



# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Will You Accept  
**GOD'S GREATEST GIFT?**



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What is the greatest gift that God has ever given us?

*The Bible says: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son.”—John 3:16.*

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses why God sent Jesus to earth to die for us and how we can show appreciation for that gift.

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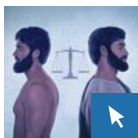
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### How Is Jesus’ Sacrifice “a Ransom for Many”?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

THE **WATCHTOWER**  
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH’S KINGDOM

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God’s heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God’s Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## COVER SUBJECT

# A Gift Unlike Any Other

THE boat-shaped pencil sharpener in Jordan's hand seems unremarkable. Yet, it is one of his most treasured possessions. Jordan explains, "Russell, an elderly family friend, gave it to me when I was very young." After Russell's death, Jordan learned that Russell had played a pivotal role in the lives of Jordan's grandfather and parents, reassuring them during difficult times. "Now that I have learned more about Russell," Jordan says, "this tiny gift is more valuable to me than ever."

As Jordan's experience illustrates, a gift may have little or no value in some people's eyes. To the appreciative recipient, though, it may be precious, even priceless. The Bible describes a gift of incalculable worth in these well-known words: "God loved the world so much that he gave his

only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

A gift that can bring the receiver everlasting life! Can there be any gift of greater worth? While some may not recognize the value of that gift, true Christians esteem it as "precious." (Psalm 49:8; 1 Peter 1:18, 19) Why, though, did God offer the life of his Son as a gift for the world?

The apostle Paul explains why in these words: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men." (Romans 5:12) The first man, Adam, sinned by knowingly disobeying God, and he thus suffered the penalty of death. Through Adam, death came upon all his descendants—the world of humankind.

“The wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) To free mankind from the condemnation of death, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to sacrifice his perfect life for the world. On the basis of that sacrifice, known as “the ransom,” all who exercise faith in Jesus will have everlasting life.—Romans 3:24.

Regarding all the blessings that God extends to his worshippers through Jesus Christ, Paul declares: “Thanks be to God for his indescribable

free gift.” (2 Corinthians 9:15) Yes, the ransom is so marvelous that we are incapable of fully describing it. But among all of God’s gracious gifts to humankind, why is the ransom especially remarkable? In what way is it unlike any of God’s other gifts?\* And how should we respond to it? We invite you to read the Bible’s answers to those questions in the following two articles.

\* Jesus willingly “surrendered his life for us.” (1 John 3:16) However, since that sacrifice was part of God’s purpose, this series of articles focuses on God’s role as the Provider of the ransom.

# God’s Greatest Gift

## Why So Precious?

What makes a gift truly precious to you? Likely four factors are involved:

(1) *who* gave the gift to you, (2) *why* it was given, (3) what was *sacrificed* to make the gift possible, and (4) whether the gift filled a real *need*. Giving thought to those factors can help us to deepen our appreciation for the ransom—God’s greatest gift.



### WHO GAVE IT?

Some gifts are precious because they were given to us by someone in authority or someone whom we highly esteem. Other gifts, though of little monetary value, are cherished because they come from a dear family member or a

trusted friend. This was the case with Russell’s gift to Jordan, mentioned in the preceding article. How does this apply to the gift of the ransom?

First, the Bible says that “God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him.” (1 John 4:9) That fact makes this gift truly precious. No one has greater author-

ity than God. Regarding him, a Hebrew psalmist wrote: “You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.” (Psalm 83:18) We could not receive a gift from a higher source.

Second, God is “our Father.” (Isaiah 63:16) How so? He gave us life. In addition, he loyally cares for us as a devoted father cares for his children. Addressing some of his ancient people as Ephraim, God asked: “Is Ephraim not a precious son to me, a beloved child? . . . My emotions are stirred for him. And I will surely have pity on him.” (Jeremiah 31:20) God feels the same way about his worshippers today. He is not only our almighty Creator but also our loyal Father and Friend. Does that not make any gift from him especially treasurable?





### WHY IS IT GIVEN?

Some gifts are precious because they were given, not out of obligation, but out of genuine love. A truly unselfish giver does not expect to be repaid for his kindness.

God gave his Son in our behalf because he loved us. “By this the love of God was revealed in our case, that God sent his only-begotten Son,” says the Bible. To what end? “So that we might gain life through him.” (1 John 4:9) Was God obligated to do so? Not at all! “The ransom paid by Christ Jesus” is an expression of God’s “undeserved kindness.”—Romans 3:24.

Why is God’s gift an act of “undeserved kindness”? The Bible explains: “God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Unselfish love prompted God to act in behalf of weak, helpless, sinful humans. We did not earn that love, nor can we ever repay him. His gift is the greatest expression of love in history.



### WHAT SACRIFICE WAS MADE?

Some gifts are precious because they represent a great sacrifice made by the giver. When a person is willing to part with something that is of great value to him and gives it to us, we especially treasure the gift because of the sacrifice.

God “gave his only-begotten Son.” (John 3:16) He could not have offered us anyone dearer to him. During the aeons that God was creating

the universe, Jesus worked alongside him and became “the one he was especially fond of.” (Proverbs 8:30) Jesus is God’s “beloved Son” and “the image of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:13-15) Never has a closer bond existed between two intelligent beings.

Yet, God “did not even spare his own Son.” (Romans 8:32) Jehovah gave his very best for us. No gift has cost him more.



### FILLING A DESPERATE NEED

Some gifts are precious because they fill a real need, even an urgent one. For example, how grateful you would be to someone who voluntarily paid for a lifesaving medical treatment that you could not

afford! That gift would be priceless indeed, would it not?

“Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ *all will be made alive.*” (1 Corinthians 15:22) As descendants of Adam, we are all “dying,” unable to escape the stings of sickness and death or to reconcile ourselves to God and be free of guilt before him. And as lowly humans, we cannot make ourselves or anyone else “alive.” The Bible points out: “None of them can ever redeem a brother or give to God a ransom for him . . . It is always beyond their reach.” (Psalm 49:7, 8) We desperately need help because we cannot afford the price of the ransom. Left alone, we would be helpless.

Out of his great love, Jehovah willingly paid for the lifesaving “treatment” we need, so that by means of Jesus “all will be made alive.” How does the ransom accomplish this? “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” Yes, faith

in the shed blood of Jesus opens the door to forgiveness of sin and to everlasting life. (1 John 1:7; 5:13) And what will the ransom do for our dead loved ones? “Since death came through a man, resurrection of the dead also comes through a man [Jesus].”—1 Corinthians 15:21.\*

No gift has ever been given by a higher source or motivated by greater love than was the sacrifice of Jesus. No one has ever given up as much for us as Jehovah God has. And no gift fills a greater need than the one sacrifice that frees us from sin and death. Yes, no gift can even approach the indescribable worth of the ransom.

\* For more information about God’s purpose to resurrect the dead, see chapter 7 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).



To learn more about Jesus’ sacrifice and how you can benefit from it, watch the short video *Remember Jesus’ Death* at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org). Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS. You can also scan this code with your mobile device.



## How Will You Respond to God’s Greatest Gift?

*“The love the Christ has compels us . . . He died for all so that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them.”—2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.*

AN EXTRAORDINARY gift should compel us to express gratitude. Jesus highlighted that lesson after he healed ten men of a debilitating disease that had no cure at the time. One of the ten men “turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice.” Jesus said: “All ten were cleansed, were they not? Where, then, are the other nine?” (Luke 17:12-17) The lesson? How quickly we can forget the kind deeds others do for us!

The ransom is unlike any other gift. It is by far the greatest gift ever given. How, then, should you respond to what God has done in your behalf?

**Come to know the Giver.** The ransom does not automatically bring everlasting life to all humans. Rather, Jesus said in prayer to God: “This means everlasting life, their coming to *know* you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) If someone told you that a man saved your life when you were yet a child, would you not be interested in learning more about that man and why he saved you? Jehovah God, who gave the lifesaving gift of the ransom, wants you not only to know who he is but also to come into a close relationship with him. “Draw

close to God,” the Bible urges, “and he will draw close to you.”—James 4:8.

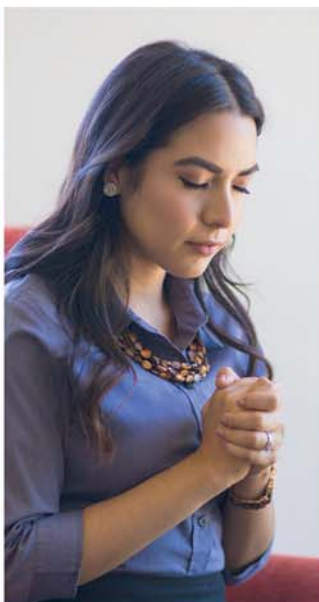
**Exercise faith in the ransom.** “The one who exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life.” (John 3:36) What does it mean to exercise faith? It means action; to show faith in the ransom requires action. (James 2:17) What kind of action? A gift becomes yours only when you reach out and accept it. So you must reach out and accept the ransom. How? Learn how God wants you to live, and then act accordingly.\* Pray to God for forgiveness and a clean conscience. Approach God in full confidence that the ransom guaran-

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\* The best way to come to know God and to draw close to him is to study his Word, the Bible. Learn how to do this by asking one of Jehovah’s Witnesses or by visiting our website, [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

tees an eternal future of peace, security, and prosperity for all who exercise faith in it!—Hebrews 11:1.

**Attend the Memorial of Jesus’ death.** Jesus instituted an annual event to remind us of the provision of the ransom. Regarding the observance of that event, he said: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) Jehovah’s Witnesses will commemorate Jesus’ death on **Tuesday, April 11, 2017**, after sundown. The program, which lasts about one hour, will include a discourse explaining the significance of Jesus’ death and how it brings present and future benefits. Last year, some 20 million people around the world attended the Memorial. We warmly invite you to join us in response to God’s greatest gift. ■



# Is Celibacy a Requirement for Christian Ministers?

RELIGIONS around the world—such as the Roman Catholic Church, the various Orthodox churches, Buddhism, and others—require celibacy of their religious leaders and clergy. On the other hand, many people feel that this practice lies at the root of the recent wave of sexual scandals involving clerics of various religions.

It is, therefore, reasonable to ask, Is celibacy a Scriptural requirement for Christian ministers? To answer that question, let us consider the origin and development of this practice as well as God's view of it.

## CELIBACY IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines celibacy as “the state of being unmarried and, therefore, sexually abstinent, usually in association with the role of a religious official or devotee.”

In a 2006 address to the Roman Curia, then Pope Benedict XVI linked compulsory celibacy to “a tradition that dates back to an epoch close to that of the Apostles.”

Celibacy, however, was not a religious custom practiced by first-century Christians. In fact, the apostle Paul, who lived in the first century, warned believers about men who would make “misleading inspired statements” and “forbid marriage.”—1 Timothy 4:1-3.

It was during the second century that the practice of celibacy began to make its way into the Western “Christian” churches. According to the book *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, this was “consistent with the new wave of sexual restraint that arose in the Roman Empire.”

In the following centuries, church councils and so-called Church Fathers promoted clerical

Jesus visited Peter's mother-in-law and cured her.—Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29-31





celibacy. They thought that sexual intercourse was defiling and incompatible with clerical duties. Nevertheless, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* points out that “as late as the 10th century many priests and even some bishops had wives.”

Clerical celibacy was enforced during the Lateran Councils of 1123 and 1139, which were held in Rome, and it has remained the official position of the Roman Catholic Church to the present day. With this measure, the church prevented the loss of power and income that resulted when priests who were married willed church property to their children.

### GOD’S VIEW OF CELIBACY

God’s view of celibacy is clearly expressed in his Word, the Bible. In it we read Jesus’ words about those who remained single, as he did, “on account of the Kingdom of the heavens.” (Matthew 19:12) Along the same line, the apostle Paul spoke about Christians who chose to follow his example of singleness “for the sake of the good news.”—1 Corinthians 7:37, 38; 9:23.

However, neither Jesus nor Paul were commanding ministers to be celibate. Jesus stated that singleness was a “gift” not possessed by all his followers. When Paul wrote about “those who have never married,” he frankly admitted: “I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion.”—Matthew 19:11; 1 Corinthians 7:25, footnote.

In addition, the Bible shows that many Christian ministers in the first century, including the apostle Peter, were married men. (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:5) In fact, on account of the prevalence of immoral sexual practices in the Roman world of that time, Paul wrote that if a Christian overseer was married, he was to be “a husband of one wife” and have “his children in subjection.”—1 Timothy 3:2, 4.

These were not celibate marriages, for the Bible candidly states that a “husband [ought to] give to his wife her due” and that married couples should “not deprive each other” of sexual intimacies. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) Clearly, celibacy is not required by God, nor is it compulsory for Christian ministers.

### FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOOD NEWS

If celibacy is not compulsory, why did Jesus and Paul speak favorably of singleness? Because singleness may afford a person greater opportunities to share the good news with others. Single ones can give more of themselves, since they are spared the anxieties that married ones experience.—1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

Consider the example of David, who decided to quit his well-paying job in Mexico City to move to a rural area in Costa Rica to teach others the Bible. Does David feel that singleness helped him to do so? “Definitely,” he says. “It was a challenge to adapt to a new culture and different living conditions, but since I had only myself to care for, the adaptation process was easier.”

“It does not matter whether you are married or single, you will be happy if you give your best to Jehovah God.”—*Claudia*

Claudia, a single Christian who has moved to serve in places where evangelizers are needed, says: “I enjoy my service to God. My faith and my relationship with God are strengthened when I see how he takes care of me.”

Singleness does not have to be a burden. Claudia adds: “It does not matter whether you are married or single, you will be happy if you give your best to Jehovah God.”—Psalm 119:1, 2. ■



Depiction of captured slaves in ancient Egypt



Slave trade between Africa and the Americas was a lucrative business

# Escape From Slavery Then and Now

Blessing\* arrived in Europe with the promise of getting work as a hairdresser. But after ten days of constant beatings, as well as threats of violence against her family back home, she was forced to work as a prostitute.

Blessing was expected to earn 200 to 300 euros a night to pay off a debt that her madam had set at over 40,000 euros.<sup>#</sup> “I often thought about escaping,” Blessing explains, “but I was afraid of what they would do to my family. I was trapped.” Her story is typical of some four million people enslaved in the international sex industry.

Nearly 4,000 years ago, a teenager named Joseph was sold by his brothers. He ended up in servitude in a prominent Egyptian home. Unlike

\* Name has been changed.

<sup>#</sup> At the time, the value of the euro was approximately the same as the U.S. dollar.

Blessing, Joseph was not maltreated by his owner at first. But when he rejected the advances of his master’s wife, he found himself unjustly accused of attempted rape. He was thrown into jail and put in irons.—Genesis 39:1-20; Psalm 105:17, 18.

Joseph was a slave of antiquity; Blessing is a slave of the 21st century. But both were victims of the age-old practice of human trafficking, a trade that treats people as commodities and cares for nothing but economic gain.

## WAR MAKES SLAVERY A BIG BUSINESS

Warfare proved to be the easiest way for nations to acquire slaves. Egyptian King Thutmose III is said to have brought back 90,000 prisoners after one military campaign in Canaan. The Egyptians put them to work as slaves in mining, building temples, and cutting canals.



Millions still labor in bondage

Under the Roman Empire, wars also provided slaves in abundance, and the demand for slaves sometimes led to war. It is estimated that by the first century, slaves constituted nearly half the population of Rome. Many Egyptian and Roman slaves were harshly exploited. The life expectancy of slaves in Roman mines, for example, was only about 30 years.

As time went on, slavery did not get kinder. From the 16th century to the 19th century, the slave trade between Africa and the Americas was one of the most lucrative businesses on earth. 'It is estimated that between 25 million and 30 million men, women, and children were abducted and sold,' says a UNESCO report. Hundreds of thousands are said to have died during the Atlantic crossing. Olaudah Equiano, a slave who survived, reported: "The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable."

Sadly, slavery is not just a tragedy of history. Some 21 million men, women, and children still work as slaves, under bondage and with little or no pay, according to the International Labour

Organization. Modern-day slaves work in mines, sweat shops, brick factories, brothels, and private homes. Although illegal, this kind of slavery is apparently on the increase.

### ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

Brutal treatment has led many slaves to fight for freedom. In the first century B.C.E., the gladiator Spartacus and some 100,000 slaves staged an unsuccessful rebellion against Rome. In the 18th century, slaves on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola rose up against their masters. The appalling treatment the slaves had suffered on the sugar plantations sparked a 13-year-long civil war that finally led to the formation of the independent nation of Haiti in 1804.

The Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, however, must surely count as the most successful escape from slavery in all history. Possibly three million people—an entire nation—were liberated from slavery in Egypt. They certainly deserved their freedom. The Bible describes their life in Egypt as being under "harsh conditions in every form of slavery." (Exodus 1:11-14) One Pharaoh even





## Escape From a Different Kind of Slavery

Alonso was a slave of a different sort. While still a teenager, he became enslaved to cocaine and heroin. “To pay for my drug habit, I turned to crime and became a drug trafficker,” Alonso confesses. “Although I went to four different detoxification centers, I could not break free. The police finally caught up with me, and I spent four years in prison.”

After 30 years of slavery to drugs, Alonso began to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Bible’s

message touched his heart and made him determined to overcome his addiction. “It was very tough, after so many years,” he recalls. “But Jehovah God has helped me to win the battle.” —Psalm 55:22.

“My wife is delighted to see how much I have changed,” says Alonso. “I cannot thank Jehovah enough for helping me escape from a course of self-destruction. Without his help I would still be enslaved. Or more likely, I would probably be dead.”

launched a campaign of infanticide to control the growing Israelite population.—Exodus 1:8-22.

The Israelites’ release from their unjust treatment in Egypt was unique because God himself intervened. “I well know the pains they suffer,” God told Moses. “I will go down to rescue them.” (Exodus 3:7, 8) To this day, Jews everywhere celebrate the Passover each year to commemorate that event.—Exodus 12:14.

### THE FINAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

“With Jehovah our God there is no injustice,” says the Bible, and it assures us that he has not changed. (2 Chronicles 19:7; Malachi 3:6) God sent Jesus to “proclaim liberty to the captives . . . , to send the crushed ones away free.” (Luke 4:18) Did this mean freedom for every literal slave? Apparently not. Jesus was sent to liberate people from bondage to sin and death. He later declared: “The truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) Even today, the truth that Jesus taught liberates people in many ways.—See the box “Escape From a Different Kind of Slavery.”

Actually, God did help Joseph and Blessing to escape from slavery in different ways. You

can find Joseph’s extraordinary account in chapters 39 to 41 of the Bible book of Genesis. Blessing’s quest for freedom was no less remarkable.

After being expelled from one European country, Blessing went to Spain. There she met Jehovah’s Witnesses and began to study the Bible with them. Determined to straighten out her life, she got a regular job and convinced her former madam to lower the monthly debt payments. One day, Blessing got a phone call from the madam. She wanted to pardon Blessing’s debt and to ask for her forgiveness. What had happened? She too had started to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses! “The truth sets you free in amazing ways,” says Blessing.

Jehovah God felt grieved by the harsh treatment of Israelite slaves in Egypt; he must feel the same way about similar injustice today. True, to end all forms of slavery will require a huge change in human society. But God promises to bring about just such a change. “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”—2 Peter 3:13 ■



# Enjoy the Benefits of Giving

“THE bus can leave, but the Chinese guy stays!” That was what Alexandra overheard while sitting on a bus, waiting to cross the border between two South American countries. She got off to see what was happening and found a young Chinese man struggling with broken Spanish as he was trying to explain his predicament to a border guard. Since Alexandra attended a Chinese-language congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, she volunteered to help as interpreter.

The man said that he was a legal resident but had been robbed of his documents and money. At first the officer did not accept this story and even suspected that Alexandra was involved in human trafficking. Finally, he accepted the man’s explanation, but the hapless traveler had to pay a fine for not having the right document. Since he had no money, Alexandra offered to lend him \$20. The man could not thank her enough and said he would repay more than \$20. Alexandra explained that she was not looking for a reward; she was happy to help because she felt it was the right thing to do. She gave the man



some Bible literature and urged him to study the Bible with the Witnesses.

It is heartwarming to hear of generosity toward strangers, and doubtless, similar acts are performed by people of all religions and by people who have no religion. Would *you* have been willing to give of yourself in such an altruistic way? That question is of interest because Jesus said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) It is also of scientific interest because researchers have found

that giving is good for you. Let us see in what ways this is so.

## THE “CHEERFUL GIVER”

Experience shows that giving and happiness often go hand in hand. The apostle Paul wrote that “God loves a cheerful giver.” He was speaking of Christians who made generous donations to help relieve the hardship of fellow believers. (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:7) Paul was not saying that they gave because they were happy. The reverse was true—they were happy *because* they were able to give.

Indeed, according to one study, giving “activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust, creating a ‘warm glow’ effect.” Another study found that “giving money to someone else lifted participants’ happiness more than spending it on themselves.”

Have you ever felt that because of your circumstances there is not much you can do? The truth is that everyone can experience the joy of being “a cheerful giver.” When given with the right motive, the sum does not have to be large. One of Jehovah’s Witnesses sent this message to the publisher of this magazine with a contribution from her: “All these years I have been unable to give but small

amounts of money at the Kingdom Hall.” Yet, she continued: “Jehovah God has given me back much more than I have given. . . . Thank you for making it possible for me to make this gift—it gives me comfort.”

Giving, of course, is not limited to money. There are many other ways to give.

### GIVING IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

The Bible states: “A kind man benefits himself, but the cruel person brings trouble on himself.” (Proverbs 11:17) Kind people are generous, willing to give of themselves—their time, energy, care, and so forth. This approach to life benefits them in various ways, not the least of which is that such generosity is good for their health.

Studies indicate that those who volunteer to help others have been found to suffer from fewer aches and pains and less depression. Overall, they enjoy better health. Generous giving even improves the health of some who suffer from chronic health problems, such as multiple sclerosis or HIV. It has also been shown that recovering alcoholics who help others become significantly less depressed and can improve their odds of avoiding a relapse.



Giving does you and others good

As to why this is so, it is suggested that “feelings of compassion, benevolence and kindness leave less room for negative emotions.” Giving may also lower stress and blood pressure. And people who lost their spouse in death recovered from symptoms of depression sooner if they offered support to others.

There is no doubt about it. Giving does you good.

### GIVING IS CONTAGIOUS

Jesus urged his followers: “Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return.” (Luke 6:38) When you give, people are more likely to respond to your generosity with gratitude and become generous themselves. Giving thus fosters cooperation and friendship.

Researchers who study human relations have noted that “people who consistently display altruism encourage others to follow suit.” In fact, “simply reading about extraordinary acts of kindness makes people more generous.” Hence, according to one study, “each person in a network can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom he or she does not know and has not met.” In other words, a single act of generosity can start a ripple effect that goes from person to person throughout a community. Would you not like to live in a place like that? Yes, great benefits would come if more people practiced giving.

One experience that illustrates this positive effect comes

from Florida, U.S.A. A group of Jehovah's Witnesses volunteered to do relief work after a destructive hurricane. As they were waiting for repair supplies at the house they were to work on, they noticed that a fence belonging to one of the neighbors was damaged, and they offered to fix it. "I am forever grateful," wrote the neighbor some time later in a letter to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. "I found these people to be among the nicest I have ever met." Gratitude moved him to send a generous contribution to be used in what he called the Witnesses' extraordinary work.

### IMITATE THE GREATEST EXAMPLE OF GIVING

A remarkable finding from scientific research is that "there appears to be a fundamental human drive toward helping others." Children, says the study, "behave altruistically even before they've learned to talk." Why? The Bible provides the answer when it says that humans were created "in God's image," that is, they possess the same basic godly qualities.—Genesis 1:27.

Among the marvelous qualities of our Creator, Jehovah God, is generosity. He has giv-



Giving fosters cooperation  
and friendship

en us life and everything we need to make us happy. (Acts 14:17; 17:26-28) We can become acquainted with our heavenly Father and his loving purposes for us by studying his Word, the Bible. That book also discloses that God has made provision for our future happiness.\*

\* For more details, see the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org). Look under PUBLICATIONS > BOOKS & BROCHURES.

(1 John 4:9, 10) Since Jehovah God is the source of generosity and you are made in his image, it should be no surprise that giving—in imitation of God—is good for you and wins you his favor.—Hebrews 13:16.

Do you remember Alexandra, mentioned at the beginning of this article? How did her story turn out? Although a fellow traveler on the bus with her said she had thrown her money away, the man she helped contacted friends in a city where the bus subsequently stopped, and the \$20 debt was promptly settled. Moreover, the man acted on Alexandra's suggestion and began studying the Bible. She was delighted to meet him again three months later at a Chinese-language convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Peru. To express his thanks for all that Alexandra had done for him, the man invited her and those who had traveled to the convention with her to his restaurant.

Giving and helping others bring great joy. And even more so if in the process you help people to become better acquainted with the Source of all good gifts—Jehovah God! (James 1:17) Are you enjoying the benefits of such giving? ■

## Are we living in “the last days”?

### What would you say?

- Yes   ► No   ► Maybe

### What the Bible says

*“In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.”* (2 Timothy 3:1) Bible prophecy, combined with current events, identifies our time as “the last days.”

### What else can we learn from the Bible?

- The last days would be marked by wars, famines, earthquakes, and epidemics of deadly disease.—Matthew 24:3, 7; Luke 21:11.
- During the last days, human society would suffer a serious moral and spiritual breakdown.—2 Timothy 3:2-5.

## What does the future hold for humankind?

### Some people believe . . .

that the last days will end with the destruction of the earth and everyone on it, while others hope that conditions will improve.

### What do you think?

### What the Bible says

*“The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”*—Psalm 37:29.

### What else can we learn from the Bible?

- The last days will end with the removal of all wickedness.—1 John 2:17.
- The earth will be transformed into a paradise.—Isaiah 35:1, 6.



An earthly paradise awaits survivors of the last days



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

For more information about “the last days,” see chapter 9 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses  
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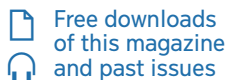
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