

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A close-up, profile shot of a young woman with reddish-brown hair, looking down and slightly to the right. She is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and other people, suggesting a park or public space. The lighting is warm, possibly from the setting or rising sun, creating a contemplative mood.

**Is Life
Worth
Living?**

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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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When Life Seems Unbearable



LIFE can be pure bliss—when all goes well. But what if circumstances make your life seem unbearable?

For instance, Sally,* in the United States, who lost most of her possessions in a hurricane, explains: “I didn’t know how much more I could take. Many days I felt that I was near the breaking point.”

Or what if a loved one dies? Janice, in Australia, says: “When I lost both my sons, I had to gather the fragments of my shattered life and reassemble them as best I could. I begged God: ‘Please, my heart can’t take any more! Just let me sleep. I don’t want to wake up again.’”

Daniel, on the other hand, was devastated when his wife was unfaithful. He explains: “When my wife confessed that she had been unfaithful, it was like a knife pierced my heart. I felt this physical pain stabbing me again and again—and it lasted several months.”

This issue of *The Watchtower* will consider how life can be worth living even when

Disaster strikes

A loved one dies

A spouse is unfaithful

You are dealing with a serious illness

Life becomes unbearable

So, first, how can we cope when disaster strikes?

* Some names in this series of articles have been changed.



When Disaster Strikes

“Our first feeling was total despair. Everything we owned had been destroyed by a mudslide and flooding.”—Andrew, Sierra Leone.

“After the hurricane, we returned to our home. Nothing was left. We were speechless. My daughter dropped to her knees and wept.”—David, Virgin Islands.

IF YOU have ever survived a disaster, you may understand what other survivors have experienced: shock, denial, confusion, anxiety, and nightmares. Many disheartened and fatigued survivors have little motivation to move on in life.

If your life has been devastated by a disaster, you too may feel that you are near the breaking point. You may even begin to feel that your life is not worth living. However, the Bible explains that your life is worth living and that you can have a firm basis for hope in a better future.

KNOWING BIBLE TRUTH MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING

Ecclesiastes 7:8 says: “Better is the end of a matter than its beginning.” When you are just beginning to recover from a disaster, life may seem hopeless. But as you patiently work at rebuilding your life, things can get better.

The Bible foretells a time when “no more will there be heard . . . the sound of weeping or a cry of distress.” (Isaiah 65:19) This will be true when the earth is transformed into a paradise under God’s Kingdom. (Psalm 37:11, 29) Disasters will be a thing of the past. Any painful memories and lingering trauma will be wiped out forever, because Almighty God promises: “The former things will

not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart.”—Isaiah 65:17.

Just think: The Creator has arranged “to give you a future and a hope”—a peaceful life under God’s perfect rulership. (Jeremiah 29:11) Can having knowledge of this truth help make your life worth living? Sally, quoted in the opening article, states, “Reminding yourself of all the wonderful things that God’s Kingdom is going to do for us in the future can help you let go of the past and get through the present.”

Why not learn more about what God’s Kingdom will soon do for mankind? Doing so can assure you that despite the disaster you have suffered, your life is worth living now as you eagerly await a disaster-free future. In the meantime, the Bible provides practical guidance that can help you to cope with the aftermath of a disaster. Consider a few examples.

Bible Verses That Can Help

Get needed rest.

“Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind.”—**Ecclesiastes 4:6.**

Researchers report that after a traumatic experience, “a lack of quality sleep . . . can exacerbate your trauma symptoms and make it harder to maintain your emotional balance.” Therefore, it is wise to get sufficient rest.

Discuss your feelings.

“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down [or, “depresses him,” footnote], but a good word cheers it up.”

—**Proverbs 12:25.**

Confide in a family member or trusted friend. In addition to providing a listening ear, family members or close friends can provide words of encouragement and give practical help.*

* A person who experiences prolonged stress or severe anxiety may need to seek medical treatment.

Look ahead to better times.

“There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God’s] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”

—**2 Peter 3:13.**



When a Loved One Dies

“I felt helpless when my older brother died unexpectedly. Months later I would suddenly remember him and feel sick, as if a knife were stabbing me deep inside. At times, I was also angry. Why did my brother have to die? And I felt guilty for not having spent more time with him.”—Vanessa, Australia.

IF YOU have lost someone you love in death, you too may have felt a wide range of emotions, from sorrow to loneliness and helplessness. Perhaps you have also felt anger, guilt, and fear. You may have even wondered whether life is still worth living.

Be assured that grief is not a sign of weakness. It indicates how much your loved one meant to you. However, is it possible to find a measure of relief from your painful grief?

HOW SOME HAVE COPED

While your pain can seem unending, you may find the following suggestions consoling:

ALLOW YOURSELF TIME TO GRIEVE

Not everyone grieves in the same way or for the same amount of time. Still, crying can provide an outlet for fragile emotions. Vanessa, quoted earlier, says: “I would just cry; I needed to release the pain.” Sofia, whose sister died suddenly, says: “Confronting my thoughts and feelings is very painful, like opening and cleaning an infected wound. The pain is almost unbearable, but it allows the wound to heal.”

TALK ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Understandably, at times you may wish to be alone. But grief is a heavy burden to carry by your-

Bible Verses That Can Help

God cares about your grief and tears.

One Bible writer said to God: “Do collect my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not recorded in your book?”—**Psalm 56:8.**

You can pour out your heart to God.

“Before [God] I tell about my distress . . . I call to you, O Jehovah,* for help.”—**Psalm 142:2, 5.**

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

self. Seventeen-year-old Jared, who lost his father, recalls: “I talked about my emotions with others. I doubt I made much sense, but it was good just to be able to express myself.” Janice, quoted in the opening article, adds another benefit: “Talking with others was tremendously comforting. I felt understood, and I didn’t feel so alone.”

ACCEPT HELP

One doctor says: “The bereaved who allow friends and relatives to help them through [the] initial period [of shock] tend to continue to move with some ease through the different phases of grief.” Let your friends know what they can do to help; they likely want to but might not know how. —Proverbs 17:17.

DRAW CLOSER TO GOD

Tina says: “When I suddenly lost my husband to cancer, I could no longer confide in him, so I would tell God everything! I started each day asking him to help me get through the day. God helped me in more ways than I can mention.” Tarsha, who was 22 years old when her mother died, says: “Bible reading was my daily source of comfort. It gave me something encouraging to think about.”

VISUALIZE THE RESURRECTION

Tina continues: “Initially, the resurrection hope didn’t comfort me because I needed my husband—and my boys needed their father—right then. However, now, four years later, I cling to this hope. It’s a lifeline for me. I imagine seeing him again, and it brings me such peace and joy!”

You are not likely to experience instant relief from your grief. Nevertheless, Vanessa’s experience can be reassuring. She says, “You think you’ll never get through it, but you will see brighter days.”

Remember, while the void you feel in your heart may not disappear, life is still worth living. With God’s tender help, you can still enjoy warm friendships and a purposeful life. And soon God *will* resurrect the dead. He wants you to be able to embrace your loved one again. Then that pain in your heart will be healed forever!

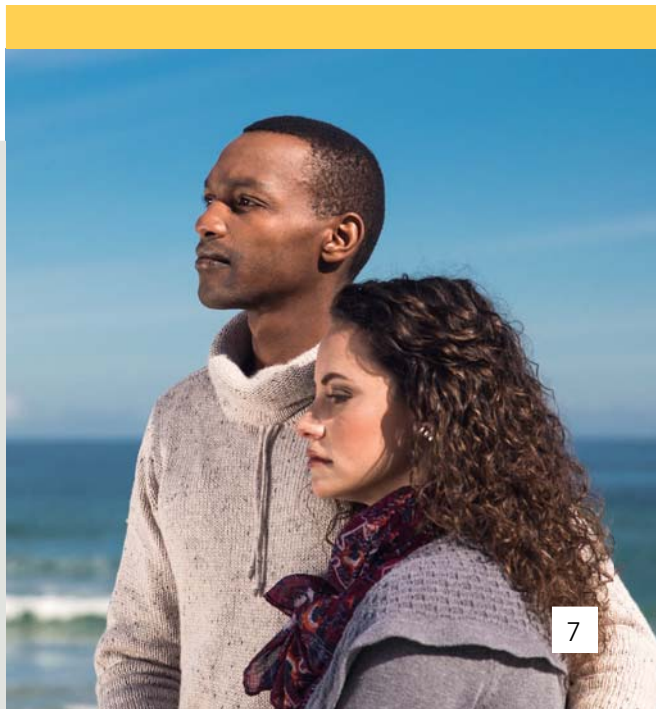
You can have hope.

“There is going to be a resurrection.”

—Acts 24:15.

God promises to bring back to life countless people who have died, and he yearns to do so.*—Job 14:14, 15, footnote.

* For more information about the resurrection, see chapter 7 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available for free download at www.jw.org.





When a Spouse Is Unfaithful

“I wanted to die when my husband said that he was leaving me for a younger woman. It all seemed so unfair, especially when I remembered the sacrifices I had made for him.”—Maria, Spain.

“When my wife suddenly left me, it seemed that something died inside me. Our dreams, our hopes, and our plans had been destroyed. There were days when I thought I was free from anxiety, only to find myself back in the depths of despair.”—Bill, Spain.

MARITAL unfaithfulness is devastating. True, some mates have found that they can forgive a repentant spouse and rebuild their relationship.* But whether the marriage survives or not, those who discover that their mate has been unfaithful invariably suffer intense agony. How can such ones deal with their fragile emotions?

BIBLE VERSES THAT CAN HELP

Despite the heartache, many innocent spouses have found comfort in the Scriptures. They have learned that God sees their tears and shares their pain.—Malachi 2:13-16.

“When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.”—**Psalm 94:19.**

“As I read that verse, I imagined Jehovah soothing my pain tenderly, as a compassionate father would,” recalls Bill.

“With someone loyal you act in loyalty.”—**Psalm 18:25.**

“My husband had not been loyal,” explains Carmen, whose husband had been unfaithful for

months. “But I could trust in Jehovah’s loyalty. He would never let me down.”

“Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication . . . let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts.”
—**Philippians 4:6, 7.**

“I read this text over and over again,” says Sasha. “As I prayed more and more, God gave me peace in my life.”

All those quoted above felt like giving up at times. But they trusted in Jehovah God and drew strength from his Word. Bill put it this way: “My faith gave meaning to my life when everything else seemed to have collapsed. Though I walked for a time ‘in the valley of deep shadow,’ God was with me.”—Psalm 23:4.

* For a discussion of whether to forgive or not, see the series in *Awake!* of April 22, 1999, “When a Mate Is Unfaithful.”

How Some Have Coped

Meditate on comforting scriptures.

“I read the book of Job and then the Psalms,” explains Bill, “underlining every passage that seemed to fit my own circumstances. I realized that these Bible writers had experienced the kind of pain and anxiety that I was feeling.”

Find consolation in music.

“When I could not sleep at night, I listened to music,” Carmen remembers. “This was a great source of comfort.” Daniel says: “I learned to play the guitar and found that the harmony needed for the music helped me recover my inner peace and harmony.”

Talk about your feelings.

“I was not used to talking about my feelings,” Daniel says. “But I had some good friends, and I reached out to them every day. I unburdened my feelings on them, both in writing and in conversation. That really helped.” Sasha says: “The help of my family was crucial. My mother was always there for me. If I wanted to talk, she was there to listen. My father also made me feel secure, and he helped me recover at my own pace.”

Persist in prayer.

“I prayed constantly,” says Carmen. “I felt that God was near to me, listening to me, and helping me. Through this terrible time, I drew closer to God.”



When You Have a Serious Illness

“When I learned that I had cancer in my lung and colon, I thought that I had just received a death sentence. But after I got home from the doctor, I thought, ‘OK, it’s not what I expected, but I have to find a way to deal with this.’”—Linda, aged 71.

“I suffer from a debilitating nerve syndrome on the left side of my face. On occasion, the severe pain has caused me to fall into depression. Many times, I felt alone and even contemplated suicide.”
—Elise, aged 49.

IF YOU or a loved one has been diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening illness, you know how distressing it can be. In addition to the disease itself, you have to deal with fragile emotions. Fear and anxiety can be intensified by nerve-racking medical appointments, difficulty obtain-

ing or paying for treatment, or the unpleasant side effects of medications. The mental anguish associated with serious illness can be overwhelming.

Where can we turn for assistance? Many have found that their greatest comfort comes from

Bible Verses That Can Help

Lean on God.

“I inquired of Jehovah, and he answered me. He rescued me from all my fears. This lowly one called, and Jehovah heard.”

—**Psalms 34:4, 6.**

Linda, quoted earlier, says: “I never pray, ‘Make me better.’ I always pray, ‘Help me be strong, and help me to endure my illness.’”

Draw strength from God’s Word.

“No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”

—**Isaiah 33:24.**

Tap into the sustaining power of hope by meditating on God’s promises for the future.

leaning on God in prayer and reading comforting passages found in the Bible. Another help may come through the love and support that family and friends can provide.

HOW SOME HAVE COPED

“Face illness with your faith in God,” advised 58-year-old Robert, “and he will carry you through. Go to Jehovah in prayer. Let him know how you feel. Ask him for holy spirit. Ask him for strength to be strong for the family and to allow you to go through your illness with dignity.

“It means so much when your family supports you emotionally, when they are there for you. I get phone calls every day from one or two who ask, ‘How are you doing?’ I get encouragement from friends all over. They definitely give me a boost, and that helps me to keep going.”

If you are a friend visiting a sick person, note what Linda points out: “The patient no doubt wants to lead as normal a life as possible and may not always want to talk about the sickness. So talk about the things you usually talk about.”

With strength from God and comfort from the Scriptures, as well as the support of loving family and friends, we can maintain our assurance that life is worth living, even when we are enduring a serious illness.



Seek support from family and friends.

“A true friend shows love at all times and is a brother who is born for times of distress.”—**Proverbs 17:17.**

“Do not isolate yourself,” advises Elise, quoted earlier. “Allow your friends to help you. There might be times when you feel alone and you don’t even think that God is listening, but do not isolate yourself.”



When You Feel You Cannot Go On

“These feelings were relentless,” admits Adriana, from Brazil. “So I concluded that it would be better to end my life.”

HAVE YOU ever felt so bad that you no longer wanted to live? Then you may understand how Adriana felt. She suffered from acute anxiety and felt sad and hopeless. Adriana was diagnosed with clinical depression.

Consider, too, a Japanese man named Kaoru, who cared for his sickly, aged parents. “At the time, I was overwhelmed by extreme pressure at work,” he explains. “In time I lost my appetite, and my sleep was terribly disturbed. I came to think how relieved I would be if I could just die.”

A Nigerian man named Ojebode says, “I was always sad to the point of shedding tears, so I looked for a means to end my life.” Thankfully, Ojebode, Kaoru, and Adriana did not take their lives. But every year hundreds of thousands do.

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Most people who commit suicide are men, many of whom felt too ashamed to ask for help. Jesus said that sick people need a physician. (Luke 5:31) So if you have such feelings, please do not be ashamed to seek help. Many people who suffer from depression have found that medical treatment can help them to cope. Ojebode, Kaoru, and Adriana all received professional help and now cope much better.

Doctors may use medication or talk therapy or both to treat depression. Those who suffer also need the empathetic support of patient, caring family and friends. The best friend anyone can have is Jehovah God, who provides wonderful help in his Word, the Bible.

IS THERE A PERMANENT SOLUTION?

Victims of depression often need prolonged treatment and have to learn how to cope by making adjustments to their lifestyle. But if you struggle with depression, you can look forward to a bright future, as does Ojebode. He says, “I look forward to seeing the fulfillment of Isaiah 33:24, which foretells the time when no one on earth will say ‘I am sick.’” Like Ojebode, take comfort in God’s promise of “a new earth,” where “pain” will be no more. (Revelation 21:1, 4) That promise includes an end to all mental and emotional pain. Your painful feelings will be gone forever. Never again will your painful feelings “be called to mind, nor will they come up into [your] heart.”—Isaiah 65:17.

Bible Verses That Can Help

God understands your feelings.

“I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, . . . saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I will help you.’”

—**Isaiah 41:13.**

Jehovah understands our feelings better than anyone else, and he wants to help us.

Meditate on God’s Word.

“[Elijah] asked that he might die. He said: ‘ . . . O Jehovah, take my life away.’”—**1 Kings 19:4.**

“Meditating on God’s Word helped me,” says Ojebode. “I realized that the prophet Elijah once felt just as I did.”

Learn from Bible examples.

“I [Jesus] have made supplication for you [Peter] that your faith may not give out.”—**Luke 22:32.**

After the apostle Peter denied Jesus three times, his feelings were hard for him to bear and he wept bitterly. “Peter’s experience,” says Kaoru, “helped me to see that Jehovah and Jesus cared about Peter’s feelings. This encouraged me.”

Never again will your painful feelings “be called to mind, nor will they come up into [your] heart.”—**Isaiah 65:17**



Why Life IS Worth Living

Faizal required major heart surgery just over a year after his wife died. He says: “When I read the book of Job, I know Jehovah put it there for a reason. When we find an example in the Bible that we can relate to, it is a way of soothing our pain of heart.” He adds: “Life is still worth living.”

Tarsha was young when her mother died. She says: “Knowing our Creator is what gives life purpose, hope, and joy despite all the things we may have to deal with. Jehovah is more than capable of sustaining us and helping us to get through each day.”

THE PRECEDING articles show how various traumatic events can make life seem unbearable. As you carry your own personal burden, you may wonder if life is worthwhile or whether anyone even cares about you. Be assured that God does care about your distress. You are precious to him.

The writer of Psalm 86 expressed confidence toward God: “I call on you in the day of my distress, for you will answer me.” (Psalm 86:7) You may wonder, though, ‘How will God answer me “in the day of my distress”?’

Although God may not take away your problems immediately, his Word, the Bible, assures you that he can give you inner peace to help you cope: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts.” (Philippians 4:6, 7, footnote) Please consider how the following Bible verses give us assurance of God’s tender care.

God Does Care About You

“Not one [sparrow] is overlooked by God. . . . You are worth more than many sparrows.”

—Luke 12:6, 7, footnote.

CONSIDER: Seemingly insignificant birds are not inconsequential to God. Not even one tiny sparrow escapes God’s notice; every one is a precious living creature. Humans are far more valuable to God than sparrows are. Humans, as the centerpiece of God’s earthly creation, are made in his “image” and are capable of cultivating and displaying his elevated qualities.—Genesis 1:26, 27.

“O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me. . . . You discern my thoughts Examine me, and know my anxious thoughts.”—Psalm 139:1, 2, 23.

CONSIDER: God knows you personally. He knows your most intimate feelings and concerns. While others may not understand your distressing situation, God cares about you and wants to help you. That makes life worth living.

Although you may be troubled and your life may seem to be unbearable, make a careful study of God’s Word and build your faith in the hope that God promises. It will make you happy and confident that life is worth living.

Your Life Has Meaning

“O Jehovah, hear my prayer; let my cry for help reach you. . . . Incline your ear to me; do answer me quickly when I call. . . . He will pay attention to the prayer of the destitute.”

—Psalm 102:1, 2, 17.

CONSIDER: It is as if from the very start of human suffering, Jehovah had been keeping a record of every tear humans have shed. (Psalm 56:8) This includes your tears. God remembers all your trials and tears because you are precious to him.

“Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you . . . I, Jehovah your God, am . . . the One saying to you, ‘Do not be afraid. I will help you.’”

—Isaiah 41:10, 13.

CONSIDER: God is ready to help you. If you fall down, he will lift you up.

There Is Hope for a Better Future

“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.

CONSIDER: You are so dear to God that he willingly gave his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice in your behalf. This sacrifice gives you the prospect of living a happy and purposeful life forever.*

* To learn more about how you can benefit from Jesus' sacrifice, watch the video *Remember Jesus' Death* at www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS > OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY.



“He Cares for You”

Even if others in your life may fail you, there is One who will never leave you. Who is that?

King David of old said: “Even if my own father and mother abandon me, Jehovah himself will take me in.”—Psalm 27:10.

Jehovah is “the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials.”—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

“Throw all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

To learn how God wants to care for you, see chapter 12 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org



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