

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.

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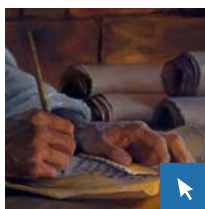
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A Story That Matters

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 excep-

tion rather than the rule." If the Bible had thus decayed, its message would have died with it.

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.

* 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.



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."

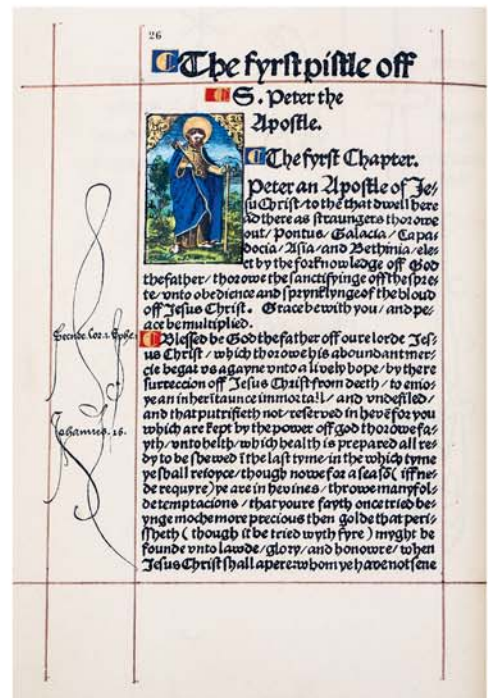
If the Bible's enemies had succeeded in stamping it out, its message would have disappeared.

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

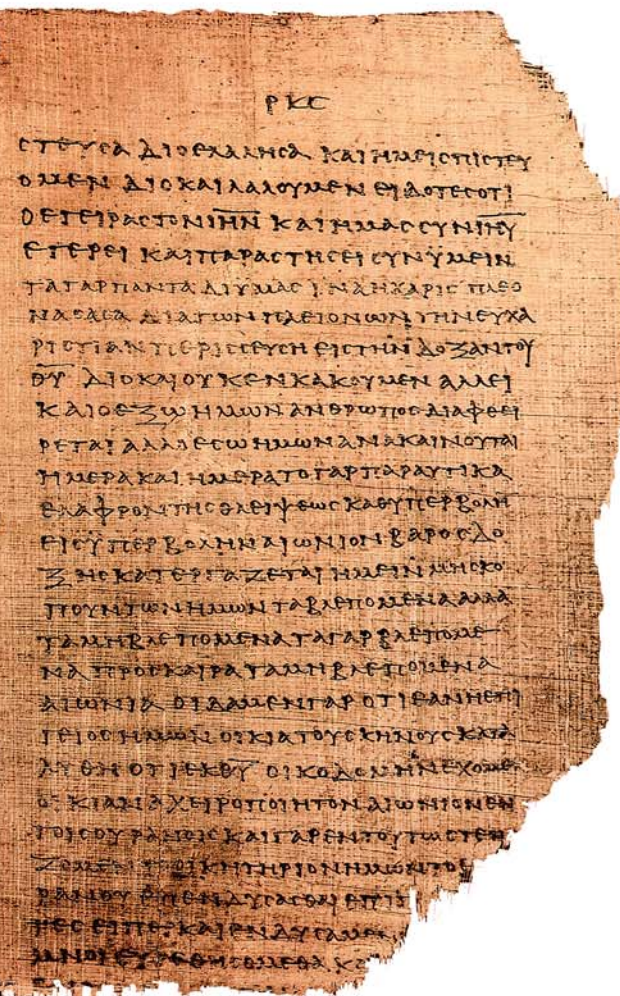
middle of the 15th century, portions of the Bible may have been available in as many as 33 languages. Thereafter, the Bible was translated and produced at an unprecedented pace.

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.”

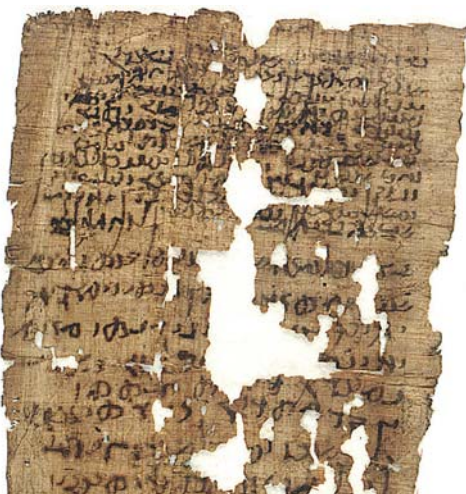
How different was Jesus' approach! Rather than chasing lepers away, he was willing to touch them—and even heal them.—Matthew 8:3. ■

On what grounds did Jewish religious leaders grant a divorce?

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. ■



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

Courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority

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 eradicat-



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)

* Names have been changed.



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 unitedly 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!

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. ■

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



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.



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What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information,
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