

An illustration of a man in an orange shirt and brown pants walking towards the viewer on a paved path. In the background, several other people are walking in the same direction. The scene is set in a lush park with large green trees on the left and a city skyline with blue buildings in the distance under a clear blue sky. The overall style is clean and modern with a focus on nature and urban life.

## THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

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# Awake!®

**Vol. 99, No. 1 2018 ENGLISH**

**Produced Each Issue: 64,905,000**

**Available in 182 LANGUAGES**

*Awake!* (ISSN 0005-237X)

Issue 1 March/April 2018 is published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Walkkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. © 2017 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

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## WHERE CAN WE FIND SOUND GUIDANCE ON LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

The Bible says: "Happy are those who are blameless in their way."  
—Psalm 119:1.

These seven articles discuss sound, time-tested principles that contribute in a big way to happiness.



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# Finding the Way

### DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE A HAPPY PERSON?

If so, what makes you happy? Your family, your work, your religious faith? Perhaps you are looking forward to something that may make you happy, such as finishing your schooling, getting a good job, or buying a new car.

Many people experience a measure of happiness when they reach a certain goal or obtain a desired item. But how long does that surge of happiness last? Often, it is only temporary, which can be disappointing.

Happiness has been described as a state of well-being that is characterized by relative permanence, by emotions ranging from mere contentment to deep and intense joy in living, and by a natural desire for it to continue.

Further, as an ongoing state of well-being, **happiness has been described, not as a destination or goal, but as a journey.** To say, “I’ll be happy when . . .” is, in effect, postponing happiness.

To illustrate, compare happiness with good health. How do we enjoy that state of physical well-being? We follow a wise path in regard to diet, exercise, and overall lifestyle. Likewise, happiness results from following a good path in life, living in harmony with sound principles.

What principles or qualities of life characterize the way of happiness? While some are more important than others, the following play a key role:

**CONTENTMENT AND GENEROSITY**

**PHYSICAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE**

**LOVE**

**FORGIVENESS**

**PURPOSE IN LIFE**

**HOPE**

A highly respected book of wisdom states: “Happy are those who are blameless in their way.” (Psalm 119:1) Let us now consider that way.



THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

## CONTENTMENT AND GENEROSITY



**HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU HEARD HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS MEASURED IN TERMS OF ASSETS OR WEALTH?** Driven by that view, millions work long, exhausting hours to make more money. But do money and possessions bring lasting happiness? What does the evidence suggest?

According to the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, once our basic needs are met, more income does little to improve our overall happiness or our sense of well-being. Money itself is not the issue. It's "the striving for [money] that's linked to unhappiness," states an article in the magazine *Monitor on Psychology*. Those words mirror this advice given in the Bible almost two thousand years ago: "The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have . . . stabbed themselves all over with many pains." (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) What may those pains include?

**WORRY AND LOSS OF SLEEP BECAUSE WEALTH HAS TO BE PROTECTED.** "Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, whether he eats little or much, but the plenty belonging to the rich one does not permit him to sleep."—Ecclesiastes 5:12.

**DISAPPOINTMENT WHEN THE PROMISED HAPPINESS FAILS TO ARRIVE.** In part, that letdown is because a craving for money cannot be satisfied. "A lover of silver will never be satisfied with silver, nor a lover of wealth with income." (Ecclesiastes 5:10) Also, a hunger for wealth may move a person to sacrifice important things that do promote happiness, such as precious time spent with family and friends or in spiritual pursuits.

**GRIEF AND FRUSTRATION WHEN MONEY OR INVESTMENTS DEPRECIATE OR FAIL.** "Do not wear yourself out to gain wealth. Stop and show understanding. When you cast your eyes on it, it is not there, for it will surely sprout wings like an eagle and fly off."—Proverbs 23:4, 5.

## QUALITIES THAT PROMOTE HAPPINESS

**CONTENTMENT.** “We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having food and clothing, we will be content with these things.” (1 Timothy 6:7, 8) People who are content are not disposed to complain or grumble, and their attitude protects them against envy. And because their desires do not exceed their means, they spare themselves needless anxiety and stress.

**GENEROSITY.** “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) Generous people are happy because they enjoy making others happy, even if all they can give is a little of their time and energy. They often gain in abundance what no amount of money can buy—love, respect, and genuine friends, who give generously in return!—Luke 6:38.

**PUTTING PEOPLE BEFORE THINGS.** “Better is a dish of vegetables where there is love than a fattened bull where there is hatred.” (Proverbs 15:17) The point? Loving relationships with others are more valuable than material riches. And love, as we shall see later, is vital to happiness.

Sabina, a woman in South America, learned the value of Bible principles. Abandoned by her husband, Sabina struggled to obtain life’s necessities for herself and her two daughters. She held two jobs and daily rose at 4:00 a.m. Despite her grueling schedule, Sabina decided to study the Bible. The result?

Her economic status remained much the same. But her outlook on life improved dramatically! For example, she gained the happiness that comes from satisfying one’s spiritual need. (Matthew 5:3) She found true friends among fellow believers. And she experienced the happiness of giving by sharing with others what she had learned.

“Wisdom is vindicated by its results,” the Bible says. (Matthew 11:19; footnote) On that basis, contentment and generosity as well as putting people before things stand thoroughly vindicated!

## KEY POINTS

“The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have . . . stabbed themselves all over with many pains.”

—1 Timothy 6:10.

“The love of money” can lead to . . .

- Worry and loss of sleep
- Disappointment
- Grief and frustration

Happiness comes to those who . . .

- Are content with what they have
- Are generous
- Put people before things



THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE



**CHRONIC ILL HEALTH OR DISABILITY CAN HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON A PERSON'S LIFE.** After becoming physically paralyzed, a once active and healthy man named Ulf said: "I became deeply depressed. My strength, courage, and power drained away . . . I felt 'destroyed.'"

Ulf's experience reminds us that none of us have complete control over our health. Still, we can take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of ill health. But what if our health deteriorates? Does that doom us to unhappiness? Not at all, as we shall see. First, though, let us consider some principles that promote good health.

**BE "MODERATE IN HABITS."** (1 Timothy 3:2, 11) Habitually eating or drinking to excess is obviously bad for our health—not to mention our finances! "Do not be among those who drink too much wine, among those who gorge themselves on meat, for a drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty."—Proverbs 23:20, 21.

**DO NOT POLLUTE YOUR BODY.** "Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1) People defile their bodies when they chew or smoke tobacco or abuse alcohol or drugs. Smoking, for example, "leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body," says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**VIEW YOUR BODY AND YOUR LIFE AS PRECIOUS GIFTS.** "By [God] we have life and move and exist." (Acts 17:28) Appreciating that fact moves us to avoid taking needless risks, whether we are at work, driving, or choosing our recreation. A momentary thrill is not worth a life of disability!

**CONTROL NEGATIVE EMOTIONS.** Your mind and body are closely linked. So try to avoid undue anxiety, unbridled anger, envy, and other harmful emotions. "Let go of anger and abandon rage," says Psalm 37:8. We also read: "Never be anxious

about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties.”—Matthew 6:34.

**TRY TO FOCUS ON POSITIVE THOUGHTS.** “A calm heart gives life to the body,” says Proverbs 14:30. The Bible also states: “A joyful heart is good medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22) That is a scientifically sound statement. “If you are happy,” said a doctor in Scotland, “you are likely in the future to have less in the way of physical illness than those who are unhappy.”

**BUILD RESILIENCE.** Like Ulf, mentioned earlier, we may have no choice but to endure a persistent trial. Still, we can choose how we endure. Some become overwhelmed with discouragement, which may only make matters worse. “If you become discouraged in the day of distress, your strength will be meager,” says Proverbs 24:10.

Others, perhaps after initial feelings of despair, bounce back. They adapt. They find ways to cope. That was the case with Ulf. He said that after much prayer and meditation on the Bible’s positive message, he “started to see opportunities instead of obstacles.” Moreover, like many who undergo major trials, he learned valuable lessons in compassion and empathy, which moved him to share the Bible’s comforting message with others.

Another person who suffered greatly was a man named Steve. At age 15, he had an accident that paralyzed him from the neck down. By the time he was 18, he had regained the use of his arms. He then went to a university, where his life spiraled into drugs, alcohol, and sexual immorality. He had no hope—until he began to study the Bible, which gave him a new outlook on life and helped him to conquer his bad habits. “The emptiness that I had felt for so long was no longer there,” he said. “My life is now filled with peace, happiness, and contentment.”

Steve and Ulf’s comments call to mind the words at Psalm 19:7, 8: “The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring strength. . . . The orders from Jehovah are righteous, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine.”

## KEY POINTS

When applied, God’s laws and principles ‘re-store strength, cause the heart to rejoice, and make the eyes shine.’

—Psalm 19:7, 8.

## The Bible encourages us to . . .

- Be moderate in habits
- Take good care of our body
- View life as sacred
- Control negative emotions
- Focus on positive thoughts
- Build resilience



## THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

# LOVE

**HUMANS CRAVE LOVE.** No marriage, family, or friendship can thrive without it. It stands to reason, therefore, that love is essential to mental health and happiness. What, though, is meant by “love”?

The love referred to here is not romantic love, which, of course, has its place. Rather, it is a superior form of love that causes a person to show sincere concern for the welfare of others, even putting them before self. It is love that is guided by godly principles but is by no means devoid of warmth and feeling.

A beautiful description of love states: “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous. It does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not be-

have indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, . . . hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”—1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Such love “never fails” in that it will never cease to exist. Indeed, it can grow stronger over time. And because it is patient, kind, and forgiving, it is “a perfect bond of union.” (Colossians 3:14) Hence, relationships bound by such love are both secure and happy despite the imperfections of the individuals. For example, consider the marriage union.

## UNITED BY “A PERFECT BOND OF UNION”

Jesus Christ taught important principles on marriage. For instance, he said: “‘A man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh’ . . . Therefore, what God has yoked together, let no man put apart.” (Matthew 19:5, 6) **At least two important principles stand out.**

**“THE TWO WILL BE ONE FLESH.”** Marriage is the most intimate union humans can have, and love can protect it against infidelity—that is, the husband or wife becoming “one body” with someone other than his or her spouse. (1 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 13:4) Unfaithfulness shatters trust and can wreck the marriage. If children are involved, they may be emotionally traumatized, feeling unloved, insecure, or even resentful.

**“WHAT GOD HAS YOKED TOGETHER.”** Marriage is also a sacred union. Couples who respect that fact strive to strengthen their marriage. They do not look for a way out when difficulties arise. Their love is strong and resilient. Such a love “bears all things,” working through difficulties in an effort to maintain marital harmony and peace.

When self-sacrificing love exists between parents, any children in the family benefit greatly. A young woman named Jessica observed: “My father and mother truly love and respect each other. When I see my mother respect my father, especially when dealing with us children, it makes me want to be just like her.”

Love is God’s foremost quality. In fact, the Bible says: “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) It thus comes as no surprise that Jehovah is also called “the happy God.” (1 Timothy 1:11) We too will be happy when we strive to imitate our Creator’s qualities—especially his love. Says Ephesians 5:1, 2: “Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love.”

## KEY POINTS

‘Love is patient and kind. It bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.’

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Love promotes happiness because it . . .

- Helps us to show sincere concern for the welfare of others
- Can grow stronger over time
- Gives strength and resilience to friendships and marriages
- Helps children to thrive and feel secure
- Makes us more like our Creator



THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

# FORGIVENESS



**“DURING MY CHILDHOOD, I HEARD A LOT OF INSULTS AND SCREAMING,”** said a woman named Patricia. “I did not learn to forgive. Even as an adult, I would dwell on an offense for days, losing sleep.” Yes, a life filled with anger and resentment is neither a happy one nor a healthy one. Indeed, studies show that unforgiving people may . . .

- Let anger or bitterness sour relationships, leading to isolation and loneliness
- Become easily offended, anxious, or even severely depressed
- Become so focused on a wrong that they cannot enjoy life
- Feel that they are at odds with their spiritual values
- Experience increased stress and a higher risk of ill health, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and pain disorders, such as arthritis and headaches\*

**WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?** Forgiveness means pardoning an offender and letting go of anger, resentment, and thoughts of revenge. It does not mean condoning a wrong, minimizing it, or pretending that it did not happen. Rather, forgiveness is a well-thought-out personal choice that reflects a loving commitment to peace and to building or maintaining a good relationship with the other person.

Forgiveness also reflects understanding. A forgiving person understands that we all err, or sin, in word and deed. (Romans 3:23) Reflecting such insight, the Bible says: “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another.”—Colossians 3:13.

It stands to reason, then, that forgiveness is an important facet of love, which is “a perfect bond of union.” (Colossians 3:14) Indeed, according to the Mayo Clinic website, forgiveness leads to . . .

\* Sources: Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins Medicine websites and the journal *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.

- Healthier relationships, including feelings of empathy, understanding, and compassion for the offender
- Improved mental and spiritual well-being
- Less anxiety, stress, and hostility
- Fewer symptoms of depression

**FORGIVE YOURSELF.** Self-forgiveness can be “the most difficult to achieve,” yet “the most important to health”—mental and physical—according to the journal *Disability & Rehabilitation*. What can help you to forgive yourself?

- Do not expect perfection from yourself, but realistically accept that you—like all of us—will make mistakes.—Ecclesiastes 7:20
- Learn from your errors so that you will be less likely to repeat them
- Be patient with yourself; some personality flaws and bad habits may not go away overnight.—Ephesians 4:23, 24
- Associate with friends who are encouraging, positive, and kind but who will also be honest with you.—Proverbs 13:20
- If you hurt someone, take responsibility for it and be quick to apologize. When you make peace, you will gain inner peace.—Matthew 5: 23, 24

## BIBLE PRINCIPLES REALLY WORK!

After studying the Bible, Patricia, quoted at the outset, learned to forgive. “I feel liberated from the anger that poisoned my life,” she wrote. “I no longer suffer, and I don’t make others suffer. Bible principles confirm that God loves us and wants the best for us.”

A man named Ron said: “I could not control the thoughts and actions of others. But I could control my own. If I wanted peace, I had to let go of resentment. I began to view peace and resentment as north and south. I could not be in both places at the same time. I now have a good conscience.”

## KEY POINTS

“Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely.”

—Colossians 3:13.

## Forgiveness leads to . . .

- Healthier relationships and inner peace
- Less anxiety, hostility, and stress
- Improved physical, mental, and spiritual health



**HUMANS ARE UNIQUE IN MANY WAYS —WE WRITE, WE PAINT, WE CREATE, AND WE THINK ABOUT LIFE’S BIG QUESTIONS:** Why does the universe exist? How did we come to be? What is the purpose of life? What does the future hold?

Some people shy away from those questions, thinking that the answers are beyond us. Others say that such questions are pointless because life is a product of mindless evolution. “There are no gods, no purposes,” claimed professor of history and biology William Provine. He added: “There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life.”

Some people, however, consider that fatalistic outlook unacceptable. They see a universe that is governed by precise, elegant, mathematical laws. They marvel at the impressive designs in nature, some of which humans try to mimic in man-made products. And everyday experience tells them that complex, highly functional designs point to intelligence, not undirected forces.

Such reasoning has moved some evolutionists to reconsider their position. Note the following two examples.

**NEUROSURGEON DR. ALEXEI MARNOV.** “The schools I attended taught atheism and evolution,” he said. “Anyone believing in God was considered uninformed.” In 1990, however, his thinking began to change.

“I have always tried to understand the logical reason for things,” he explains, “including the human brain. This amazing organ has rightly been called the most complex structure in the known universe. But was the brain designed to gain knowledge and skills and then die? This seemed pointless, unreasonable. So I began to wonder: ‘Why are we here? What is the purpose of life?’

After some serious reflection, I concluded that there must be a Creator.”

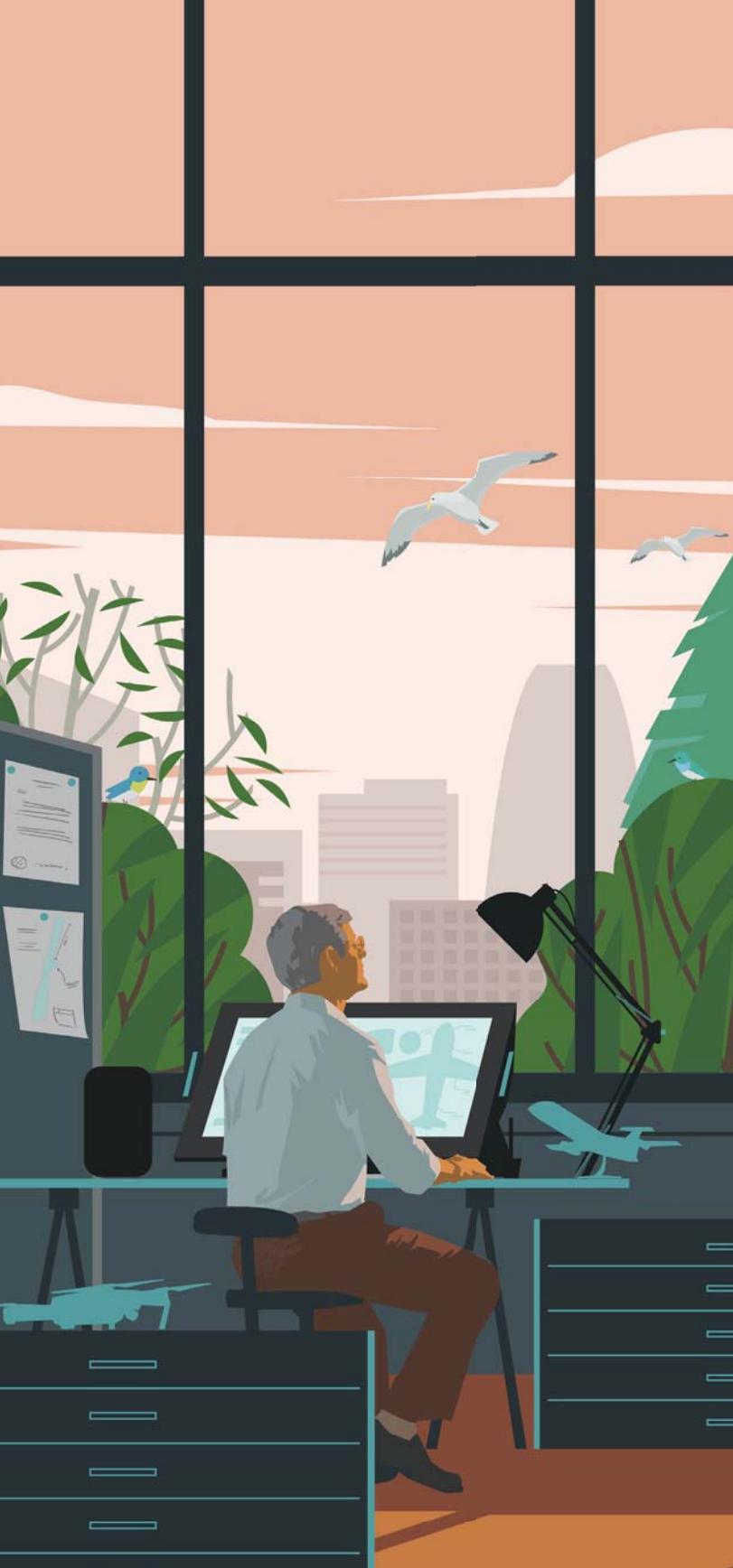
The quest for life’s purpose led Alexei to examine the Bible. Later, his wife, a medical doctor who was also an atheist, studied the Bible as well —initially to prove her husband wrong! Now, however, both firmly believe in God and understand his purpose for humankind as explained in the Scriptures.

**PLASMA SCIENTIST DR. HUABI YIN.** Huabi Yin studied physics, and for many years, she did research on plasma. Considered the fourth state of matter, plasma (as in the sun) is composed largely of electrons and positive ions.

“Whenever we scientists study natural phenomena,” says Huabi, “we always find a high degree of order, which is a result of precise laws. ‘How did these laws arise?’ I wondered. ‘If even a simple cooking fire must be carefully controlled, who is responsible for the laws that regulate the sun?’ In time, I concluded that the first statement in the Bible is the most logical answer: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’”—Genesis 1:1.

Science, to be sure, has shed light on many “how” questions, such as: How do brain cells work? And how does the sun generate heat and light? But as Alexei and Huabi discovered, the Bible answers the more important “why” questions: Why does the universe exist? Why is it governed by laws? And why do we exist?

Regarding the earth, the Bible says: “[God] did not create it simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited.” (Isaiah 45:18) Yes, God has a purpose for the earth, and as the next article will show, that purpose is closely related to our hope for the future.



## KEY POINTS

‘God did not create the earth simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited.’

—*Isaiah 45:18.*

“We need something to live for”

“To keep alive and mentally healthy we need something to live for,” wrote William McDougall, a professor of psychology. In a similar vein, Carol Ryff, also a professor of psychology, said that people whose “lives have purpose show widespread health benefits—they have reduced risk for cognitive [mental] impairment . . . , reduced risk for cardiovascular disease, better recovery profiles from stroke . . . and, relatedly, they live longer.”



THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

**HOPE**

“[I have] thoughts of peace,  
and not of calamity, to give you  
a future and a hope.”

—*Jeremiah 29:11.*

**“HOPE IS . . . AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFEblood,”** states the book *Hope in the Age of Anxiety*. “And it is the best medicine for overcoming feelings of helplessness, alienation, and fear.”

Our need for hope is reflected in the pages of the Bible, which also cautions us against false hopes. “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, who cannot bring salvation,” says Psalm 146:3. Instead of trusting in human efforts to save us, we are wise to trust in our Creator, who has the power to fulfill all his promises. What has he promised us? Consider the following.

**WICKEDNESS WILL END; LASTING PEACE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS WILL FOLLOW:** “Just a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more . . . But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace,” states Psalm 37:10, 11. Verse 29 adds that “the righteous . . . will live forever” on the earth.

**AN END TO WARFARE:** “Jehovah . . . is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the military wagons with fire.”—Psalm 46:8, 9.

**NO MORE SICKNESS, SUFFERING, OR DEATH:** “The tent of God is with mankind . . . He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—Revelation 21:3, 4.

**AMPLE FOOD FOR ALL:** “There will be an abundance of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains it will overflow.”—Psalm 72:16.

**A JUST RULERSHIP BY ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT—CHRIST’S KINGDOM:** “To [Jesus Christ] there were given rulership, honor, and a kingdom, that the peoples, nations, and language groups should all serve him. His rulership is an everlasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom will not be destroyed.”—Daniel 7:14.

How can we be sure of those promises? When on earth, Jesus publicly confirmed his credentials as King-Designate. He healed the sick, fed the

poor, and raised the dead. Even more important were his teachings, for they include principles that will enable people to live together forever in peace and unity. Jesus also foretold future events, including those that would mark the final days of the present world.

## **THE STORM BEFORE THE CALM**

Jesus foretold that the last days would be marked, not by peace and security, but by the very opposite! His composite sign of “the conclusion of the system of things” includes international warfare, food shortages, pestilences, and great earthquakes. (Matthew 24:3, 7; Luke 21:10, 11; Revelation 6:3-8) Jesus also said: “Because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold.”—Matthew 24:12.

That coldness is evident in many ways, which another Bible writer specifically foretold. At 2 Timothy 3:1-5, we read that in “the last days,” people in general would be obsessed with self, money, and pleasures. They would be arrogant and fierce. Families would lack natural affection, and children would be disobedient to parents. Religious hypocrisy would be commonplace.

**Those stormlike conditions confirm that this world is in its last days.** They also confirm that the calm of Kingdom rule is near. Indeed, Jesus included the following assurance in his prophecy about the last days: “This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14.

That good news gives fair warning to wrongdoers and hope to the righteous, assuring the latter that the promised blessings will soon become reality. Would you like to learn more about those blessings? If so, please turn to the back page of this magazine.

# THE WAY OF HAPPINESS LEARN MORE

## HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED:

How can my family be happy?

How can I make good friends  
and also be a good friend?

What hope is there for my  
dead loved ones?

Will suffering ever end?

Will humans eventually  
destroy the earth?

Do all religions lead  
to the true God?



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Visit the [jw.org](http://jw.org) website, which is available in more than 900 languages. There you can find helpful information on a broad range of topics.

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- Lasting Peace and Happiness  
—How to Find Them
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