extreme temperatures, humidity, or light.[#] Parchment is also a target of insects. Consequently, for ancient records, states the book *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East*, "survival is the exception rather than the rule." If the Bible had thus decayed, its message would have died with it.

* Papyrus is a writing material made from an aquatic plant of the same name. Parchment is made from animal skins.

[#] For example, the official signed copy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence was written on parchment. Now, less than 250 years later, it has faded to the point of being barely legible.

HOW THE BIBLE SURVIVED: Jewish law compelled every king to "write for himself in a book a copy of this Law," the first five books of the Bible. (Deuteronomy 17:18) Moreover, professional copyists produced so many manuscripts that by the first century C.E., the Scriptures could be found in synagogues throughout Israel and even in distant Macedonia! (Luke 4:16, 17; Acts 17:11) How did some very old manuscripts survive until today?

"Jews were known to put scrolls containing Scripture in pitchers or jars in order to preserve them," says New Testament scholar Philip W. Comfort. Christians evidently continued that tradition. Consequently, some early Bible manuscripts have been discovered in clay jars, as well as in dark closets and caves and in exceptionally dry regions.

THE RESULT: Thousands of portions of Bible manuscripts—some over 2,000 years old—survive to this day. No other ancient text has so many manuscripts from so long ago.



Manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls survived for centuries in clay jars stored in caves in a dry climate

Shrine of the Book, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



The Bible Survived Opposition

THE THREAT: Many political and religious leaders pursued an agenda contrary to the Bible's message. Often, they used their authority to stop people from owning, producing, or translating the Bible. Consider two examples:

- **About 167 B.C.E.:** Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes, who sought to force Greek religion on the Jews, ordered all copies of the Hebrew Scriptures to be destroyed. His officials "tore and burnt the rolls of the Law whenever they found them," wrote historian Heinrich Graetz, "and killed those who were found to seek strength and consolation in their perusal."

- **Middle Ages:** Some Catholic leaders, upset that the laity were preaching what the Bible teaches rather than Catholic dogma, branded as heretics any laymen who possessed Bible books other than the Psalms in Latin. One church council enforced the command by directing that their men "diligently, faithfully, and frequently seek out the heretics . . . by searching all houses and subterranean chambers which lie under any suspicion. . . . The house in which any heretic shall be found shall be destroyed."

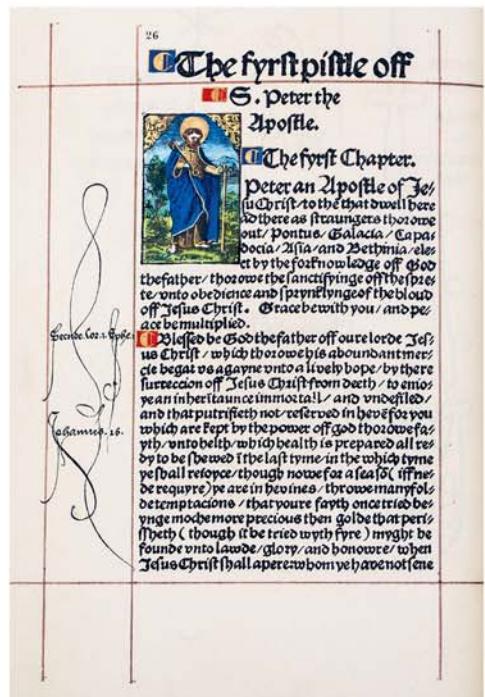
If the Bible's enemies had succeeded in stamping it out, its message would have disappeared.

HOW THE BIBLE SURVIVED: King Antiochus focused his campaign on Israel, but the Jews had formed communities in numerous other lands. In fact, scholars estimate that by the first century C.E., over 60 percent of Jews lived outside Israel. In their synagogues, the Jews kept copies of the Scriptures—the same Scriptures that were used by future generations, including Christians.
—Acts 15:21.

During the Middle Ages, lovers of the Bible braved persecution and continued to translate and copy the Scriptures. Even before the movable-type printing press was invented in the

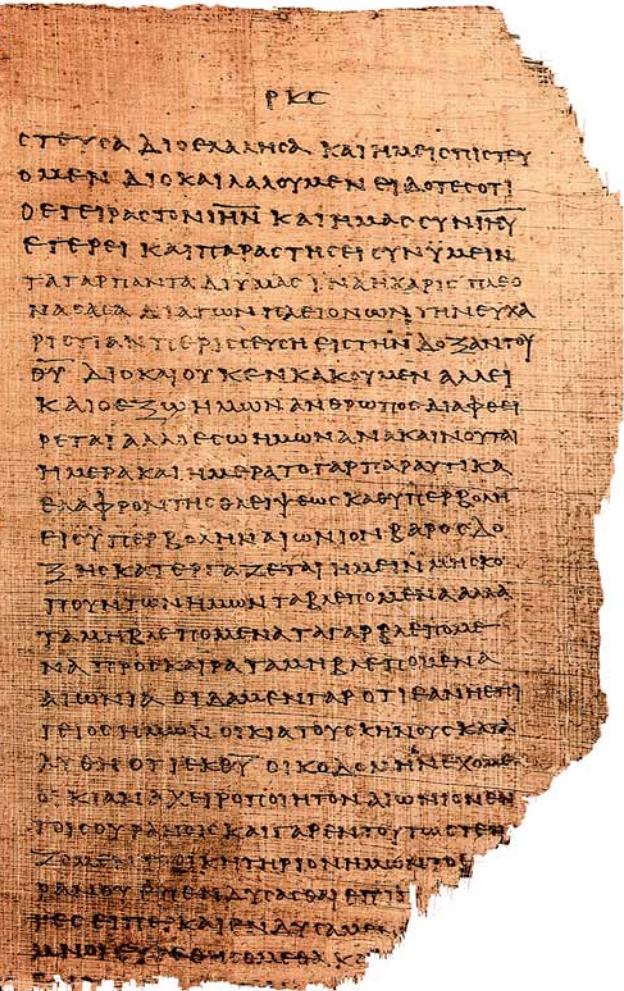
middle of the 15th century, portions of the Bible may have been available in as many as 33 languages. Thereafter, the Bible was translated and produced at an unprecedented pace.

THE RESULT: Despite threats from powerful kings and misguided clergymen, the Bible is the most widely distributed and most translated book in history. It has shaped the laws and languages of some countries, as well as the lives of millions.



William Tyndale's English translation of the Bible survived despite a ban, Bible burnings, and the execution of Tyndale himself in 1536

The Bible Survived Attempts to Alter Its Message



Chester Beatty P46, a papyrus Bible manuscript from about 200 C.E.

© The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

THE THREAT: External threats such as decay and opposition have not destroyed the Bible. Yet, some copyists and translators have attempted to alter the Bible's *message*. At times, they have tried to make the Bible conform to their doctrines rather than conform their doctrines to the Bible. Consider some examples:

- **Place of worship:** Between the fourth and second centuries B.C.E., the writers of the Samaritan Pentateuch inserted after Exodus 20:17 the words “in Aargaareezem. And there you shall build an altar.” The Samaritans thus hoped to make the Scriptures support their construction of a temple on “Aargaareezem,” or Mount Gerizim.

- **Trinity doctrine:** Less than 300 years after the Bible was completed, a Trinitarian writer added to 1 John 5:7 the words “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” That statement did not appear in the original text. “From the sixth century onwards,” notes Bible scholar Bruce Metzger, those words were “found more and more frequently in manuscripts of the Old Latin and of the [Latin] Vulgate.”

- **Divine name:** Citing a Jewish superstition as their authority, many Bible translators decided to remove the divine name from the Scriptures. They replaced that name with titles such as “God” or “Lord,” expressions applied in the Bible not only to the Creator but also to men, objects of false worship, and even the Devil.—John 10:34, 35; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6; 2 Corinthians 4:4.*

HOW THE BIBLE SURVIVED: First, although some Bible copyists were careless or even deceitful, many others were highly skilled and meticulous. Between the sixth and tenth centuries C.E., the Masoretes copied the Hebrew Scriptures and produced what is known as the Masoretic text.

* For more information, see Appendixes A4 and A5 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, available at www.jw.org.

“It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted”

They reportedly counted the words and the letters to verify that no mistakes crept in. Where they suspected errors in the master text they were using, they noted these in the margin. The Masoretes refused to tamper with the Bible text. “Interfering with it purposely,” wrote Professor Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, “would have been for them the worst crime possible.”

Second, the sheer volume of manuscripts today actually helps Bible scholars to spot errors. For example, religious leaders taught for centuries that their Latin versions contained the authentic Bible text. Yet, at 1 John 5:7, they had inserted the spurious words referred to earlier in this article. The error even crept into the influential English *King James Version!* But when other manuscripts were discovered, what did they reveal? Bruce Metzger wrote: “The passage [at 1 John 5:7] is absent from the manuscripts of all ancient versions (Syriac, Coptic, Armenian,

Ethiopic, Arabic, Slavonic), except the Latin.” As a result, revised editions of the *King James Version* and other Bibles have removed the erroneous phrase.

Do older manuscripts prove that the Bible’s message has been preserved? When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, scholars could at last compare the Hebrew Masoretic text to what appeared in Bible scrolls that had been written more than a thousand years earlier. A member of the editorial team of the Dead Sea Scrolls concluded that one scroll “provides irrefutable proof that the transmission of the biblical text through a period of more than one thousand years by the hands of Jewish copyists has been extremely faithful and careful.”

The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland, features a collection of papyri that represents nearly every book of the Christian Greek Scriptures, including manuscripts dating from the second century C.E.—only about 100 years after the Bible was completed. “Although the Papyri supply a wealth of new information on textual detail,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* observes, “they also demonstrate remarkable stability in the transmission history of the biblical text.”

THE RESULT: Rather than corrupting the Bible text, the age and multitude of Bible manuscripts have actually improved it. “No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text,” wrote Sir Frederic Kenyon about the Christian Greek Scriptures, “and no unbiased scholar would deny that the text that has come down to us is substantially sound.” And regarding the Hebrew Scriptures, scholar William Henry Green stated: “It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted.”



The Masoretes carefully copied the Scriptures

Why the Bible Has Survived

The Bible has survived. As a result, you can obtain and read a copy of it today. And when you choose a good translation of the Scriptures, you can be certain that you are reading a dependable copy of the original writings.* But why has the

* See the article “How Can You Choose a Good Bible Translation?” in the May 1, 2008, issue of this magazine.



“I am now convinced that the Bible that I have is a gift from God”

Bible endured despite natural decay, fierce opposition, and deliberate tampering with its message, often with astounding accounts of survival? What is so special about that book?

Many students of the Bible have come to the same conclusion as the apostle Paul, who wrote: “All Scripture is inspired of God.” (2 Timothy 3:16) They believe that the Bible has survived because it is the unique Word of God and because God has preserved it until today. Faizal, quoted in the opening article of this series, eventually decided to investigate those claims for himself by studying the Bible. What he discovered surprised him. He soon learned that many of the teachings that are prevalent in Christendom are not found in the Bible. Furthermore, he was touched by God’s purpose for the earth as revealed in His Word.

“I am now convinced that the Bible that I have is a gift from God,” he says. “After all, if God can make the universe, wouldn’t he have the power to give us a book and preserve it for us? To say otherwise would be to limit God’s power. To limit the power of the Almighty—who am I to do that?”
—Isaiah 40:8. ■



This series of articles has discussed the *preservation* of the Bible. But how can you be sure that the Bible is really “the word of God” and not just a collection of myths and legends? (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Watch the short video *How Can We Be Sure the Bible Is True?* at www.jw.org. (Click the Search button, and enter the title)

What was unusual about Jesus' dealings with lepers?



The ancient Jews had a fear of the form of leprosy common in Bible times. That dreaded disease could attack the sufferer's nerve endings and lead to permanent damage and disfigurement. There was no known cure for leprosy. Rather, those afflicted by it were quarantined and were obliged to warn others of their condition.—Leviticus 13:45, 46.

The Jewish religious leaders devised rules about leprosy that went beyond what was stated in the Scriptures, making life unnecessarily hard for the victims. For example, rabbinic regulations prohibited anyone from coming within 4 cubits, or about 6 feet (2 m), of a leper. But if a wind was blowing, no one was to come within 100 cubits, or about 150 feet (45 m). Certain Talmudists interpreted the Scriptural requirement that lepers live "outside the camp" to mean that they should be excluded from walled cities. Hence, one rabbi, when he saw a leper within a city, would throw stones at him and say: "Go to your place, and do not defile other people."

How different was Jesus' approach! Rather than chasing lepers away, he was willing to touch them—and even heal them.
—Matthew 8:3. ■

On what grounds did Jewish religious leaders grant a divorce?



CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE
DATED FROM 71/72 C.E.

Courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority

Divorce was a matter of debate among religious leaders in the first century C.E. Hence, on one occasion, some Pharisees challenged Jesus with this question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on every sort of grounds?"—Matthew 19:3.

The Mosaic Law permitted a man to divorce his wife if he "found something indecent about her." (Deuteronomy 24:1) In Jesus' time, there were two schools of rabbinic thought that held contrasting interpretations of the meaning of that law. Shammai, the more rigorous school, interpreted it to mean that the only valid reason for divorce was "unchastity," that is, adultery. The School of Hillel, on the other hand, held that a man could legitimately divorce on grounds of any marital discord, no matter how small. According to the latter school, a man could divorce his wife if she so much as spoiled his dinner or if he found another woman whom he considered prettier.

How, then, did Jesus answer the Pharisees' question? He plainly said: "Whoever divorces his wife, except on the grounds of sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery."
—Matthew 19:6, 9. ■

IS A WORLD FREE OF VIOLENCE POSSIBLE?

Have you or a member of your family ever been a victim of violence? Do you have reason to be afraid that you will? Violence has been called a “growing public health problem across the world.” Consider some examples.



DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: “One in three women has been a victim of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in her lifetime,” reports the United Nations. Sadly, “it is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape.”

STREET CRIME: Reportedly, more than 30,000 violent gangs are criminally active in the United States. In Latin America, nearly 1 person in every 3 has reported being a victim of violent crime.

HOMICIDES: It is estimated that almost half a million people were murdered during one recent year, more than those killed in wars. Southern Africa and Central America had the highest average murder rate, over four times the world average. More than 100,000 people were murdered in Latin America in one year, and some 50,000 in Brazil alone. Can a lasting solution to violence be found?

CAN VIOLENCE BE STOPPED?

Why is violence so widespread? Many causes have been identified, including the following: tension arising from social and economic inequalities, a general disdain for the lives of others, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, the exposure of children to the violent behavior of adults, and the fact that violent criminals act with seeming impunity.

Admittedly, progress in curbing violence has been made in some parts of the world. The densely populated city of São Paulo, Brazil, reportedly saw a reduction in homicides of about 80 percent in the last decade. Still, violent crime of all sorts is rampant in that city, and the homicide rate remains about 10 per 100,000 inhabitants.

What, then, will it take to end violence once and for all?

A lasting solution to violence ultimately involves people—their attitudes and behavior. For violent people to change, such traits as pride, greed, and selfishness need to give way to love, respect, and concern for others.

What can motivate a person to make such drastic changes? Think about what the Bible teaches:

- “This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments.”—1 John 5:3.
- “The fear of Jehovah means the hating of bad.”*—Proverbs 8:13.

Love for God and a fear of displeasing him are

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

such strong motivating forces that they can help even violent people change their lives—not superficially, but to the point of transforming their entire personality. Does this really happen?

Consider Alex,* who has spent the last 19 years in the Brazilian prison system for several acts of assault. He became one of Jehovah's Witnesses in the year 2000, after studying the Bible with the Witnesses. Has he truly changed his violent behavior? Yes, and Alex deeply regrets all the bad things he did. He says: "I have come to love God for allowing me to feel genuinely forgiven. Gratitude and love for Jehovah have helped me to change my ways."

César, also in Brazil, was involved in burglary and armed robbery. That was his way of life for some 15 years. What made him change? While in prison, he was contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses, and he too studied the Bible. César explains: "For the first time, I found a purpose in life. I learned to love God. I also learned to fear him—a wholesome fear of returning to doing what is bad and making Jehovah sad. I did not want to show myself ungrateful for his kindness. That love and fear motivated me to change."

What do those experiences show us? That the Bible has the power to transform people's lives profoundly—by changing their way of thinking. (Ephesians 4:23) Alex, mentioned earlier, adds: "What I learned from the Bible was like clean water pouring through me, gradually purifying me by washing away bad thoughts. These were things I never imagined I would be able to get rid of." Yes, when we fill our minds with the Bible's clean message, it can expel or wash away badness. God's Word has cleansing power. (Ephesians 5:26) The result is that cruel and selfish people can change their ways and become kind and peaceable. (Romans 12:18) They experience peace in their lives by applying Bible principles.—Isaiah 48:18.

More than eight million of Jehovah's Witnesses in 240 lands have discovered the key to eradication

* Names have been changed.



Learn how you can live in a world free of violence

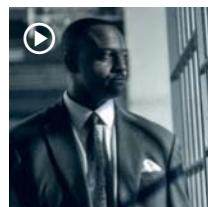
ing violence. People of all races and from all social levels and backgrounds have learned to love and fear God and also to love one another, living peaceably as a worldwide family. (1 Peter 4:8) They are living proof that a world free of violence is possible.

A WORLD FREE OF VIOLENCE IS NEAR!

The Bible promises that God will soon cleanse this earth of violence. Today's violent world is facing God's "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly people." (2 Peter 3:5-7) No more will violent people make others suffer. How can we be sure that God wants to intervene and eradicate violence?

God "hates anyone who loves violence," says the Bible. (Psalm 11:5) The Creator loves peace and justice. (Psalm 33:5; 37:28) That is why he will not tolerate violent people forever.

Yes, a new world of peace is coming. (Psalm 37:11; 72:14) Why not learn more about how you can qualify to live in that world free of violence? ■



A man relates his life experience in the short video *From Prison to Prosperity* at www.jw.org. (Click the Search button, and enter the title)



AS TOLD BY
JOSEF MUTKE

YEAR BORN
1953

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
AUSTRALIA

HISTORY
ADDICTED TO PORNOGRAPHY



I failed many times before I succeeded

MY PAST: My father emigrated to Australia from Germany in 1949. He came looking for work in the mining and power-generation industries and settled in rural Victoria. There he married my mother, and I was born in 1953.

Just a few years later, my mother began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, so the Bible's teachings formed part of my earliest memories. However, my father had no tolerance for any religion. He became violent and intimidating, and my mother was terrified of him. She kept studying the Bible in secret and came to love its teachings. While Dad was out, she shared what she learned with my sister and me. She told us about a future paradise earth and how we could be happy if we followed the Bible's standards of conduct.—Psalm 37:10, 29; Isaiah 48:17.

At 18 years of age, I felt compelled to leave home because of Dad's violence. Although I believed what Mum had taught me from the Bible, I did not appreciate its value. So I failed to live by it. I started working as an electrician in the coal mines. When I was 20, I got married. Our first daughter was born three years later, and I reconsidered what was important in my life. I knew that the Bible could help our family, so I started to study the Bible with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. But my wife was very opposed to the Witnesses. When I attended one of their meetings, she gave me an ultimatum—stop my Bible study or leave the family. Feeling powerless, I gave in to her demands and cut ties with the Witnesses. I later came to regret my failure to follow through on what I knew to be right.

One day, my workmates introduced me to pornography. It was both fascinating and sickening, and it left me feeling overwhelmed with guilt. Remembering what I had learned from the Bible, I really believed that God would punish me. But as my exposure to lewd images steadily increased, my attitude toward pornography changed. In time, I became addicted to it.

Over the next 20 years, I drifted further and further from the standards that my mother had tried to teach me. My behavior reflected what I was putting into my mind. My speech

was vulgar, and I had a filthy sense of humor. I developed a warped view of sex. Although still living with my wife, I was involved with other women. One day I looked into a mirror and thought, ‘I don’t like you.’ My self-respect had been replaced with self-loathing.

My marriage ended, and my life was in tatters. Then, I prayed to Jehovah with all my heart. I resumed my study of the Bible, although there had been a lapse of two decades. By that time my father had died, and my mother had been baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: An enormous gulf separated my way of life from the Bible’s lofty standards. But this time I was determined to attain the peace of mind that the Bible promises. I set out to clean up my speech and calm my bad temper. I also decided to give up my immoral lifestyle, stop gambling, stop drinking excessively, and stop stealing from my employer.

My companions at work could not understand why I wanted to make such drastic changes. For three years, they constantly needled me to revert to my old ways. If I suffered any small setback, such as displaying a burst of anger or saying a bad word, they would shout triumphantly: “Aha! The old Joe is back.” How those words hurt me! I often felt like a failure.

My workplace was saturated with pornography, both electronic and printed. My workmates routinely distributed filthy images through their com-

puters, as I had previously. I was trying to escape my addiction, but they seemed determined to trip me up at every step. I turned to the person conducting my Bible study for support and encouragement. He patiently listened as I poured out my heart. Using specific Bible texts, he showed me how to confront my addiction, and he encouraged me to seek Jehovah’s help through persistent prayer.—Psalm 119:37.

One day I called a meeting with my work crew. When they had assembled, I told them to give two of the men, who were self-confessed alcoholics, a beer. The group howled in protest: “You can’t do that! These men are struggling with an addiction!” I responded: “Yes, and so am I.” From that day onward, those men recognized my struggle against pornography addiction and no longer pressured me to return to my former ways.

In time, and with much help from Jehovah, I conquered my addiction to pornography. In 1999, I was baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, grateful that I had been given a second chance to live a decent, happy life.

I now understand why Jehovah hates the things I had loved for so long. As a loving Father, he wanted to shield me from the damage that pornography causes. How true are the words of Proverbs 3:5, 6! That passage says: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.” The Bible’s standards have been not only a protection but ultimately a guarantee of success.—Psalm 1:1-3.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: In the past, I felt disgusted with myself, but now I have self-respect and inner peace. I live a clean life and feel Jehovah’s forgiveness and support. In 2000, I married Karolin, a beautiful Christian sister who loves Jehovah as much as I do. Our home is a haven of peace. We feel truly privileged to be part of a clean and loving Christian brotherhood that extends around the world. ■



THE MOST USEFUL COMPARISON YOU MAY EVER MAKE

DO YOU consider yourself to be a Christian? If so, you are among the more than two billion people on earth—almost 1 in every 3—who profess to be followers of Christ. Today, there are thousands of denominations that are called Christian, yet they are divided by conflicting doctrines and differing views. So your beliefs may be very different from those of other professed Christians. Does it really matter what you believe? Yes, it does—if you want to practice the Christianity taught in the Bible itself.

The early followers of Jesus Christ became known as “Christians.” (Acts 11:26) There was no need for other names to identify them, since only one Christian faith existed. Christians uniformly followed the teachings and instructions of the Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ. What about your church? Do you believe that it teaches what Christ taught and what the early followers of Christ believed in? How can you know for sure? There is only one way—to use the Bible as a measuring stick.

1 QUESTION: Who is God?

ANSWER: Jehovah, the Father of Jesus, is the eternal God and the almighty Creator of all things.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”—Colossians 1:3.
- “You are worthy, Jehovah our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things.”—Revelation 4:11.
- See also Romans 10:13; 1 Timothy 1:17.

2 QUESTION: Who is Jesus Christ?

ANSWER: Jesus is the firstborn Son of God. Jesus was created, and thus he had a beginning. Jesus is subject to God and obedient to His will.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- “The Father is greater than I am.”—John 14:28.
- “[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”—Colossians 1:15.
- See also Matthew 26:39; 1 Corinthians 15:28.

3 QUESTION: What is the holy spirit?

ANSWER: The holy spirit is a force that God uses to accomplish his will. It is not a person. People can be filled with holy spirit and empowered by it.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- “As Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the infant in her womb leaped, and Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit.”—Luke 1:41.
- “You will receive power when the holy spirit comes upon you.”—Acts 1:8.
- See also Genesis 1:2; Acts 2:1-4; 10:38.

Consider this: Jesus Christ had a deep respect for the Scriptures as the Word of God. He did not approve of those who watered down the Bible's teachings by giving priority to man-made traditions. (Mark 7:9-13) We can thus safely conclude that true followers of Jesus would base their beliefs on the Bible. So each Christian does well to ask himself, 'Do the teachings of my church agree with the Bible?' To answer that question, why not compare what your church teaches with what the Bible actually says?

Jesus said that our worship of God must be based on truth—the truth found in the Bible. (John 4:24; 17:17) And the apostle Paul said that our salvation depends on our coming to "an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) So it is vital that our beliefs be based on accurate Bible truth. Why, our very salvation is at stake!

4 QUESTION: What is the Kingdom of God?

ANSWER: God's Kingdom is a heavenly government. Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. Soon this Kingdom will cause God's will to be done everywhere on earth.

5 QUESTION: Do all good people go to heaven?

ANSWER: No. A limited group of faithful humans, called a "little flock," are chosen by God to go to heaven. They will rule with Jesus as kings over mankind.

6 QUESTION: What is God's will for the earth and mankind?

ANSWER: Under God's Kingdom, the earth will become a paradise and faithful humans will enjoy perfect health, permanent peace, and endless life.

HOW TO COMPARE OUR BELIEFS WITH THE BIBLE

We invite you to read the accompanying six questions and note the Bible's answers to those questions. Look up the Bible texts that are cited, and ponder over the answers. Then ask yourself, 'How do my church's teachings compare with what the Bible says?'

This short quiz may help you to make the most useful comparison you could ever make. Are you willing to compare other teachings of your church with what the Bible says? Jehovah's Witnesses would be happy to help you to examine clear Bible truth. Why not ask one of the Witnesses for a free Bible study? Or you can visit our website, jw.org. ■

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- "The seventh angel blew his trumpet. And there were loud voices in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever.'”—Revelation 11:15.
- See also Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- "Have no fear, little flock, for your Father has approved of giving you the Kingdom.”—Luke 12:32.
- "They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and they will rule as kings with him.”—Revelation 20:6.
- See also Revelation 14:1, 3.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

- "The meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37:10, 11.
- "He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:3, 4.
- See also Psalm 37:29; 2 Peter 3:13.



Is religion man-made?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that religion is a human invention; others think that God uses religion to help people draw close to him. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

There is a “religion that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father.” (James 1:27, footnote) Pure, or true, religion comes from God.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- To please God, a religion must be based on Bible truth.—John 4:23, 24.
- Religions based on human ideas are futile.
—Mark 7:7, 8.

Is it necessary to belong to a religion?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“Let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking our meeting together.” (Hebrews 10:24, 25) God wants his worshippers to gather as an organized group.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- Those who worship God together should be united in belief.—1 Corinthians 1:10, 11.
- Members of the religion that God approves form a worldwide brotherhood.—1 Peter 2:17.

What Does the
Bible Really Teach?



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information,
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Where Can You Find Comfort?

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.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. To make a donation, please visit www.jw.org.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Visit www.jw.org or send your request to one of the addresses below.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Life in this world can be distressing. Is there anywhere we can turn for reliable help and comfort?

The Bible says: “The Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our trials.”

—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses how God offers us the comfort we all need.

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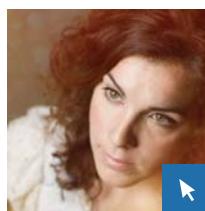
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OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Why Pray? Will God Answer Me?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS >
BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

WE ALL NEED COMFORT

Do you remember falling down when you were a young child? Perhaps you cut your hand or scraped your knee. Can you recall how your mother comforted you? Maybe she cleaned the wound and then put a bandage on it. You cried, but her soothing words and warm embrace soon made you feel better. At that time in your life, comfort was never far away.



But life gets more complicated as we get older. The problems get bigger, and comfort becomes harder to find. Adult problems, sad to say, can rarely be solved with a bandage and a mother's hug. Consider a few examples.

- Have you ever faced the trauma of losing your job? Julian says that when he got fired, the shock left him feeling distraught. ‘How will I care for my family?’ he wondered. ‘After I put in years of hard work, why does the company feel I am useless?’

- Perhaps you are devastated by the breakup of your marriage. “When my husband suddenly left me 18 months ago, I felt a sadness come over me. It was as if my heart had broken in two,” explains Raquel. “The pain was physical as well as emotional. It frightened me.”

- Maybe you have a serious health problem that shows little sign of improving. There may be times when you feel as did the patriarch Job, who lamented: “I loathe my life; I do not want to go on living.” (Job 7:16) Perhaps you share the feelings of Luis, a man in his 80’s, who confessed, “Sometimes I feel that I am just waiting to die.”

- Or possibly it is the death of a loved one that makes you yearn for comfort. “When my son died in a tragic plane accident, my first feeling was disbelief,” explains Robert. “Then came the pain, the pain that the Bible compares to having a long sword run through you.”—Luke 2:35.

Robert, Luis, Raquel, and Julian did find comfort, even in those distressing circumstances. They found the best Person to provide it—none other than Almighty God. How does he provide comfort? Will he likewise provide the comfort you need?

HOW GOD OFFERS COMFORT

The apostle Paul describes Jehovah* as “the God of *all* comfort, who comforts us in *all* our trials.” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Thus the Bible assures us that no person is beyond God’s help and that no tragedy is so great that our heavenly Father cannot comfort us.

Of course, we must do something if we want comfort from God. How could a doctor help us if we never made an appointment to see him? The prophet Amos asks: “Will two walk together unless they have met by appointment?” (Amos 3:3, footnote) The Scriptures therefore urge us: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.”—James 4:8.

How can we be sure that God will draw close to us? First of all, because he tells us repeatedly that he wants to help us. (See the accompanying box.) And second, because we have convincing testimony from people whom God has comforted—real people, both from our time and the past.

Like many today who seek help from God,

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

King David was all too familiar with tragedy. “Hear my pleas when I cry to you for help,” he once begged Jehovah. Did God respond? Yes. David added: “I have received his help, and my heart rejoices.”—Psalm 28:2, 7.

JESUS’ ROLE IN COMFORTING ALL WHO MOURN

God intended that Jesus have a key role in providing comfort. Among other tasks that God assigned him, Jesus was “to bind up the broken-hearted” and “comfort all who mourn.” (Isaiah 61:1, 2) As foretold, Jesus took a special interest in people who were “toiling and loaded down.”—Matthew 11:28-30.

Jesus comforted people by giving them wise advice, by treating them kindly, and even, in some cases, by curing their sicknesses. One day a leper pleaded with Jesus: “If you just want to, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus replied: “I want to! Be made clean.” (Mark 1:40, 41) And the leper was healed.





Today, the Son of God is not present on earth to comfort us personally. But his Father, Jehovah, “the God of all comfort,” continues to help those in need. (2 Corinthians 1:3) Consider four principal means that God uses to comfort people.

• **The Bible.** “All the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.”—Romans 15:4.

• **God’s Holy Spirit.** Not long after Jesus’ death, the whole Christian congregation entered into a period of peace. Why? “It walked in the fear of Jehovah and in the comfort of the holy spirit.” (Acts 9:31) The holy spirit, God’s active force, is very powerful. God can use it to comfort anyone in any circumstance.

• **Prayer.** “Do not be anxious over anything,” the Bible advises us. Rather, it says, “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.”—Philippians 4:6, 7.

• **Fellow Christians** can provide a comforting ‘safety net’ of true friends. The apostle Paul described his companions as “a source of great comfort” in times of “distress and tribulation.”—Colossians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:7.

But you may be wondering how all this works in practice. Let us take a closer look at the experiences of people who have faced the problems mentioned at the outset. Like them, you can discover that God still fulfills this heartwarming promise: “As a mother comforts her son, so I will keep comforting you.”—Isaiah 66:13.

How We Know That God Wants to Comfort Us

- “You, O Jehovah, are my helper and comforter.”—Psalm 86:17.
- “‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ says your God.”—Isaiah 40:1.
- “This is what Jehovah says: . . . ‘As a mother comforts her son, so I will keep comforting you.’”—Isaiah 66:12, 13.
- “Happy are those who mourn, since they will be comforted.”—Matthew 5:4.
- “Throw all your anxiety on [God], because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

COMFORT IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

Trouble comes in many forms. We certainly cannot cover every kind of hardship here, but let us take a closer look at the four examples that we have already mentioned. Notice how people facing very different problems have found genuine comfort from God.

WHEN FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

“My wife and I lost our jobs at the same time,” recalls Seth.* “For two years we had to survive on family handouts and a few odd jobs. As a result, my wife, Priscilla, became depressed, and I felt worthless.

“How did we cope? Priscilla constantly reminded herself of Jesus’ words at Matthew 6:34. He said that we should not become anxious about tomorrow, since each day has its own anxieties. And her heartfelt prayers gave her the strength to keep going. In my case, Psalm 55:22 comforted me. Like the psalmist, I threw my burden on Jehovah, and I found that he did sustain me. Although I now have a job, we keep our lifestyle simple in line with Jesus’ advice at Matthew 6:20-22. Above all, we have drawn closer to God and closer to each other.”

“I was frightened about the future when our small family business went bankrupt,” confesses Jonathan. “Because of an economic crisis, 20 years of hard work came to nothing. My wife and I started arguing about money. We couldn’t even buy with a credit card, for fear it would not be honored.

“But God’s Word and his spirit helped us to make good decisions. I learned to accept any sort of work, and we cut down on all unnecessary expenses. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we also got support from fellow believers. They bolstered our self-esteem and lent us a helping hand when times were really tough.”



“I learned to accept any sort of work, and we cut down on all unnecessary expenses.”—Jonathan

* Some names in this article have been changed.

WHEN A MARRIAGE BREAKS UP

"When my husband suddenly left me, I felt hurt and angry," recalls Raquel. "And a terrible sadness overwhelmed me. But I drew close to God, and he comforted me. The peace of God protected my heart when I turned to him daily in prayer. It seemed to me that he repaired my broken heart."

"And thanks to his Word, the Bible, I conquered feelings of anger and resentment. I took to heart the words of the apostle Paul at Romans 12:21: 'Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good.'

"One wise counselor helped me to see the need to move on. He showed me Ecclesiastes 3:6 and kindly told me that there is a time when we have to 'give up as lost.' It was tough advice, but it was what I needed. I now have new goals in life."

"When your marriage breaks up, you need support," Elizabeth states. "I had a dear friend who gave me that support, day after day. She cried with me, comforted me, and made me feel loved rather than rejected. I am convinced that Jehovah used her to heal my emotional wounds."

IN TIMES OF SICKNESS OR OLD AGE

Luis, quoted in the opening article of this series, has a serious heart condition, and he almost died on two occasions. He now needs to be on oxygen 16 hours a day. "I pray to Jehovah constantly," he says. "And after praying to God, I feel his spirit giving me strength. Prayer gives me the courage to keep going because I have faith in him and know that he cares for me."

"I want to do so many things, but I just can't," explains Petra, who is in her 80's. "Seeing my strength diminish is very hard. I feel drained and have to rely on medication. I often think of the way Jesus asked his Father to let a certain hardship pass by if it was possible. But Jehovah gave Jesus strength, and he strengthens me. Prayer is my daily therapy. I feel much better after talking to God."—Matthew 26:39.



"There is a time when we have to 'give up as lost.' . . . I now have new goals in life."—Raquel



"After praying to God, I feel his spirit giving me strength."—Luis

Julian, who has been battling multiple sclerosis for nearly 30 years, feels likewise. “I have exchanged an executive’s chair for a wheelchair,” he says. “But my life is worthwhile because it is devoted to serving others. Giving can alleviate suffering, and Jehovah does keep his promise to strengthen us in time of need. Like the apostle Paul, I can truly say: ‘For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power.’”

—Philippians 4:13.

IN TIMES OF LOSS

“When my father died in a traffic accident, I could not believe it at first,” Antonio recalls. “It seemed so unfair—he was just an innocent pedestrian. But there was nothing I could do. He was in a coma for five days before he passed away. Somehow, I kept myself from weeping in front of my mother, but I broke down when I was alone. ‘Why? Why?’ I kept asking myself.

“During those dreadful days, I kept asking Jehovah to help me control my emotions and to give me peace. And I gradually felt calmer. I remembered that the Bible explains that ‘unexpected events’ can befall any one of us. Since God cannot lie, I am convinced that I will see my father again in the resurrection.”—Ecclesiastes 9:11; John 11:25; Titus 1:2.

Robert, mentioned in the opening article, has similar thoughts. He says: “My wife and I experienced the peace of mind spoken of at Philippians 4:6, 7. It came to us through our prayers to Jehovah. This inner peace enabled us to speak to news reporters about our hope of the resurrection. Although the plane crash took the life of our son, we still have many happy memories of times shared together. We try to concentrate on them.

“When fellow Witnesses told us that they had seen us explaining our faith calmly on television, we told them that doubtless it was thanks to so many prayers being offered in our behalf. I truly believe that Jehovah was supporting us by means of their countless messages of comfort.”

As the foregoing examples show, God can provide comfort to people facing a wide range of problems and challenges. What about you? No matter what trouble you may face in life, there is comfort available to help you through the hard times.* So why not turn to Jehovah for help? He is “the God of all comfort.”—2 Corinthians 1:3. ■



“Although the plane crash took the life of our son, we still have many happy memories of times shared together.”

—Robert

* If you would like help to draw close to God and receive his comfort, please contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area or write to the nearest branch office.

“The Battle Belongs to Jehovah”

DAVID braced himself against the rush of soldiers jostling past him. They were wide-eyed with fear as they ran away from the battle line. What scared them so? Over and over, David must have heard them nervously repeating one word. It was the name of a man. And there, standing defiantly on the valley floor, was the man himself, perhaps looming larger than any man David had ever seen.

Goliath! David could see why the soldiers feared him—he seemed impossibly huge, a mountain of a man. Even without his formidable armor, he probably weighed more than two large men combined. But he was heavily armed, and he was an immensely strong, experienced warrior. Goliath bellowed out a challenge. Imagine his booming voice echoing on the hillsides as he taunted the army of Israel and their king, Saul. He dared any man to come forward and fight him, to settle this war in single combat!—1 Samuel 17:4-10.

The Israelites cowered. King Saul cowered. The situation, David learned, had been dragging on for over a month! The two armies, Philistine and Israelite, remained deadlocked as Goliath repeated his taunts day after day. David was distressed. How humiliating to think of Israel’s king and his soldiers, including three of David’s older brothers, cringing in fear! In David’s eyes, this pagan Goliath was doing far worse than embarrassing the army of Israel; he was insulting the God of Israel, Jehovah! But what could David, a mere youth, do about it? And what can we



today learn from the faith of David?—1 Samuel 17:11-14.

“ANOINT HIM, FOR THIS IS THE ONE!”

Let us go back to a time many months earlier. Evening was falling as David tended his father’s sheep somewhere on the hillsides near Bethlehem. He was a well-formed young man, likely still in his teens, with a ruddy look about him and appealing, intelligent eyes. In quiet moments, he passed the time playing the harp. The beauty of God’s creation moved him, and his musical skills had grown steadily through many happy hours of practice. But on the evening in question, David was summoned. His father wanted to see him right away.—1 Samuel 16:12.

He found his father, Jesse, talking with a very old man. It was the faithful prophet Samuel. Jehovah had sent him to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as Israel’s next king! Samuel had already seen David’s seven older brothers, but Jehovah made it clear to Samuel that He had chosen none of them. When David arrived, though, Jehovah told Samuel: “Anoint him, for this is the one!” In front of all of David’s older brothers, Samuel opened a hollowed-out horn filled with special oil and poured some of it on David’s head. David’s life was never the same after that anointing. The Bible says: “The spirit of Jehovah began to empower David from that day forward.”—1 Samuel 16:1, 5-11, 13.

Did David begin to cultivate ambitions about

the kingship? No, he was content to wait on the leading of Jehovah's spirit to let him know when it was time to assume greater responsibilities. In the meantime, he continued his humble work of shepherding. It was a work that he carried out with great dedication and courage. His father's flocks were threatened on two occasions, once by a lion and once by a bear. David did not simply try to drive off those predators from a safe distance. Rather, he leaped right into the fray to defend his father's helpless sheep. Both times, he single-handedly killed the ferocious wild beast!—1 Samuel 17:34-36; Isaiah 31:4.

In time, David was summoned again. His reputation had reached the ears of King Saul. Though still a powerful warrior, Saul had lost Jehovah's favor by rebelling against God's instructions. Jehovah had withdrawn his spirit from Saul, and thus the king was often subject to a bad spirit—fits of anger, suspicion, and violence. When this bad spirit was upon Saul, one thing that could soothe him was music. Some of Saul's men had learned of David's reputation as a musician and as a fighter. So David was summoned, and he soon became one of Saul's court musicians and armor-bearers. —1 Samuel 15:26-29; 16:14-23.

Young people in particular can learn much from David's faith in these matters. Notice that he spent his spare time in pursuits that drew him closer to Jehovah. Additionally, he patiently developed skills that were practical and that made him readily employable. Above all, though, he responded to the leading of Jehovah's spirit. What outstanding lessons for all of us to learn!—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

"LET NO ONE LOSE HEART BECAUSE OF HIM"

While serving Saul, David often returned home to shepherd the sheep, sometimes for extended periods. It was during one such period that Jesse sent David to check on the three oldest sons, who were serving in Saul's army. Obediently David, laden with supplies for his brothers, headed to the Valley of Elah. When he arrived, he was dismayed



David humbly credited Jehovah for his victories over wild beasts

to find the two armies locked in the stalemate described at the outset of this article. They faced each other from the opposing slopes of that wide, curved valley.—1 Samuel 17:1-3, 15-19.

To David, the situation was not tolerable. How could the army of the living God, Jehovah, flee in terror from a mere man—and a pagan at that? David saw Goliath's taunts as a direct insult to Jehovah. So he began talking eagerly to the soldiers about defeating Goliath. Before long, David's oldest brother, Eliab, got wind of David's talk. He rebuked his younger brother harshly, accusing him of being there only to witness the carnage of battle. But David answered him: "What have I done now? I was only asking a question!" Then he went right on speaking confidently about defeating Goliath, until someone repeated his words to Saul. The king ordered David to be brought before him. —1 Samuel 17:23-31.

David spoke these encouraging words to the king about Goliath: "Let no one lose heart because of him." Saul and his men had indeed lost heart because of Goliath. Perhaps they had made

the natural mistake of comparing themselves to that huge man, picturing how they came up only to the man's midriff or chest. They imagined that armored giant making short work of them. But David did not think that way. As we will see, he saw the problem in a completely different light. So he offered to fight Goliath himself.—1 Samuel 17:32.

Saul objected: "You are not able to go fight against this Philistine, for you are but a boy, and he has been a soldier from his youth." Was David really a child? No, but he was too young to join the army, and he may have been youthful looking. But David was already known as a valiant fighter and may have been in his late teens by this time.
—1 Samuel 16:18; 17:33.

David reassured Saul by recounting what had happened with the lion and the bear. Was he boasting? No. David knew how he had won those battles. He said: "Jehovah, who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear, he is the one who will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." Resigned at last, Saul responded: "Go, and may Jehovah be with you."—1 Samuel 17:37.

Would you like to have faith like David's? Note, then, that David's faith was not mere idealism or wishful thinking. He had faith in his God because of knowledge and experience. He knew Jehovah as a loving Protector and a Keeper of promises. If we want to acquire such faith, we need to keep learning about the God of the Bible. As we live by what we learn, we will find that the good results will likewise strengthen our faith.—Hebrews 11:1.

"JEHOVAH WILL SURRENDER YOU INTO MY HAND"

At first, Saul tried to outfit David with his own armor. It was much like Goliath's, made of copper, and it likely included a large hauberk, or shirt of mail, composed of overlapping scales. However, David tried moving about while wearing that large and cumbersome equipment and soon found that it would not work for him. He was not trained as a soldier, so he was not used to wearing armor, especially the armor that was worn by Saul, who was

the tallest man in the nation of Israel! (1 Samuel 9:2) He removed it all and chose the garb he was used to wearing—that of a shepherd equipped to protect his flock.—1 Samuel 17:38-40.

David carried his shepherd's staff, a bag over his shoulder, and a sling. Now a sling might not seem like much, but it was in fact a formidable weapon. Consisting of a small pouch at the end of two long leather straps, it was an ideal weapon for a shepherd. He would place a stone in the pouch, whirl it over his head at great speed, and then release one of the straps, hurling the stone with lethal accuracy. So effective was this weapon that armies sometimes used divisions of slingers.

Thus equipped, David hurried to meet his foe. We can only imagine David's fervent prayers as he stooped in the dry riverbed on the valley floor and collected five small, smooth stones. Then he went out onto the field of battle—not walking but running!

When Goliath saw his opponent, what did he think? "He sneered at him in contempt," we read, "because he was just a ruddy and handsome boy." Goliath boomed out: "Am I a dog, so that you are coming against me with sticks?" Evidently he saw David's staff but took no note of the sling. He cursed David in the name of the Philistine gods and vowed to feed the corpse of this contemptible foe to the birds and beasts of the field.—1 Samuel 17:41-44.

To this day, David's response stands as a great statement of faith. Just imagine the young man calling out to Goliath: "You are coming against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I am coming against you in the name of Jehovah of armies, the God of the battle line of Israel, whom you have taunted." David knew that human power and weaponry mattered little. Goliath had shown disrespect for Jehovah God, and Jehovah would respond. As David put it, "the battle belongs to Jehovah."—1 Samuel 17:45-47.

David was not blind to Goliath's size or his weapons. Yet David refused to let such things daunt him. He did not make the mistake that Saul

and the members of his army did. David did not compare himself to Goliath. Instead, he looked at Goliath in comparison with Jehovah. Standing some nine and a half feet (2.9 m) tall, Goliath towered over other men, but how big was he compared to the Sovereign of the universe? Really, like any human, he was barely more than an insect—in this case, one that Jehovah was ready to exterminate!

David ran toward his foe, reaching into his bag for a stone. He loaded his sling and whirled it over his head until it fairly whistled. Goliath, perhaps close behind his shield-bearer, advanced toward David. Goliath's great height may actually have been a disadvantage for him, since a shield-bearer of normal size could hardly have raised a shield high enough to protect the giant's head. And that is just where David aimed.—1 Samuel 17:41.

David released his stone. Imagine the silence as it hurtled toward its mark. Jehovah doubtless made sure that David would not have to fling another one. The stone struck home, sinking

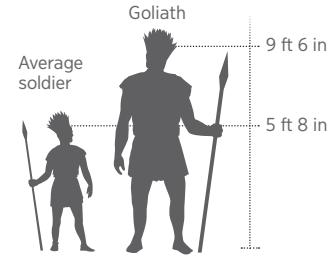
into Goliath's forehead. The colossus toppled to the earth, facedown! The shield-bearer likely fled in terror. David approached, took Goliath's own sword, and cut off the giant's head with it.—1 Samuel 17:48-51.

Finally, Saul and his soldiers found their courage. With a mighty battle cry, they rushed against the Philistines. The battle turned out just as David had told Goliath that it would: "Jehovah . . . will give *all of you* into our hand."—1 Samuel 17:47, 52, 53.

Today, servants of God do not engage in carnal warfare. That time has passed. (Matthew 26:52) Still, we do need to imitate the faith of David. Like him, we need to see Jehovah as real—as the only God to serve and to hold in awe. We may, at times, feel small in comparison to our problems, but our problems are small compared to Jehovah's limitless power. If we choose Jehovah as our God and we put faith in him as David did, then no challenge, no problem, need daunt us. Nothing is beyond the power of Jehovah to conquer! ■

David saw that even a giant is puny when compared to Jehovah God





DAVID VERSUS GOLIATH

—Did It Really Happen?

Some people wonder if the account about David and Goliath is true history or just myth. Did such a doubt cross your mind as you read the preceding article? If so, please consider the following three questions.

1 | Could a man really be some nine and a half feet (2.9 m) tall?

The Bible says that Goliath's "height was six cubits and a span." (1 Samuel 17:4) The cubit in question was 17.5 inches (44.5 cm) long; the span, 8.75 inches (22.2 cm). That adds up to about nine feet six inches (2.9 m). Some insist that Goliath could not have been that tall, but consider: In modern times, the tallest man documented was over 8 feet 11 inches (2.7 m) tall. Is it really impossible that Goliath was six inches (15 cm) or so taller? He was of the tribe of the Rephaim, men who were known for their unusual size. An Egyptian document from the 13th century B.C.E. mentions that some fearsome warriors in the region of Canaan were over eight feet (2.4 m) in height. So Goliath's height, while unusual, is hardly impossible.

2 | Was David a real person?

There was a time when scholars tried to relegate King David to the realm of myth, but that has become harder to do. Archaeolo-

gists have found an ancient inscription that mentions "the house of David." Furthermore, Jesus Christ spoke of David as a real person. (Matthew 12:3; 22:43-45) Jesus' identity as the Messiah is supported by two detailed genealogies showing that he descended from King David. (Matthew 1:6-16; Luke 3:23-31) Clearly, David was a real man.

3 | Did the events described in the account unfold in a real place?

The Bible says that the battle occurred in the Valley of Elah. But it gets still more specific, noting that the Philistines camped on a hillside somewhere between two towns, Socoh and Azekah. The Israelites were stationed across the valley on the opposite hillside. Were these real places?

Note what a recent visitor to the area says: "Our guide—who was not a religious man—took us to the Valley of Elah. We ascended a path that took us to the brow of a hill. As we looked over

the valley, he had us read 1 Samuel 17:1-3. Then he pointed across the valley, saying: 'There, to your left, lie the ruins of Socoh.' Turning, he said, 'Over there, to your right, are the ruins of Azekah. The Philistines camped between those towns, somewhere on the hillside facing you. So we may be standing where the Israelites camped.' I thought of Saul and David standing right where I was. Then we descended, and on the valley floor, we crossed a streambed, mostly dry, that was full of stones. I could not help but picture David stooping here to pick up five smooth stones, one of which killed Goliath." That visitor, like many others, was deeply impressed with the authentic details in the Bible record.

There is no real basis for doubting the truthfulness of this historical account. It involves real people and real places. More important, it is part of God's inspired Word, so it comes from the God of truth, the One who "cannot lie."—Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:16. ■



AS TOLD BY
ADRIÁN DE LA FUENTE

YEAR BORN
1974

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
MEXICO

HISTORY
**VIOLENT ADOLESCENT,
STREET FIGHTER**



I was bitter at heart and violent

MY PAST: I was born in Ciudad Mante, a beautiful region of the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. In general, the city's inhabitants are generous and kind. But sad to say, because of organized crime, the area was very dangerous.

I was the second of four boys. My parents had me baptized in the Catholic Church, and later I was part of the parish choir. I wanted to please God because I greatly feared being judged and burning forever in hell.

When I was five years old, my father left us. That caused me deep sorrow and left an emptiness in my heart. I couldn't understand why he abandoned us when we loved him so much. My mother had to work long hours outside the home to provide for us four boys.

I took advantage of the situation and skipped school to associate with older kids. They taught me to swear, smoke, steal, and fight with my fists. Since I liked to dominate others, I learned boxing, wrestling, and martial arts, as well as how to use weapons. I became a violent adolescent. I was often involved in gunfights, and several times I ended up covered with blood and was left for dead on the street. How much sorrow I caused my mother when she found me like that and had to pick me up and rush me to the hospital!

When I was 16, a childhood friend named Jorge visited our home. He told us that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and that he wanted to share an important message with us. He began to explain his beliefs, using the Bible to do so. I had never read it, and I was excited to learn about God's name and his purposes. Jorge offered to study the Bible with us. We accepted.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: I was greatly relieved to learn the truth about hellfire—that it is not a Bible teaching. (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5) Once I learned that, I no longer felt a morbid fear of God. Rather, I began to see him as a loving Father who wants the best for his children.

As I progressed in my Bible study, I saw the need to make changes in my personality. I needed to cultivate humility and stop resorting to violence. The counsel recorded at 1 Corinthians 15:33 helped me. It says: “Bad associations spoil useful habits,” or, as the footnote states, “corrupt good morals.” I realized that if I wanted to transform my personality, I needed to stop associating with people who had a negative influence on me. So I replaced my old friends with members of the true Christian congregation—people who resolved their differences, not with blows or forms of violence, but by applying Bible principles.

Another passage of Scripture that had an impact on me was Romans 12:17-19. It says: “Return evil for evil to no one. . . . If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, . . . for it is written: ‘‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’’ says Jehovah.’’ I came to accept that Jehovah will take care of injustice in his own way and time. Little by little, I overcame my violent lifestyle.

I’ll never forget what happened one evening when I was returning home. A group of youths from a former rival gang attacked me, and the leader struck me on the back, shouting, “Defend yourself!” At that moment I said a brief prayer to Jehovah, asking him to help me endure the assault. Although I felt a very strong urge to retaliate, I was able to get away instead. The next day I encountered the gang leader by himself. Vengeful anger welled up in me, but again I silently begged Jehovah to help me control myself. To my surprise, the youth came right up to me and said: “Forgive me for what happened last night. The truth is, I would like to become like you. I want to study the Bible.” How glad I was that I had been able to control my anger! Thanks to that, we began to study the Bible together.

Regrettably, the rest of my family did not con-

tinue studying the Bible at that time. However, I made a firm decision to continue studying and not allow anyone or anything to hold me back. I knew that associating regularly with God’s people would heal my emotional wounds and give me the family that I needed. I continued making progress, and in 1991, I was baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I used to be bitter at heart, domineering, and violent. But God’s Word has completely transformed my life. Now I share the Bible’s message of peace with anyone who will listen. I have had the privilege of serving as a full-time minister for the past 23 years.

For a time, I did volunteer work at the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Mexico. While there, I met Claudia, a very dynamic young Christian woman, and we were married in 1999. How grateful I am to Jehovah for blessing me with this loyal companion!

We served together in a Mexican Sign Language congregation, helping the deaf to learn about Jehovah. Later, we were invited to move to Belize to teach the Bible to people in that country. Although our life is much simpler here, we have all that we need to be happy. We would not change it for anything.

In time, my mother resumed her study of the Bible and got baptized. Also, my older brother, his wife, and their children are now Jehovah’s Witnesses. Some of my former friends with whom I shared the Kingdom message now serve Jehovah too.

Sadly, some members of my family have died because they didn’t change their violent temperament. If I had continued down that same path, I probably would have ended up like them. I am grateful that Jehovah drew me to himself and to his worshippers, who patiently and kindly taught me to apply Bible principles in my life. ■

What is the Kingdom of God?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that it represents the reign of God in a person's heart; others think that it is the product of human efforts to bring world peace and brotherhood.

What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these [human] kingdoms." (Daniel 2:44) God's Kingdom is a real government.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- The Kingdom of God rules from heaven.
—Matthew 10:7; Luke 10:9.
- God uses the Kingdom to accomplish his will in heaven and on earth.—Matthew 6:10.

When will God's Kingdom come?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

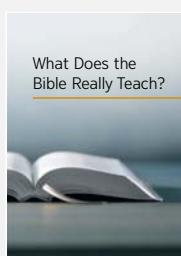
- No one knows
- Soon
- Never

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Once the good news has been fully preached, the Kingdom will come to bring the present wicked system to an end.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- No one on earth knows exactly when God's Kingdom will come.—Matthew 24:36.
- Bible prophecy shows that the Kingdom will come soon.—Matthew 24:3, 7, 12.



Please send me a copy of *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

For more information, see chapter 8 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

Also available at www.jw.org

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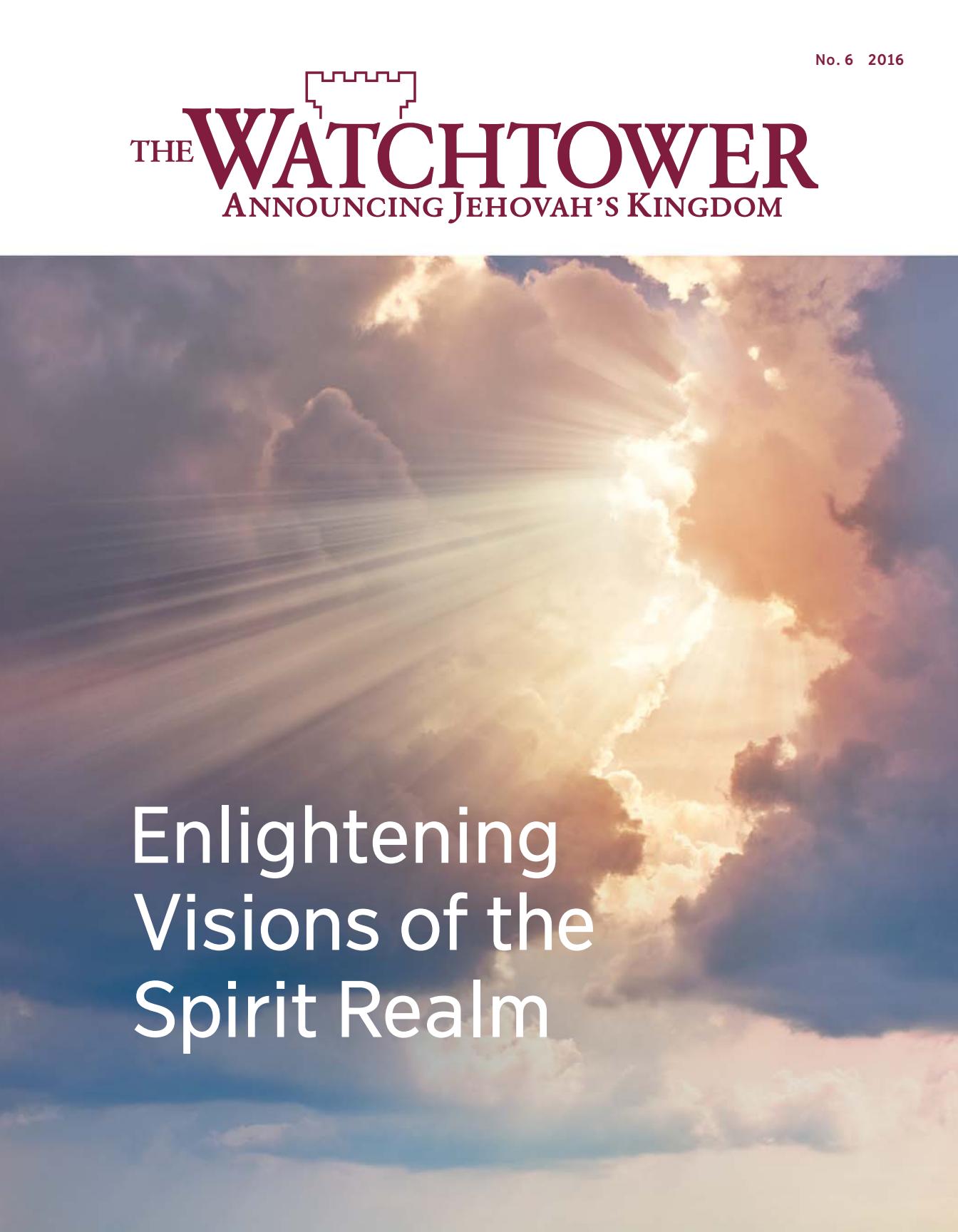
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Enlightening
Visions of the
Spirit Realm

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 DO YOU THINK?

If someone asked you what heaven is like, how would you answer?

We can learn from Jesus because he said: "I am from the realms above."
—John 8:23.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses what Jesus and his Father have revealed about heaven.

Enlightening Visions of the Spirit Realm

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Visions of Those in the Invisible Heavens 4

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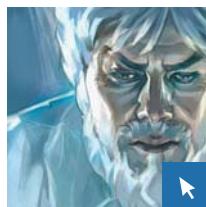
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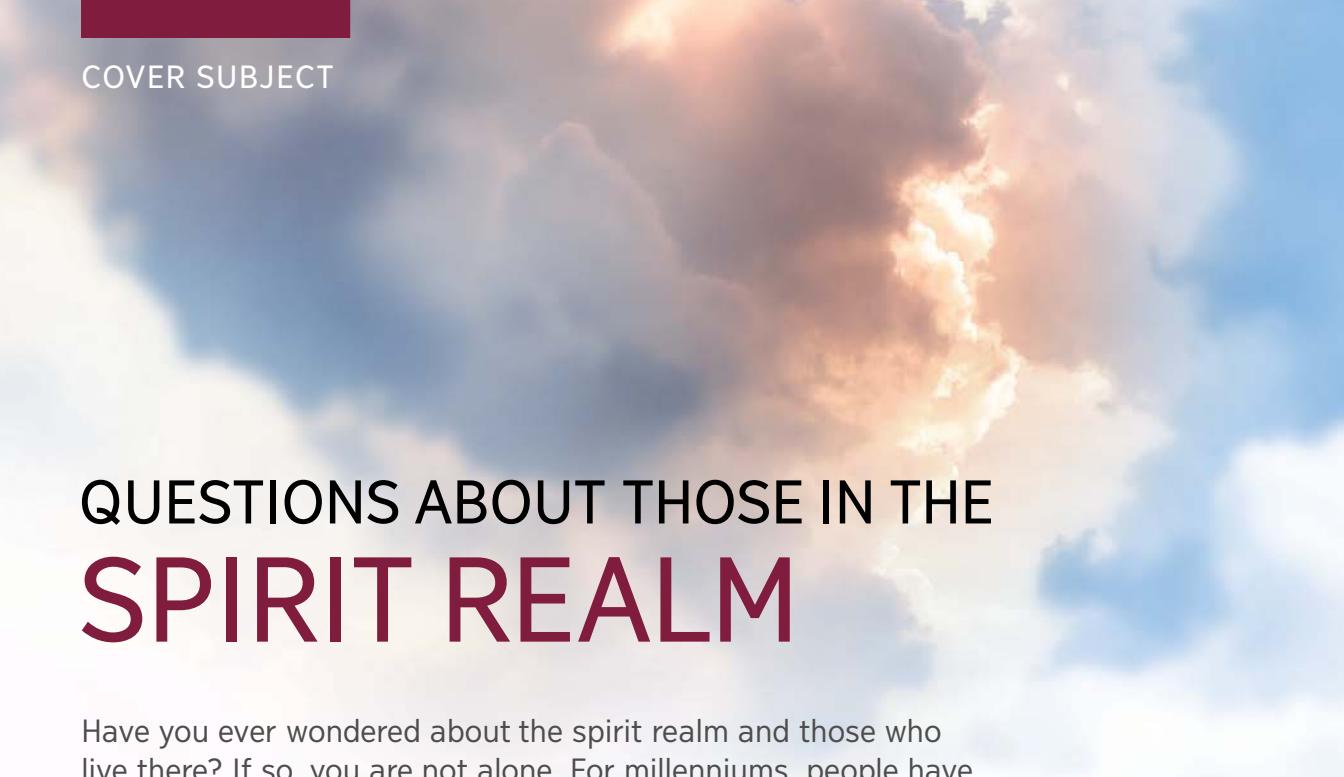
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OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

[Did God Create the Devil?](#)

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS >
BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)



QUESTIONS ABOUT THOSE IN THE SPIRIT REALM

Have you ever wondered about the spirit realm and those who live there? If so, you are not alone. For millenniums, people have speculated on that subject. Some believe that the spirit world is inhabited by ancestors who must be honored. Others envision a place of blissful tranquillity called heaven, populated by angels and good people who have died. Still others see the spirit world as a home for hundreds of millions of deities.

Many people argue that we cannot know anything about the spirit realm because no eyewitness has come from there to tell us about it. That line of reasoning, however, is incorrect. Jesus Christ existed in heaven, in the spirit realm, before he came to the earth. He said so quite openly to the religious leaders in the first century: “I have come down from heaven to do, not my own will, but the will of him who sent me.” So Jesus was sharing firsthand information when he told his apostles: “In the house of my Father are many dwelling places.”—John 6:38; 14:2.

Jesus’ Father, of course, is God, whose name is Jehovah, and Jehovah’s “house” is in the heavens. (Psalm 83:18) Thus, no one could describe the invisible world better than Jehovah God and

Jesus Christ could. They have revealed much information about the spirit realm by means of spectacular visions that they gave to faithful ones.

The following article discusses portions of the Bible that describe what men saw in a number of visions. As you consider these visions, remember that the spirit realm is not *material*, with things that we can touch or see. Thus, rather than choosing to explain matters to us in spiritual terms, which would be incomprehensible to us, God fashioned the visions to depict spiritual realities in terms that we can comprehend. The visions will help you to understand those who inhabit the spirit realm’s “many dwelling places.”

VISIONS OF THOSE IN THE INVISIBLE HEAVENS

The Bible presents a number of fascinating visions that permit us to peer, as it were, into the invisible heavenly realm. We invite you to take a careful look at them. Although not everything described in the visions is to be taken literally, the visions can help you not only to visualize those who dwell in the spirit realm but also to understand how they can affect you.

JEHOVAH IS THE SUPREME ONE

“A throne was in its position in heaven, and someone was seated on the throne. And the One seated had the appearance of a jasper stone and a sardius stone, and all around the throne was a rainbow like an emerald in appearance.”—Revelation 4:2, 3.

“There was a brilliance all around him like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. That was how the surrounding brilliant light appeared. It was like the appearance of the glory of Jehovah.”—Ezekiel 1:27, 28.

These visions, given to the apostle John and the prophet Ezekiel, depict the splendor of the Most High God, Jehovah, with things we can readily envision—dazzling gemstones, a rainbow, and the majesty of a throne. They tell us that Jehovah’s presence is one of awe-inspiring beauty, pleasantness, and serenity.

These depictions of God harmonize with the words of the psalmist who wrote: “Jehovah is great and most worthy of praise. He is more awe-

inspiring than all other gods. All the gods of the peoples are worthless gods, but Jehovah is the one who made the heavens. In his presence are majesty and splendor; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.”—Psalm 96:4-6.

Though Jehovah is the Supreme One, he invites us to approach him in prayer and assures us that he listens to us. (Psalm 65:2) God loves and cares for us so much that the apostle John could truthfully write: “God is love.”—1 John 4:8.

JESUS IS WITH GOD

“[The Christian disciple Stephen], being full of holy spirit, gazed into heaven and caught sight of God’s glory and of Jesus standing at God’s right hand, and he said: ‘Look! I see the heavens opened up and the Son of man standing at God’s right hand.’”—Acts 7:55, 56.

Shortly before Stephen had this vision, Jesus was put to death at the instigation of the very ones whom Stephen was addressing—the Jewish leaders. The vision confirmed that Jesus was alive and



that he had been resurrected and honored. About this, the apostle Paul wrote: “[Jehovah] raised [Jesus] up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named, not only in this system of things but also in that to come.”—Ephesians 1:20, 21.

In addition to describing his lofty position, the Scriptures show that Jesus, like Jehovah, cares deeply for humans. During his ministry on earth, Jesus healed the sick, cured the infirm, and raised the dead. By his sacrificial death, he demonstrated his deep love for God and for mankind. (Ephesians 2:4, 5) Standing at God’s right hand, Jesus will soon exercise his authority and bring great blessings to obedient humans everywhere.

ANGELS MINISTER TO GOD

“I [the prophet Daniel] kept watching until thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days [Jehovah] sat down. . . . A thousand thousands kept ministering to him, and

ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”—Daniel 7:9, 10.

In this vision of heaven, Daniel saw not just one angel but multitudes. What an awe-inspiring vision that must have been! Angels are glorious spirit persons, intelligent and powerful. Their ranks include seraphs and cherubs. The Bible mentions angels more than 250 times.

Angels are not former humans who had lived on earth. God created angels long before man’s appearance. At the founding of the earth, the angels were on hand to observe and to shout in applause.—Job 38:4-7.

One way faithful angels minister to God is by being involved in the most important work being done on earth today—the proclamation of the good news of God’s Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Their involvement in this work was revealed in a vision to the apostle John, who wrote: “I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” (Revelation 14:6) Though angels do

not speak to people today as they did on occasion in times past, they do help guide those preaching the good news to honesthearted ones.

SATAN MISLEADS MILLIONS

“War broke out in heaven: Michael [Jesus Christ] and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.”—Revelation 12:7-9.

Heaven has not always been peaceful. At the very dawn of human history, one of the angels, consumed by a desire to be worshipped, rebelled against Jehovah, becoming Satan, meaning “Re-sister.” Other angels later joined in the rebellion and became known as demons. Thoroughly evil, they bitterly oppose Jehovah and have led most humans on a course contrary to Jehovah’s loving direction.

Satan and his demons are depraved and cruel. They are enemies of mankind and have contribut-

ed to much of the suffering on earth. For example, Satan killed the livestock and the servants of the faithful man Job. Next, he killed all ten of Job’s children by causing “a great wind” to crush the house they were in. After that, Satan struck Job with “painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”—Job 1:7-19; 2:7.

Soon, though, Satan will be done away with. Since being hurled to the vicinity of the earth, he knows that “he has a short period of time.” (Revelation 12:12) Satan is doomed, and that certainly is good news!

THOSE WHO COME FROM THE EARTH

“You [Jesus] bought people for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”—Revelation 5:9, 10.

Just as Jesus was resurrected from earth to life in heaven, others will be too. Jesus said to his faithful apostles: “I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, . . . I will come again and will receive you home to myself, so that where I am you also may be.”—John 14:2, 3.

Those who go to heaven go there for a purpose.

YOU NEED NOT FEAR THE DEMONS

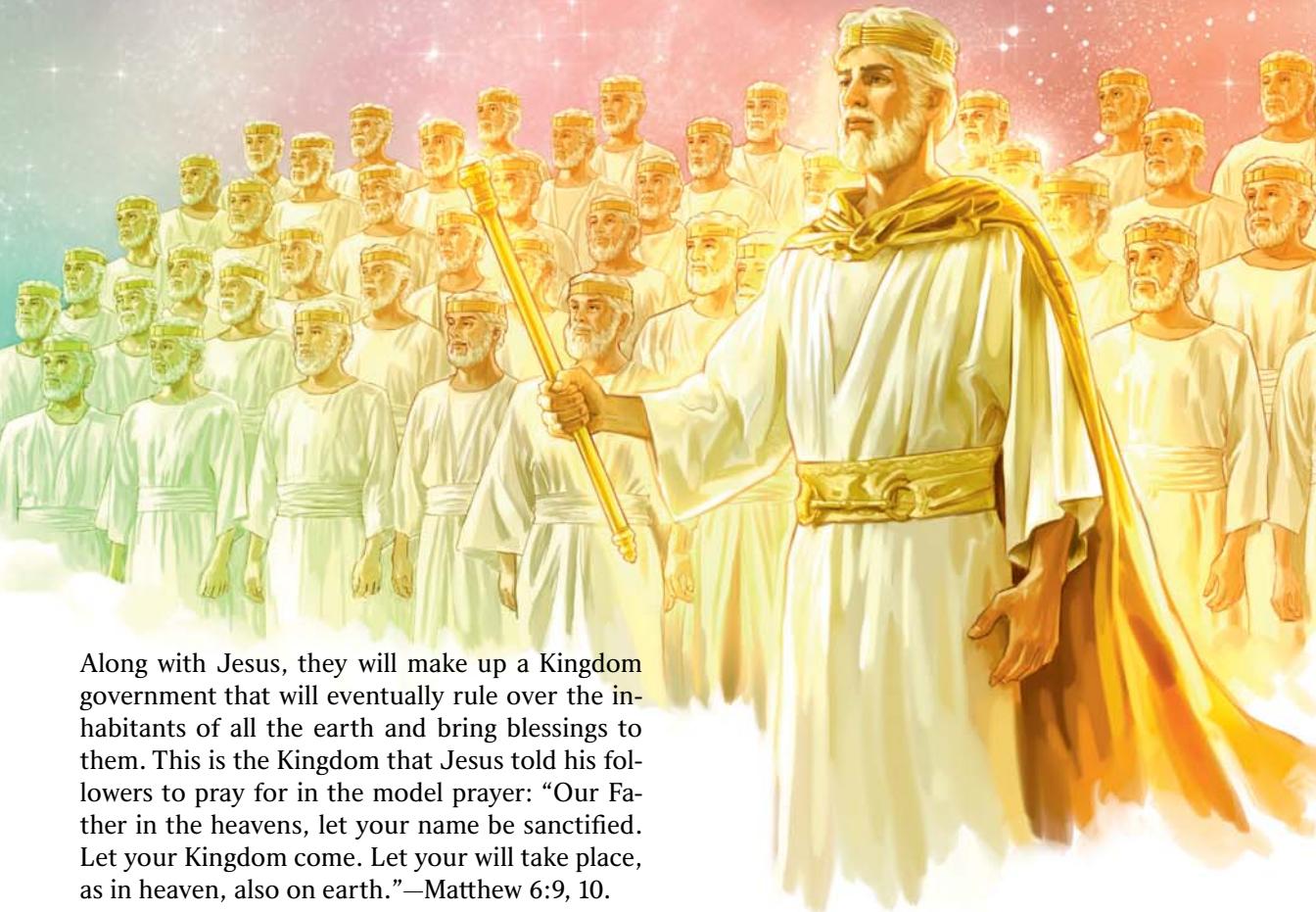
Like prisoners in chains, millions of people are shackled by superstition and the dread of evil spirits. They look to charms, amulets, and magic potions to protect themselves. There is no need for you to do so. The Bible gives this comforting assurance: “The eyes of Jehovah are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward

him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9) The true God, Jehovah, who is far more powerful than Satan, will protect you if you trust in Him.

To gain Jehovah’s protection, you need to learn what is pleasing to him and then do it. For example, in the first century, Christians in the city of Ephesus collected all their books on magic and burned them. (Acts 19:19, 20) Similarly, to have God’s protection, you must

dispose of charms, amulets, fetishes, magic books, “protective” strings, and anything else connected with demonistic practices.

The Bible says: “Subject yourselves to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7) If you subject yourself to Jehovah by obeying and serving him, you can be sure that Satan and the demons can have no hold on you.



Along with Jesus, they will make up a Kingdom government that will eventually rule over the inhabitants of all the earth and bring blessings to them. This is the Kingdom that Jesus told his followers to pray for in the model prayer: “Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth.”—Matthew 6:9, 10.

WHAT THOSE IN HEAVEN WILL DO

“I [the apostle John] heard a loud voice from the throne say: ‘Look! The tent of God is with mankind, . . . and he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.’”—Revelation 21:3, 4.

This prophetic vision points to the time when God’s Kingdom, made up of Jesus and those res-

urrected from the earth, will bring an end to Satan’s rule and make the earth a paradise. Things that have caused so much pain and sorrow to humankind will be no more. Even death will pass away.

What, though, of the billions who have died and will not be resurrected to heaven? At a future time, they will be restored to life with the prospect of living forever in that Paradise on earth.—Luke 23:43. ■

These visions assure us that Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, as well as the faithful angels and those who have been bought from the earth, all deeply care about us and seek our welfare. To learn more about what they will do, we invite you to contact Jehovah’s Witnesses or go to our website, www.jw.org, and download the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

Lessons From the Birds of the Heavens

“Ask, please, . . . the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of Jehovah has done this?”—Job 12:7, 9.



Stork

OVER 3,000 years ago, the ancient patriarch Job realized that the birds of the heavens have much to tell us about the handiwork of God. But their characteristic behavior also makes them ideal subjects for illustrations and metaphors. In the Bible, many of the references to the birds of the heavens teach us important lessons about life and our relationship with God. Let us look at a few examples.

WHERE THE SWALLOWS NEST

Inhabitants of Jerusalem were familiar with swallows, which customarily build their nests under the eaves of buildings. Some made their nests in Solomon’s temple. Likely, swallows that nested in the temple area each year found it a place of safety, where they could rear their young undisturbed.

The composer of Psalm 84—one of the sons of Korah, who served at the temple for one week every six months—noticed those nests in the temple area. Longing to be like the swallow that had a permanent home in Jehovah’s house, he exclaimed: “How lovely your grand tabernacle is, O Jehovah of armies! My whole being yearns, yes, I am faint with longing, for the courtyards of Jehovah . . . Even the bird finds a home there

and the swallow a nest for herself, where she cares for her young near your grand altar, O Jehovah of armies, my King and my God!” (Psalm 84:1-3) Do we, along with our young ones, show a similar longing and appreciation for regularly being with the congregation of God’s people? —Psalm 26:8, 12.

THE STORK KNOWS ITS TIME

“The stork in the sky knows its seasons,” wrote the prophet Jeremiah. He was doubtless well aware of the migration of storks through the Promised Land. In the spring, over 300,000 white storks have been counted migrating from Africa to Northern Europe by way of the Jordan Valley. Their internal clock triggers the urge to return to their summer breeding grounds. Like other migratory birds, they “keep to the time of their return.”—Jeremiah 8:7.

“The true wonder of migration is that it is instinctive,” says *Collins Atlas of Bird Migration*. Jehovah God gave migratory birds instinctive wisdom regarding the seasons, but he gave man the ability to discern the times and the seasons. (Luke 12:54-56) Unlike the instinctive wisdom of the stork, knowledge of God is the key to man’s discerning the significance of the events of



Eagle



Swallow



Hen and chicks

the time we live in. The Israelites of Jeremiah's day were oblivious to such signs. God explained the underlying problem, stating: "They have rejected the word of Jehovah, and what wisdom do they have?"—Jeremiah 8:9.

Today we have ample evidence that we are living in what the Bible calls "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Will you imitate the stork and take notice of 'the season'?

THE EAGLE LOOKS FAR INTO THE DISTANCE

The eagle is mentioned many times in the Bible, and its striking silhouette is a familiar feature of the Promised Land. From its nest high up on a cliff, the eagle "searches for food; its eyes look far into the distance." (Job 39:27-29) Its sight is so powerful that the eagle can reportedly spot a rabbit half a mile (1 km) away.

Just as the eagle can "look far into the distance," Jehovah is able to look far into the future. Thus, Jehovah God declared: "From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from long ago the things that have not yet been done." (Isaiah 46:10) By heeding Jehovah's counsel, we can benefit from his matchless wisdom and foresight.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

The Bible also compares those who trust in God to eagles: "Those hoping in Jehovah will re-

gain power. They will soar on wings like eagles." (Isaiah 40:31) An eagle soars by using thermals, or columns of rising warm air. Once the eagle locates a thermal, it spreads out its wings and circles around within the column of air, rising higher and higher. The eagle does not depend on its own strength to soar and glide long distances. Likewise, those who trust in Jehovah can look to him as the one who promises them "the power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7, 8.

"THE WAY A HEN GATHERS HER CHICKS"

Shortly before his death, Jesus paused to look at the Jewish capital city. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent to her," he sighed. "How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings! But you did not want it."—Matthew 23:37.

One of the strongest instincts among birds is their desire to protect their young. Birds that nest on the ground, such as domestic hens, must keep a sharp lookout for danger. If the hen spots a hawk circling overhead, she emits a loud warning call, at which the chicks quickly run to safety beneath her wings. There the fledgling chicks can also find shelter from the hot sun and heavy rain. Jesus likewise wanted to offer the inhabitants of Jerusalem spiritual shelter and protection. Today, Jesus invites us to come to him for refreshment and protection from the burdens and anxieties of our daily life.—Matthew 11:28, 29.

Truly, there is much that we can learn from these winged creatures. As you observe their behavior, try to recall the Scriptural metaphors that speak of them. May the swallow help you to appreciate Jehovah's house of worship. May you look to God for hope that can enable you to soar like an eagle. May you come to Jesus for spiritual truth that safeguards you the way a mother hen does her chicks. And may the stork remind you to stay alert to the significance of world events that mark our time. ■



Lefèvre d'Étaples

HE WANTED THE COMMON PEOPLE TO KNOW GOD'S WORD

ON A Sunday morning in the early 1520's, the inhabitants of Meaux, a small town near Paris, could not believe what they heard in church. They had listened to the reading of the Gospels in their mother tongue—in French instead of Latin!

The Bible translator who was behind this initiative, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Latin, *Jacobus Faber Stapulensis*), later wrote to a close friend: "You can scarcely imagine with what ardor God is moving the minds of the simple [people] in some places to embrace his Word."

At that time, the Catholic Church and the theologians in Paris opposed the use of translations of the Bible in common languages. So, what moved Lefèvre to translate the Bible into French? And how did he manage to help the common people to understand God's Word?

SEEKING THE TRUE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES

Before becoming a Bible translator, Lefèvre had dedicated himself to restoring the original meaning of classical works of philosophy and theology. He noted that ancient texts had often been corrupted by centuries of misleading renderings and errors. In his search for the true meaning of ancient writings, he started studying closely the standard Bible of the Catholic Church, the Latin *Vulgate*.

His earnest study of the Scriptures led him to the conclusion that "study of divine truth alone

promises . . . the highest happiness." Therefore, Lefèvre turned away from studying philosophy and devoted all his energy to translating the Bible.

In 1509, Lefèvre published a comparative study of five different Latin versions of the Psalms,* including his own correction of the *Vulgate*. Unlike theologians of his time, he endeavored to find the "natural sense" of Bible passages. His method of interpreting the Scriptures had a strong influence on other Bible scholars and reformers.—See the box "How Martin Luther Was Influenced by Lefèvre."

Born a Catholic, Lefèvre was convinced that a renewal of the church could be possible only if the Scriptures were properly taught to ordinary people. But how would the common people benefit from the Scriptures at a time when those sacred writings were mostly in Latin?

A BIBLE TRANSLATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Lefèvre's deep love for God's Word made him determined to make it accessible to the greatest number of people. To achieve that goal, in June 1523, he published a French translation of the Gospels in two pocket-size volumes. This small format—which cost half the price of a standard edition—made it easier for people with little means to obtain a copy of the Bible.

* The *Fivefold Psalter* gave five versions of the Psalms in separate columns and included a table of titles applying to God, including the Tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters representing God's name.

The response of the common people was immediate and enthusiastic. Both men and women were so eager to read Jesus' words in their mother tongue that the first 1,200 copies printed were out of stock after just a few months.

A COURAGEOUS STAND FOR THE BIBLE

In the introduction to the Gospels, Lefèvre explained that he had translated them into French so that "the simple members" of the church "can be as certain of evangelical truth as those who have it in Latin." But why was Lefèvre so eager to help the common people to get back to what the Bible teaches?

Lefèvre was well-aware that human teachings and philosophy had corrupted the Catholic Church. (Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:8) And he was convinced that the time had arrived for the Gos-

pels to be "purely proclaimed throughout the world, so that people may no longer be led astray by alien doctrines of men."

Lefèvre also endeavored to expose the faulty arguments of those who opposed the translation of the Bible into French. He denounced their hypocrisy, saying: "How will they teach [the people] to observe all that Jesus Christ commanded, if they are quite unwilling that the simple folk should see and read the Gospel of God in their own language?"—Romans 10:14.

PSALT. VET.		PSALT. CONCIL.	234
Hac subiecta figura 13 superposita nomina de hebraica patient, et quomodo latine et grecis, vulgo exponi solant.			
Nomina de HEBRAICA		LATINE GRAECE.	
1	אֵל EL	Fortis	Ιεχυστός
2	אֱלֹהִים ELOHIM	Deus	Θεός
3	אֱלֹהֶה ELOHE	Deus	Θεός
4	אֱלֹהָות SEBAOTH	Exercitus	Δυνάμεων
5	אֵלִיון ELION	Excellus	ὑψηλός
6	אֵלְהָסֶרְעִיאֵה EIEHASERIEH	Sum quifia	ἴμιτος
7	אֵשֶׁר ASREIEH	Quiest	οὖμ
8	אֲדֹנָי ADONAI	Dominus	κύριος
9	אֵת IA	Dominus	κύριος
10	אֵהוָה IEHVAH	Dominus	κύριος
11	אֵלָה SADAI	Oipotens	παντοδύναμος
12	אֵלָה ELOHA	Deus	Θεός
13	אֵת SVR	Deus	Θεός
	אֵלָה ABIR	Deus	Θεός

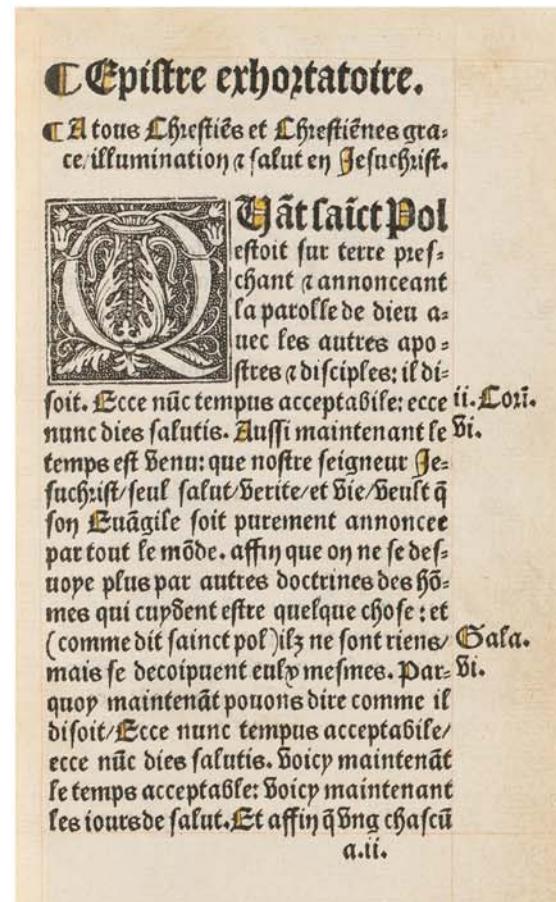
Hec pro preindicatione. Non ad litteram labor nother conseruentur,
1. **B**atus vir qui non abiit in cõsilio ipsorum/
& in via peccatorum non fleret.
& in cathedra peccatice non fletur.
2. **S**ed in lege dominicin volutias eius;
& in lege eius meditabitur die ac nocte.

Batus vir qui non abiit in cõsilio ipsorum/
& in via peccatorum non fleret.
& in cathedra peccatice non fletur.
Sed in lege DOMINI volutias eius;
& in lege eius meditabitur die ac nocte.

Tetragram.
תְּהָרֵב
maison.
1513

▲ Table of titles applying to God in the Psalms, as found in the *Fivefold Psalter*, 1513 Edition

The introduction to the Gospels confirmed Lefèvre's desire to make the Bible accessible to all in their mother tongue ▶



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Not surprisingly, theologians at the University of Paris—the Sorbonne—soon attempted to silence Lefèvre. In August 1523, they objected to vernacular translations of and commentaries on the Bible, considering them “harmful to the Church.” Had it not been for the intervention of French King Francis I, Lefèvre would have been condemned as a heretic.

THE “SILENT” TRANSLATOR COMPLETED HIS WORK

Lefèvre did not allow heated debates on his works to distract him from translating the Bible. In 1524, after completing his translation of the Greek Scriptures (the so-called New Testament), he released a French version of the Psalms so that believers might pray “with greater devotion and deeper feeling.”

Theologians at the Sorbonne lost no time in going through Lefèvre’s works with a fine-tooth comb. They soon ordered that his translation of the Greek Scriptures be burned publicly, and they denounced some other writings as “favoring the heresy of Luther.” When the theologians summoned him to justify his views, Lefèvre decided to remain “silent” and fled to Strasbourg. There, he discreetly continued translating the

Bible. Even though some considered his stance to be lacking courage, he believed that it was the best way to respond to those who had no appreciation for the precious “pearls” of Bible truth.

—Matthew 7:6.

Almost one year after his flight, King Francis I appointed Lefèvre tutor of his four-year-old son, Charles. This assignment gave Lefèvre plenty of time to finish his translation of the Bible. In 1530, his translation of the complete Bible was printed outside France, in Antwerp, with the approval of Emperor Charles V.*

GREAT HOPES, LAST REGRETS

Throughout his life, Lefèvre hoped that the church would abandon human traditions and return to the pure knowledge of the Scriptures. He strongly believed in “the right, indeed, the duty, of every Christian to read and learn the Bible personally.” That is why he worked so hard to make the Bible accessible to all. Although his desire to see the church reform itself failed to materialize, Lefèvre’s legacy is undisputed—he helped the common people to know God’s Word. ■

* Five years later, in 1535, French translator Olivétan released his version of the Bible based on the original languages. He relied heavily on Lefèvre’s works when translating the Greek Scriptures.



How Martin Luther Was Influenced by Lefèvre

Martin Luther was still an obscure monk when he carefully studied Lefèvre’s works. The young Luther noted that Lefèvre expounded Biblical passages in a clear and simple way, without resorting to fancy allegories as did the scholars of his time. Lefèvre’s method of interpretation exerted a strong

influence on Luther as well as on Bible translator William Tyndale and Reformer John Calvin. Although Lefèvre remained a Catholic until his death, his works marked a turning point in Bible translation and paved the way to the Reformation.

Embracing Bible Truth Without Hands and Arms

AS TOLD BY BERNHARD MERTEN

When people feel insecure, they like to hold on to something. I cannot do that, because I have neither hands nor arms. I was seven years old when my arms had to be amputated to save my life.



My mother was 17 when I was born in 1960. My father left us before my birth. Mother and I lived with my grandparents in Burg, a small town in the former German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. Many people were atheists, and my family also held that view. God did not mean anything to us.

As I grew up, I enjoyed Grandfather's attention. He got me involved in many projects, such as sending me up trees to saw off branches. As a child, I loved those adventures. My life was carefree and happy.

AN ACCIDENT CHANGES MY LIFE

Something dreadful happened one day when I was seven. I had just started my second year at school. On my way home, I climbed an electricity pylon. When I was 25 feet (8 m) above the ground, I was struck unconscious by a powerful electric arc flash. When I woke up in the hospital, I could not feel my arms. They had been severely burned, and the injuries were so horrific that both arms had to be amputated to prevent blood poi-

soning. As you can imagine, my mother and my grandparents were devastated. Being a child, however, I did not fully understand how the loss of my arms would eventually affect my life.

After my hospital stay, I went back to school. Children poked fun at me, pushed me around, and threw things at me because I could not defend myself. I felt really hurt by their cruel and patronizing remarks. Finally, I was sent to the Birkenwerder School for the Disabled, which was like a boarding school for physically disabled children. Since the school was far away from home, my mother and grandparents could not afford to visit me. I saw them only during vacation. For the next ten years, I grew up without my mother and grandparents.

GROWING UP WITHOUT HANDS AND ARMS

I learned to perform many tasks anew by using my feet. Can you imagine what it is like to eat with a fork or a spoon held with your toes? Somehow I managed to develop that skill. I also learned to



Bringing good news to others makes me happy

brush my teeth and comb my hair using my feet. I even started to gesture with my feet as I talked to people. Yes, my feet became my hands.

Growing into my teens, I loved to read science fiction. Sometimes I imagined having high-tech arms that would allow me to do everything. At age 14, I began to smoke. I felt that it gave me self-confidence and made me feel that I was like everyone else. It was as if I were saying: ‘Yes, I can do that too. Smokers are grown-ups—with or without arms.’

I kept myself busy and got involved in social activities. I became a member of the Free German Youth, a State-sponsored socialist youth organization, and served as secretary, a responsible position among local members. I also joined a singing club, did poetry sessions, and participated in sports for the disabled. After an apprenticeship, I started to work in a company in our town. As I grew up, I wore my prosthesis more and more because I wanted to be a complete man.

EMBRACING BIBLE TRUTH

One day while I was waiting for the train to go to work, a man approached me. He asked me if I could imagine that God could let me have my two arms back again. I was puzzled. Of course I wanted my arms back, but to me that sounded far-fetched and impossible! As an atheist, I was convinced that God did not exist. From that moment on, I found a way to avoid that man.

Some time later, a work colleague invited me to visit her family. During coffee, her parents began to talk about God—Jehovah God. For the first time, I heard that God has a name. (Psalm 83:18) However, inwardly I objected: ‘There cannot be a God, no matter what his name is. I will prove these people wrong.’ Confident of my views, I agreed to Bible discussions. To my surprise, however, I was unable to prove that God does not exist.

My atheist mind-set was gradually falling apart as we examined Bible prophecies. Many divine predictions have come true, although written hundreds or even thousands of years in advance. During one Bible discussion, we compared current world conditions with prophecies found in Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 21, and 2 Timothy chapter 3. Just as a combination of symptoms can help a doctor reach the correct diagnosis of a patient’s illness, the combination of events mentioned in those prophecies helped me to see that we are living in what the Bible calls “the last days.”* I was awestruck. Those prophecies were being fulfilled in front of my eyes.

I was convinced that what I was learning was the truth. I began to pray to Jehovah God and gave up smoking—although I had been a heavy smoker for more than a decade. I continued to

* For a detailed discussion of the sign of the last days, see chapter 9, “Are We Living in the ‘Last Days?’” in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.

study the Bible for about a year. On April 27, 1986, I was baptized secretly in a bathtub, since at the time the Witnesses were under ban in East Germany.

GIVING TO OTHERS

Because of the ban, we met in small groups in private homes and I knew only a few fellow believers. Unexpectedly, I was allowed by the State authorities to travel to West Germany, where the Witnesses were not banned. For the first time in my life, I was able to attend Bible conventions and see thousands of my brothers and sisters. That was a unique experience.

After the Berlin Wall came down, the ban on Jehovah's Witnesses was lifted. Finally, we could worship Jehovah God in freedom. I wanted to increase my share in the preaching work. However, I dreaded contact with strangers. I felt inferior because of my disability and my spending most of my childhood in a home for the disabled. But in 1992, I tried preaching for 60 hours in one month. I did well and experienced much joy. So I decided to do that every month and managed to continue for about three years.

I keep in mind the words in the Bible: "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" (2 Corinthians 11:29)

With my loving wife, Elke



In spite of my disabilities, I still have a mind and a voice. So I try my best to help others. Having no arms, I can fully empathize with those who have limitations. I know what it feels like to want to do something desperately that you just cannot do. I try to encourage those who feel that way. Giving to others in such a way makes me happy.

JEHOVAH HELPS ME EVERY DAY

I have to admit, though, that at times I am a bit down. I simply want to be a complete man. I can perform many everyday tasks myself, but they take a lot more time, effort, and energy than they normally would. My motto for each day is: "For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Philippians 4:13) Each day, Jehovah gives me the power I need to get "normal" things done. I have learned that Jehovah has not given up on me. That is why I never want to give up on him.

Jehovah has blessed me with a family—the very thing I missed in my childhood and youth. I have a wonderful wife, Elke, who is loving and compassionate. In addition, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have become my spiritual brothers and sisters—a global family.

I also feel comforted by God's promise of Paradise, in which he will make "all things new," including my arms. (Revelation 21:5) I understand this promise better when I contemplate what Jesus did while he was on earth. In an instant, he healed crippled limbs and even restored a man's ear that had been cut off. (Matthew 12:13; Luke 22:50, 51) Jehovah's promises and Jesus' miracles have convinced me that soon I will be a complete man again.

The greatest blessing, however, is having come to know Jehovah God. He has become my father and my friend, my comforter and my strength. I feel the same way King David did, who wrote: "Jehovah is my strength . . . I have received his help, and my heart rejoices." (Psalm 28:7) This wonderful truth I want to hold on to all my life. I embrace it even without hands and arms. ■



Does God answer all prayers?

WOULD YOU SAY THAT HE ANSWERS

THE PRAYERS OF . . .

- Everyone
- Some people
- No one

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“Jehovah is near to all . . . who call on him in truth.”—Psalm 145:18.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- God ignores the prayers of those who rebel against him. (Isaiah 1:15) However, they can “set matters straight” with him by changing their ways.—Isaiah 1:18.
- For God to answer a prayer, it must be in harmony with his requirements as found in the Bible.
—1 John 5:14.

What Does the
Bible Really Teach?



Please send me a copy of *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

For more information, see chapter 17 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

Also available at www.jw.org

Do we have to pray in a special position?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that they must always kneel, bow their head, or place their hands together when praying. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

God has accepted prayers from those who “sat down” or “stood up” or those who were “lying prostrate” or “kneeling down.”(1 Chronicles 17:16; 2 Chronicles 30:27; Ezra 10:1; Acts 9:40) He does not require a specific bodily position when we pray.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- God listens to those who are humble.
—Psalm 138:6.
- You can pray in any language, or even silently.
—2 Chronicles 6:32, 33; Nehemiah 2:1-6.

LANGUAGE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

For mailing address, see page 2

