

AUGUST 1, 2013

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A man in a dark suit and checkered shirt is shown from the chest up, leaning over a laptop. He has a distressed expression, with his right hand covering his face and eyes. His left hand is on the laptop keyboard. The background is dark and out of focus.

PORNOGRAPHY  
HARMLESS OR TOXIC?

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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# Pornography

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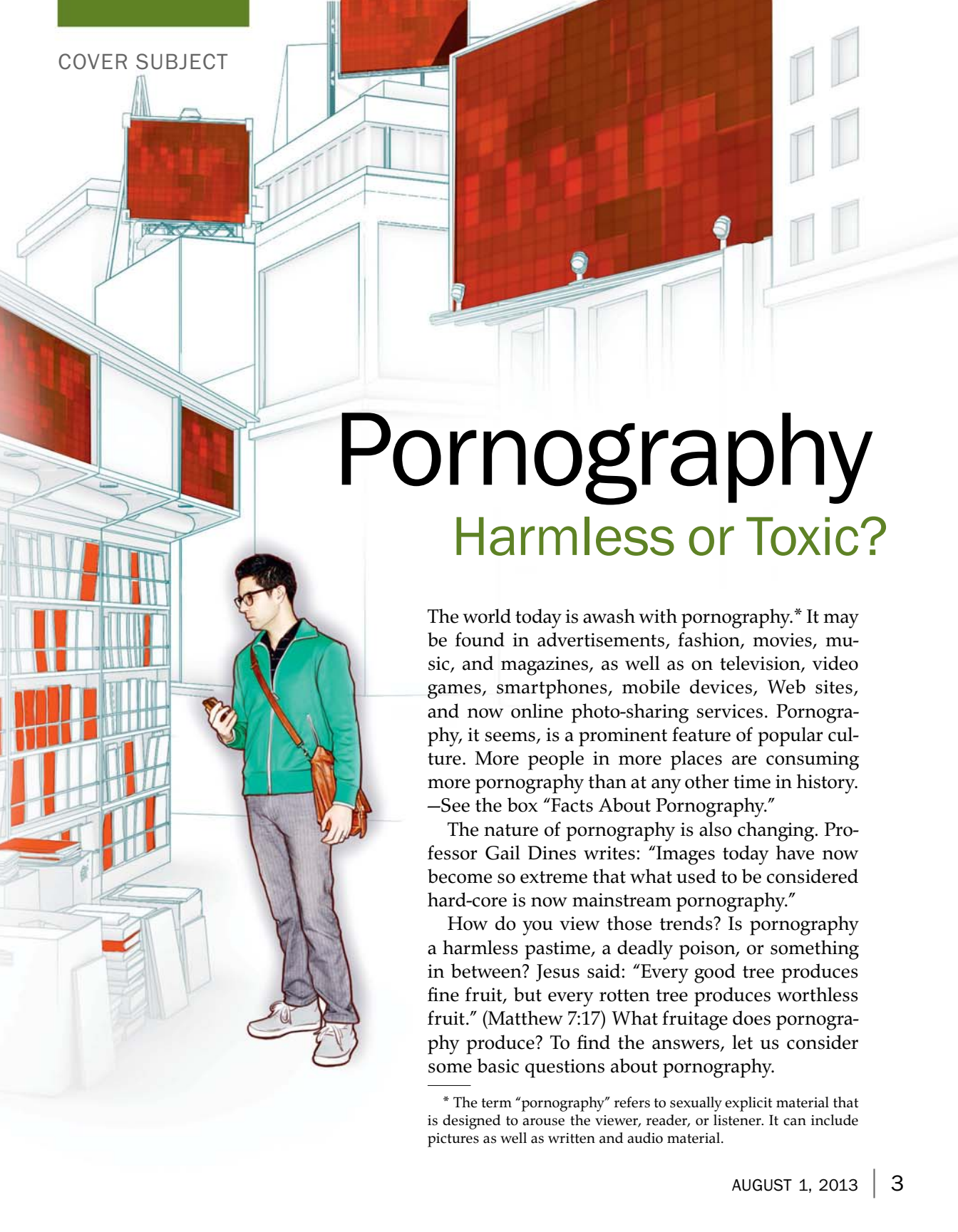


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# Pornography

## Harmless or Toxic?

The world today is awash with pornography.\* It may be found in advertisements, fashion, movies, music, and magazines, as well as on television, video games, smartphones, mobile devices, Web sites, and now online photo-sharing services. Pornography, it seems, is a prominent feature of popular culture. More people in more places are consuming more pornography than at any other time in history. —See the box “Facts About Pornography.”

The nature of pornography is also changing. Professor Gail Dines writes: “Images today have now become so extreme that what used to be considered hard-core is now mainstream pornography.”

How do you view those trends? Is pornography a harmless pastime, a deadly poison, or something in between? Jesus said: “Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit.” (Matthew 7:17) What fruitage does pornography produce? To find the answers, let us consider some basic questions about pornography.

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\* The term “pornography” refers to sexually explicit material that is designed to arouse the viewer, reader, or listener. It can include pictures as well as written and audio material.



## How does pornography affect individuals?

**WHAT EXPERTS SAY:** Pornography is highly addictive, with some researchers and therapists even likening it to crack cocaine.

Brian,\* who was hooked on Internet pornography, relates: “Nothing would stop me. I felt like I was in some sort of trance. I would literally shake and develop pains in my head. I struggled to stop, but years later I was still addicted.”

People who indulge in pornography often cover up their habit. They are secretive and deceitful. Not surprisingly, many suffer from feelings of isolation, shame, anxiety, depression, and anger. In some cases, they even develop suicidal tendencies. “My mood became self-absorbed and desperate,” says Serge, who downloaded porn to his mobile phone almost daily. “I felt worthless, guilty, alone, and trapped. I was too embarrassed and scared to seek help.”

Even a fleeting or accidental brush with pornography can have a negative impact. Testifying before a U.S. Senate committee, Dr. Judith Reisman, a leading researcher on pornography, said: “Pornographic visual images imprint and alter the brain, triggering an instant, involuntary, but lasting, biochemical memory trail [that is] difficult or impossible to delete.” Susan, 19, who was exposed to pornographic Web sites, relates: “The images are engraved on my mind. They pop up unexpectedly. It feels like I will never completely be able to erase them.”

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography enslaves and wreaks havoc on its victims.—2 Peter 2:19.

\* Names in this article have been changed.



## How does pornography affect families?

**WHAT EXPERTS SAY:** “Couples and families break up over porn.”—*The Porn Trap*, by Wendy and Larry Maltz.

Pornography damages marriages and families by

- Undermining marital trust, intimacy, and love.—Proverbs 2:12-17.
- Promoting selfishness, emotional aloofness, and dissatisfaction with one’s mate.—Ephesians 5:28, 29.
- Fueling unhealthy sexual fantasies and cravings.—2 Peter 2:14.
- Tempting users to force objectionable sex practices on their mate.—Ephesians 5:3, 4.
- Promoting emotional and physical infidelity.—Matthew 5:28.

The Bible tells marriage mates not to “deal treacherously” with each other. (Malachi 2:16) Infidelity is the kind of treachery that can devastate



a marriage and lead to separation and divorce. Such breakups, in turn, harm the children from the marriage.

Pornography can also hurt children more directly. Brian, mentioned earlier, explains: "When I was about ten, I accidentally found my father's pornographic magazines while playing hide-and-seek. I started looking at them secretly, not really understanding why I was attracted to such images. That started a destructive cycle that lasted way into my adult years." Studies show that pornography can influence adolescents to become sexually active at younger ages and also to become promiscuous, sexually violent, and emotionally and psychologically unstable.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography poisons loving relationships and ultimately brings heartache and pain.—Proverbs 6:27.

## FACTS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY



### EVERY SECOND:

Nearly **30,000** persons view pornographic Web sites.



### EVERY MINUTE:

Internet users send more than **1.7 MILLION** pornographic e-mails.



### EVERY HOUR:

Nearly **TWO** hard-core pornographic videos are released in the United States.



### EVERY DAY:

An average of more than **TWO MILLION** pornographic movies are rented in the United States alone.



### EVERY MONTH:

Nearly **9 out of 10** young men and 3 out of 10 young women in the United States view pornography.



### EVERY YEAR:

The global pornography industry generates an estimated **\$100 BILLION** (U.S.).

## What does the Bible say about pornography?

**GOD’S WORD SAYS:** “Deden, therefore, your body members . . . as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” —Colossians 3:5.

Simply put, Jehovah\* God hates pornography. This is not because he is prudish about sex. He created our sexual powers and purposed that marriage mates use them for the sake of pleasing one another, drawing close emotionally, and sharing the wonder of bringing children into the world.—James 1:17.

Why, then, can we assert that Jehovah feels so strongly about pornography? Consider just a few reasons.

- He knows that pornography can wreck lives.—Ephesians 4:17-19.
- He loves us and wants to protect us from harm.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.
- Jehovah wants to safeguard marriages and families.—Matthew 19:4-6.
- He wants us to be morally clean and to respect the rights of others.—1 Thessalonians 4:3-6.
- He wants us to respect our procreative powers and use them in an honorable way.—Hebrews 13:4.
- Jehovah knows that pornography reflects a warped, selfish, satanic view of sex.—Genesis 6:2; Jude 6, 7.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Pornography damages a person’s friendship with God.—Romans 1:24.

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



Jehovah, however, has great compassion for those wanting to escape pornography’s grip. The Bible states: “Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:8, 14) He invites humble ones to turn to him to “obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time.”—Hebrews 4:16; see the box “Breaking Free From Pornography.”

Countless individuals have accepted God’s help. Is his help effective? Notice what the Bible says about some who overcame bad habits: “You have been washed clean, . . . you have been sanctified, . . . you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11) Like the apostle Paul, such ones can declare: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.”—Philippians 4:13.

Susan, who overcame her addiction to pornography, declares: “Jehovah is the only one who can help you get back on track. If you ask for his help and guidance, you can gain a clean standing before him. He will *not* let you down.”



## Breaking Free From Pornography

Do you know someone who is struggling to escape pornography addiction? Consider some steps that have helped many to break free.

### 1. Pray to God.

“The most important step in overcoming the snare of pornography is to ask for Jehovah’s help in prayer.”—Franz.

Jehovah can give the person holy spirit, empowering him “both to will and to act.” (Philippians 2:13) If the person yields to its leading, it will help him to conquer wrong “passions and desires.”—Galatians 5:16, 24.

### 2. Get help from others.

“Pornography addiction is so secretive and shameful that you feel you can’t ask for help. You think you can beat it by yourself. But that is not true. You can beat it only with help. So I swallowed my pride and opened up to my wife. I also sought the help of a trusted friend. It was the

hardest thing that I have ever had to do, but I got the help I needed.”—Yoshi.

Confiding in others will take courage and determination. Yet, it is a vital step toward conquering the addiction and reconnecting with loved ones. Susan, mentioned earlier, relates: “Afterward, I felt a huge gush of relief. Those moments were painful, but they resulted in feelings of peace and approval.”—James 5:16.

### 3. Identify and avoid potential triggers.

What situations, thoughts, or emotions trigger wrong desires? Surfing the Internet? Watching late-night TV? Reading magazines? Visiting the beach? Being hungry, angry, alone, or tired? “Identify your weaknesses, and avoid them like the plague,” says Sven. Jesus said: “If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you.”—Matthew 5:29.

“When I’m tempted to gaze lustfully at a woman, I immediately pray to Jehovah and force my eyes to look away,” says Franz. The faithful Bible patriarch Job said: “I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a girl.”—Job 31:1, *Today’s English Version*.

### 4. Strengthen spirituality.

“Fill your mind with wholesome thoughts, and fill your life with spiritual activities,” adds Franz.

The Bible states: “Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things . . . , and the God of peace will be with you.”—Philippians 4:8, 9. ■





AS TOLD BY ALLAN HANCOCK

YEAR BORN:

1941

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

AUSTRALIA

HISTORY:

SMOKING,  
ALCOHOL ABUSE



## “I began to think seriously about where my life was headed”

**MY PAST:** I grew up in Warialda, a small country town in New South Wales. Warialda is a diverse farming community where sheep and cattle are raised and grain and small crops are grown. The town is clean, with little crime.

Being the eldest of ten children, at the age of 13, I started working to help provide for the family. Since I had little secular education, I worked on farms. By the age of 15, I was working as a stockman, breaking in horses.

Working on the farms was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, I really enjoyed the work, as well as the environment. I would sit by the campfire at night and look at the moon and the starry sky as the evening breezes brought in the scents of the surrounding bush. I remember thinking that Someone must have created all those wonderful things. On the other hand, I was exposed to some harmful influences on the farms. I often heard swearing, and I had easy access to cigarettes. Smoking and swearing soon became a regular part of my life.

When I turned 18, I moved to Sydney. I tried to get into the army but was rejected because of my lack of secular education. I got a job and stayed in Sydney for a year. It was during that time that I first came in contact with Jehovah’s Witnesses. I accepted an invitation to attend one of their meetings, and I immediately recognized that their teachings had the ring of truth.

Shortly thereafter, however, I decided to go back to the bush. I ended up in Goondiwindi, Queensland. I found a job, got married and, unfortunately, also started drinking.

My wife and I had two children. After my sons were



born, I began to think seriously about where my life was headed. I remembered what I had heard at that meeting of the Witnesses in Sydney and decided to do something about it.

I found an old issue of *The Watchtower*, which contained the address of the Australia branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. I sent a letter asking for help. In response, a kind and loving Witness came to visit. Soon he was studying the Bible with me.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** As I studied the Bible, I came to see that I needed to make big changes in my life. One Bible verse that especially struck me was 2 Corinthians 7:1. That verse encourages us to "cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh."

I decided that I would quit smoking and stop abusing alcohol. It was not easy to make those changes, as these habits had been a part of my life for a long time. But I was determined to live in a way that pleases God. The biggest help was applying the principle recorded at Romans 12:2: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over." I realized that in order to change my habits, I needed to change my thinking and to see my habits the way that God does—as harmful. With his help, I succeeded in giving up smoking and the abuse of alcohol.

**"I realized that in order to change my habits, I needed to change my thinking"**

Most challenging, though, was my struggle to quit swearing. I knew the Bible counsel recorded at Ephesians 4:29: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth." Even so, I didn't succeed immediately in cleaning up my language. I found it helpful to meditate on the words of Isaiah 40:26. Regarding the starry heavens, that verse reads: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bring-



ing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing." I reasoned that if God had the power to create the vast universe—which I so loved to look at—surely he could give me the strength to make changes in order to please him. With much prayer and effort, I gradually brought my speech under control.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** As a stockman, I hadn't had much opportunity to converse with people, as there were few people around on the farms where I worked. Yet, through the training provided at meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have learned how to express myself. Among other things, that training has enabled me to talk to others about the good news of God's Kingdom. —Matthew 6:9, 10; 24:14.

For the past several years, I've enjoyed serving as an elder in the congregation. I count it a privilege to do whatever I can to help my fellow believers. My greatest blessing, though, is being united in serving Jehovah along with my faithful, loving wife and our beautiful children.

I thank Jehovah for allowing me—someone with little education—to be taught by him. (Isaiah 54:13) I agree completely with the words of Proverbs 10:22, which reads: "The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich." My family and I look forward to learning more about Jehovah and serving him forever. ■

## Why are some Bible characters left unnamed?

In the Bible book of Ruth, a man who refused to perform his duty according to the Mosaic Law is simply called So-and-so. (Ruth 4:1-12) Should we conclude that all unnamed Bible characters are likewise marred by bad traits or are too insignificant to be named?

No. Consider a different example. To prepare for his final Passover meal, Jesus told his disciples to “go into the city to So-and-so [“a certain man,” *The New English Bible*]” and get things ready at his home. (Matthew 26:18) Are we to assume that the man referred to as “So-and-so” in this verse was a bad man or that he was too insignificant to be named? Not at all; the “certain man” mentioned here no doubt was a disciple of Jesus. Since his name was not vital to the account, it was omitted.

Furthermore, the Bible record contains the names of many wicked individuals; it also contains examples of many faithful people who go unnamed. For instance, the name of Eve, the first woman, is well-known. Yet, her selfishness and disobedience contributed to the sin of Adam, which cost us all a terrible price. (Romans 5:12) By contrast, Noah’s wife goes unnamed in the Scriptures, but we owe much to her selfless, obedient spirit in supporting her husband in his vital work. Clearly, the omission of her name is no indication of insignificance or of divine disfavor.

There are other unnamed individuals in the Bible record who played important—even heroic—roles in Jehovah’s purpose. Think of the little Israelite girl who was a slave in the house of Naaman, a Syrian army chief. She boldly spoke to her mistress, Naaman’s wife, about Jehovah’s prophet in Israel. This led to a great miracle. (2 Kings 5:1-14) The daughter of the Israelite judge Jephthah also set an outstanding exam-

ple of faith. She willingly gave up the prospect of marriage and childbearing in order to fulfill a vow that her father had made. (Judges 11:30-40) Similarly, there are composers of over 40 psalms who are left unnamed as well as unnamed prophets who faithfully carried out prominent assignments.—1 Kings 20:37-43.

Perhaps an even more impressive example is that of the faithful angels. There are hundreds of millions of them, yet only two are named in the Bible—Gabriel and Michael. (Daniel 7:10; Luke 1:19; Jude 9) The rest go unnamed in Bible accounts. For instance, an angel was asked by Manoah, the father of Samson: “What is your name, that when your word comes true we shall certainly do you honor?” The response? “Just why should you ask about my name?” Modestly, that angel refused to accept honor that was due only to God.—Judges 13:17, 18.

The Bible does not explain in each case why some individuals are named and others are not. But we can learn much from faithful individuals who served God without any prospect of fame or prominence. ■



# “His Invisible Qualities Are Clearly Seen”

Do you believe in God? If so, can you point to proof of his existence? The truth is that we are surrounded by evidence of a Creator who is wise, powerful, and loving. What is this evidence, and how compelling is it? For the answer, consider the words of the apostle Paul recorded in his letter to Christians in Rome.

Paul said: “His [God’s] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.” (Romans 1:20) The Creator left his imprint on his handiwork, as Paul pointed out. Let us take a closer look at Paul’s words.

God’s qualities could be seen “from the world’s creation onward,” notes Paul. In this context the Greek word rendered “world” does not refer to the planet Earth. Rather, it refers to humankind.\* Hence, Paul is saying that from the moment humans were created, they could see evidence of the Creator’s qualities in the things he made.

That evidence is all around us. It is not hidden in nature but is “clearly seen.” From the largest to the smallest, creation clearly reveals not only that there is a Creator but also that he has wonderful qualities. Does not the intelligent design so obvious in nature reveal to us God’s wisdom? Do not the starry heavens and the pounding surf reveal his power? Does not the variety of foods that delight our palate and the beauty of sunrises and sunsets reveal his love for mankind?—Psalm 104:24; Isaiah 40:26.

\* The Bible also speaks of “the world” as being guilty of sin and needing a savior, clearly showing that in such contexts the term applies to humankind and not the earth.—John 1:29; 4:42; 12:47.

How plain is the evidence? It is so clear that those who do not see it and who thus refuse to believe in God “are inexcusable.” One scholar illustrates it this way: Imagine a driver who ignores a sign that says “Detour—Turn Left.” A police officer stops him and starts writing him a ticket. The driver tries to argue that he did not see the sign. But his words carry little weight because the sign is in plain view and there is nothing wrong with the driver’s vision. Besides, as a driver, the responsibility for seeing and heeding such signs is

## The Creator left his imprint on his handiwork

his. So it is with the evidence of God in nature. That “sign” is in plain view. As reasoning creatures, we are capable of seeing it. There is no excuse for ignoring it.

Indeed, the book of creation reveals much about our Creator. But there is another book that reveals far more about him—the Bible. Through its pages we can learn the answer to this vital question: What is God’s purpose for our earth and the humans who inhabit it? Learning the answer to that question can help you to draw closer to the God whose “invisible qualities are clearly seen” in the world around us. ■

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR AUGUST  
Romans 1-16

# He Was Kept “Safe With Seven Others”

**N**OAH and his family huddled together as the rain came down in torrents. Just picture them, their features outlined in the gloom by the flickering light of an oil lamp, their eyes wide as they listened to the water cascading down onto the roof and lashing against the sides of the ark. The noise must have been overwhelming.

As Noah looked at the faces of his beloved family—his faithful wife and his three stalwart sons along with their wives—his heart no doubt swelled with gratitude. In that dark hour, he likely found comfort in seeing the people he loved the most right there with him. They were all safe and sound. Surely he led his family in a prayer of gratitude, raising his voice so that they could hear him above the din.

Noah was a man of great faith. It was because of Noah’s faith that his God, Jehovah, was moved to protect him and his family. (Hebrews 11:7) But did their need for faith end when the rain began to fall? On the contrary, they would urgently need that quality in the challenging days ahead. The same can be said of us in these tumultuous times. So let us see what we can learn from the faith of Noah.

## “FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS”

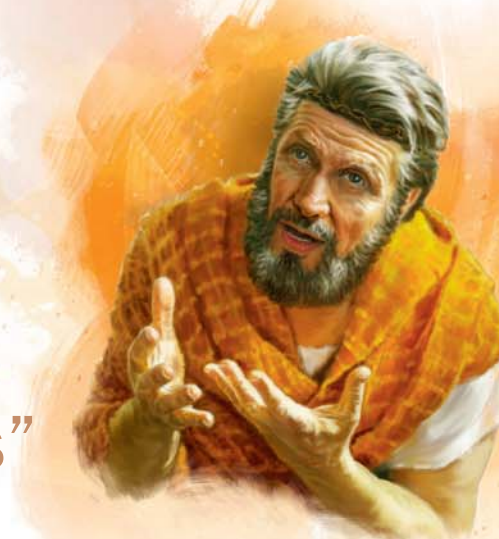
Outside, the downpour continued “for forty days and forty nights.” (Genesis 7:4, 11, 12) The water kept rising and rising and rising. As it did, Noah could see that his God, Jehovah, was simultaneously protecting righteousness and punishing wickedness.

The Flood checked a rebellion that had broken out among the angels. Influenced by Satan’s selfish attitude, many angels had forsaken their “proper dwelling place” in heaven to cohabit with women, producing hybrid offspring called Nephilim. (Jude 6; Genesis 6:4) Satan no doubt was filled with glee as that rebellion unfolded, for it further debased mankind, the pinnacle of Jehovah’s creation on earth.

However, as the floodwaters rose, the rebel angels were forced to shed their material bodies and return to the spirit realm, never again to assume fleshly form. They left their wives and their offspring behind to die in the floodwaters, along with that society of humans.

From the days of Enoch, almost seven centuries earlier, Jehovah had warned mankind that He would destroy wicked, ungodly people. (Genesis 5:24; Jude 14, 15) Since that time, people had only got worse, ruining the earth and filling it with violence. Now destruction was upon them. Did Noah and his family rejoice in those executions?

No! Nor did their merciful God. (Ezekiel 33:11) Jehovah had done everything to save as many as possible. He had commissioned Enoch’s warning, and he had ordered Noah to build the ark. Noah and his family had been laboring on that massive project for decades, in full view of the people. What is more, Jehovah directed Noah to serve as “a preacher of righteousness.” (2 Peter 2:5) Like Enoch before him, he warned people about the judgment that was coming upon the





world. And how did they respond? Jesus, who witnessed events from heaven, later recalled the people of Noah's day: "They took no note until the flood came and swept them all away."—Matthew 24:39.

Imagine what it must have been like for Noah and his family during those first 40 days after Jehovah shut the door to the ark. As the torrential rains kept drumming down on the ark day after day, the eight of them likely settled into some kind of routine—caring for one another, tending to their home, and seeing to the needs of the animals in their enclosures. At one moment, though, the whole immense structure shuddered and lurched. The ark was moving! Cradled on the rising waters, the ark was lifted up, higher and higher, until "it was floating high above the earth." (Genesis 7:17) What an amazing demonstration of the power of the Almighty God, Jehovah!

Noah must have been thankful—not only for his safety and that of his family but also for Jehovah's mercy in using them to warn the people who perished outside the ark. Those years of hard work may have seemed unrewarding at the time. People were so unresponsive! Think of it—Noah likely had brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces alive before the Flood came; yet, no one except his immediate family listened to him. (Genesis 5:30) Now, as those eight souls clung to safety in the ark, they surely drew comfort from thinking back on all the time they had spent giving people a chance to survive.

Jehovah has not changed since Noah's day. (Malachi 3:6) Jesus Christ explained that our times today are much like "the days of Noah." (Matthew 24:37) Ours is a marked era, a time of great trouble that is due to end in the destruction of a corrupt world system of things. Today, God's people are likewise delivering a warning message to all who will listen. Will you respond to that message? If you have already accepted the truth of that lifesaving message, will you join in sharing it with others? Noah and his family set the example for us all.



No doubt Noah took the lead in family worship even in the darkest times

## **“CARRIED SAFELY THROUGH THE WATER”**

As the ark drifted on that surging ocean, those within surely heard a symphony of squeaks and groans from the massive timbers. Was Noah worried about the size of the waves or the structural integrity of the ark? No. Such concerns may arise among skeptics today, but Noah was no skeptic. The Bible says: “By faith Noah . . . constructed an ark.” (Hebrews 11:7) Faith in what? Jehovah had made a covenant, a formal agreement, to bring Noah and all those with him safely through the Deluge. (Genesis 6:18, 19) Could not the One who created the universe, the earth, and all the living things on it keep that vessel intact? Of course! Noah rightly trusted in Jehovah to keep His promise. And, indeed, he and his family were “carried safely through the water.”—1 Peter 3:20.

After 40 days and 40 nights had passed, the rain finally stopped. By our calendar, it was sometime in December 2370 B.C.E. But the family’s adventure aboard the ark was far from over. That craft full of living creatures drifted alone on a global sea, well above even the tops of mountains. (Genesis 7:19, 20) We may imagine Noah organizing the heavier labor so that he and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—could keep all the animals fed, clean, and healthy. Of course, the same God who rendered all those wild creatures docile enough to enter the ark was able to keep them in such a state for the duration of the Flood.\*

Noah evidently kept a careful log of events. That record tells when the rains started and stopped. It also reveals that the waters overwhelmed the earth for 150 days. Finally, the waters began to abate. One momentous day, the ark gently came to rest on “the mountains of Ararat,” located in modern-day Turkey. That would have been in April 2369 B.C.E. It was 73 days later, in June, that the tops of the mountains became visible. Three months later, in September, Noah decided to remove some part of the ark’s covering,

or roof. Surely that heavy work was rewarded as light and fresh air poured in. Earlier, Noah also began testing the environment to see if it was safe and habitable. He released a raven, which came and went for a while, perhaps perching on the ark between flights; then Noah released a dove, which kept returning to him until it finally found a place to roost.—Genesis 7:24–8:13.

Noah’s routine no doubt focused still more on spiritual matters. We may well picture the family gathering regularly to pray together and to talk about their protective heavenly Father. Noah relied on Jehovah for every important decision. Even when Noah could see that the earth had finally “dried off”—after more than a year aboard the ark—he still did not unseal the door and lead an exodus from the confines of that vessel. (Genesis 8:14) No, he waited for word from Jehovah!

Family heads today can learn a great deal from that faithful man. He was orderly, industrious, patient, and protective of all those under his care. Above all, though, he considered the will of Jehovah God first in all things. If we imitate Noah’s faith in these respects, we will bring blessings to all those we love.

## **“GO OUT OF THE ARK”**

Finally, Jehovah’s command came. “Go out of the ark,” he told Noah, “you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.” Obediently, the family led the way, and all the animals followed. How? In a chaotic stampede? Not at all! The record states that “according to their families they went out of the ark.” (Genesis 8:15-19) Once outdoors, breathing in the fresh mountain air and looking out over the highlands of Ararat, Noah and his family saw before them a cleansed earth. Gone were the Nephilim, the violence, the rebellious angels, and that entire wicked society!\* Mankind had a chance to make a fresh start.

\* Some have raised the possibility that God kept the animals in a state of relative torpor, akin to hibernation, thus reducing their need for food. Whether he did so or not, he certainly kept his promise, ensuring the safety and survival of all aboard the ark.

\* Also gone from the earth was any trace of the original Garden of Eden, which was likely obliterated in the floodwaters. If so, the cherubs guarding the entrance were then free to return to heaven, their 1600-year assignment complete at last.—Genesis 3:22-24.



Noah and his family emerged from the ark onto a cleansed earth

Noah knew what to do. He started with worship. He built an altar and used some of the animals that God viewed as clean—which they had brought aboard in “sevens”—and offered up a burnt sacrifice to Jehovah. (Genesis 7:2; 8:20) Did that worship please Jehovah?

The Bible answers in these reassuring words: “Jehovah began to smell a restful odor.” The pain that had filled God’s heart when mankind was filling the world with violence was replaced by the restful, pleasant sensation of seeing a family of faithful worshippers on earth who were determined to carry out his will. Jehovah did not expect them to be perfect. The same verse continues: “The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up.” (Genesis 8:21) Consider how Jehovah further expressed his patient compassion for humankind.

God lifted the curse on the ground. Back in the days of the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God had pronounced that curse, making cultivation unusually difficult. Noah’s father, Lamech, had named his son Noah—probably meaning “Rest,” or “Consolation”—and had foretold that his son would lead mankind to a time of rest from that curse. Noah must have beamed when he learned that he would now see that prophecy fulfilled and that the earth would respond more readily to efforts to cultivate it. Little wonder that Noah soon took up farming!—Genesis 3:17, 18; 5:28, 29; 9:20.

At the same time, Jehovah gave all the descendants of Noah some clear, simple laws to guide

them in life—including a prohibition against murder and the misuse of blood. God also established a covenant with mankind, promising that he would never again bring a flood to destroy all life on earth. As a sign of the reliability of his word, Jehovah gave mankind its first glimpse of a glorious natural phenomenon—the rainbow. Down to this day, every rainbow we see offers a comforting reminder of Jehovah’s loving promise.—Genesis 9:1-17.

If Noah’s story were mere fiction, it might well have ended with that rainbow. But Noah was a real man, and his life was not so simple. In those days when longevity was the norm, that faithful man had to endure another 350 years, and those centuries brought him a lot of pain. He made a serious mistake when he gave in to drunkenness on one occasion, but that error was compounded when his grandson Canaan committed a more serious sin—a sin that brought grim consequences to Canaan’s family. Noah lived on long enough to see his descendants fall into such sins as idolatry and violence in the days of Nimrod. On the brighter side, though, Noah got to see his son Shem set a strong example of faith for his family.—Genesis 9:21-28; 10:8-11; 11:1-11.

Like Noah, we need to endure in a course of faith. When others around us ignore the true God or even leave off serving him, we need to stay on course as Noah did. Jehovah greatly values such faithful endurance. As Jesus Christ said, “he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved.”—Matthew 24:13. ■



## Does God listen to all prayers?

God listens to people from all nations. (Psalm 145: 18, 19) His Word, the Bible, encourages us to speak to him about any matter that concerns us. (Philippians 4:6, 7) Yet, some prayers displease God. For example, repeating memorized prayers does not please him.—**Read Matthew 6:7.**

Also, Jehovah dislikes the prayers of people who willfully disregard his law. (Proverbs 28:9) For example, in Bible times, God refused to listen to Israelites who were guilty of murder. Clearly, we must meet certain requirements to be heard by God.—**Read Isaiah 1:15.**

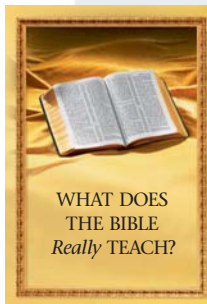
## What must we do to be heard by God?

We cannot approach God in prayer without faith. (James 1:5, 6) We must be convinced that he exists and cares about us. We can strengthen our faith by studying the Bible because true faith is based on the evidence and assurances found in God's Word.—**Read Hebrews 11:1, 6.**

We should pray sincerely and humbly. Even God's Son, Jesus, was humble when he prayed. (Luke 22:41, 42) So, rather than tell God what to do, we should try to understand his requirements by reading the Bible. Then we can pray in harmony with God's will.—**Read 1 John 5:14.**



Why may some prayers displease God?



For more information, see chapter 17 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Available for download at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org)

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