

**YOU CAN BE
GOD'S FRIEND!**

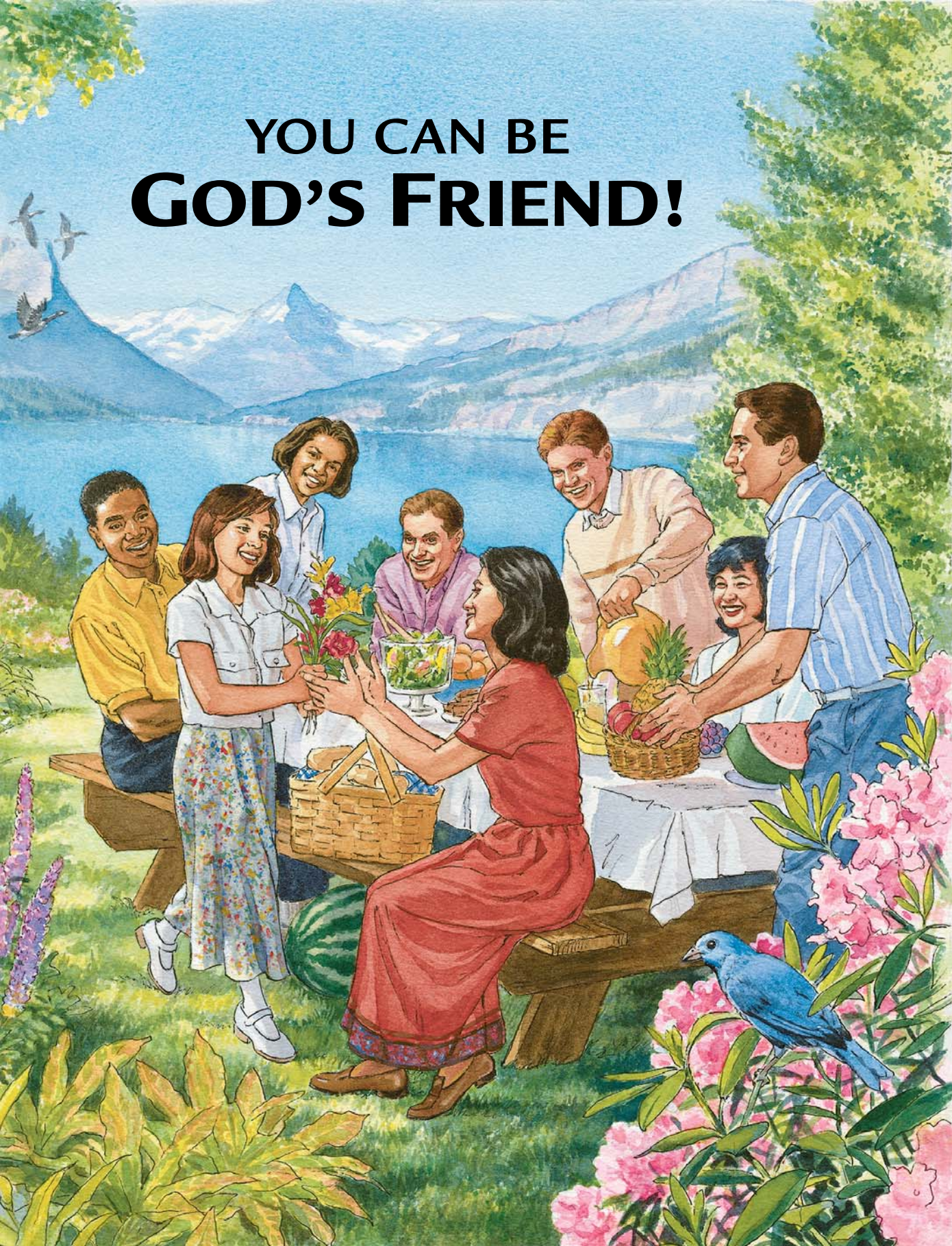


TABLE OF CONTENTS	LESSON
◆ God Invites You to Become His Friend	1
◆ God Is the Best Friend You Could Ever Have	2
◆ You Need to Learn About God	3
◆ How You Can Learn About God	4
◆ God's Friends Will Live in Paradise	5
◆ Paradise Is Near!	6
◆ A Warning From the Past	7
◆ Who Are God's Enemies?	8
◆ Who Are God's Friends?	9
◆ How to Find the True Religion	10
◆ Reject False Religion!	11
◆ What Happens at Death?	12
◆ Magic and Witchcraft Are Bad	13
◆ God's Friends Avoid What Is Bad	14
◆ God's Friends Do What Is Good	15
◆ Show Your Love for God	16
◆ To Keep a Friend, You Must Be a Friend	17
◆ Be God's Friend Forever!	18

© 2000
 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania
 All rights reserved
 Publishers:
 Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.
 International Bible Students Association,
 Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.
 First Printing in English: 5,000,000 Copies
 Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are
 from the modern-language *New World Translation of
 the Holy Scriptures—With References*
You Can Be God's Friend!
 English (gf-E)
 Made in the United States of America

GOD INVITES YOU TO BECOME HIS FRIEND

God wants you to be his friend. Have you ever thought that you could be a friend of the greatest Person in the universe? Abraham, who lived long ago, was called God's friend. (James 2:23) Others spoken of in the Bible also enjoyed God's friendship and were greatly blessed. Today, people from all parts of the earth have become friends of God. You too can be God's friend.

Being a friend of God is better than being a friend of any human. God never disappoints his loyal friends. (Psalm 18:25) Being a friend of God is better than having riches. When a rich person dies, his money goes to others. However, those who enjoy friendship with God have a treasure that no one can take away.—Matthew 6:19.

Some people may try to stop you from learning about God. Even some of your friends and family may do this. (Matthew 10:36, 37) If others laugh at you or threaten you, ask yourself, 'Whom do I want to please—humans or God?' Think about this: If someone told you to stop eating, would you obey him? Of course not! You need food to live. But God can make you live forever! So never let anyone stop you from learning how you can be a friend of God.—John 17:3.

GOD IS THE BEST FRIEND YOU COULD EVER HAVE

Becoming God's friend is the best thing that could ever happen to you. God will teach you how to be happy and secure; he will free you from many wrong beliefs and harmful practices. He will listen to your prayers. He will help you to enjoy inner peace and confidence. (Psalm 71:5; 73:28) God will support you during times of trouble. (Psalm 18:18) And God offers you his gift of everlasting life.—Romans 6:23.

As you draw close to God, you will draw close to friends of God. They will become your friends too. In fact, they will be like brothers and sisters to you. They will be happy to teach you about God and will help you and encourage you.

We are not equal to God. As you seek God's friendship, you must understand an important fact. Friendship with God is not a friendship between equals. He is far older and wiser and is more powerful than we are. He is our rightful Ruler. So if we want to be his friend, we must listen to him and do what he tells us to do. This will always work for our good.—Isaiah 48:18.

YOU NEED TO LEARN ABOUT GOD

To be God's friend, you need to learn about him. Do your friends know your name and use it? They do. God wants you to know and use his name too. God's name is Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18; Matthew 6:9) You must also learn what he likes and dislikes. You need to know who his friends are and who his enemies are. It takes time to get to know someone. The Bible says that it is wise to set aside time to learn about Jehovah.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

God's friends do what is pleasing to him. Think about your friends. If you treat them badly and do the things that they hate, will they continue to be your friends? Of course not! In the same way, if you want to be God's friend, you need to do what is pleasing to him.—John 4:24.

Not all religions lead to friendship with God. Jesus, who is God's closest friend, spoke of two roads. One road is wide and is filled with people. That road leads to destruction. The other road is narrow and has few people traveling on it. That road leads to everlasting life. This means that if you want to have God's friendship, you must learn the correct way to worship him.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

HOW YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT GOD

You can learn about Jehovah by reading the Bible. Long ago God picked certain humans to write down his thoughts. Those writings are called the Bible. Today we learn about God by reading the Bible. Because the Bible contains Jehovah's word, or message, it is also called God's Word. We can believe what the Bible says because Jehovah never lies. "It is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:18) God's Word contains the truth.—John 17:17.

The Bible is one of God's most precious gifts to us. It is like a letter from a loving father to his children. It tells us about God's promise to change the earth into a wonderful place to live—a paradise. It tells us what he has done in the past, what he is doing now, and what he will do in the future for his faithful children. It also helps us to solve our problems and to find happiness.—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Jehovah's Witnesses are friends of God; they will help you understand what the Bible teaches. Just tell them that you want to study the Bible. They do not charge money for this. (Matthew 10:8) In addition, you can attend Christian meetings. These are held in places of worship called Kingdom Halls. If you attend Christian meetings, you will rapidly grow in your knowledge of God.

You can learn about God from the things he has made. For example, the Bible says: "God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) When Jehovah created "the heavens," he made the sun. Now what does that tell us about God? It tells us that Jehovah has great power. Only he could make something as powerful as the sun. It also tells us that Jehovah is wise, since it required wisdom to make the sun, which gives out heat and light and never burns out.

Jehovah's creation shows that he loves us. Think about all the different kinds of fruits that there are on earth. Jehovah could have provided just one kind of fruit for us—or none at all. Instead, Jehovah gave us many types of fruit with a great variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and tastes. This shows that Jehovah is a God who is not only loving but also very generous and thoughtful and kind.—Psalm 104:24.

GOD'S FRIENDS WILL LIVE IN PARADISE

Paradise will not be like the world we live in now. God never wanted the earth to be filled with trouble and sorrow, pain and suffering. In the future, God will make the earth a paradise. What will Paradise be like? Let us see what the Bible says:

Good people. Paradise will be the home of God's friends. They will do good things for one another. They will live according to the righteous ways of God.—Proverbs 2:21.

Plenty of food. In Paradise, there will be no hunger. The Bible says: "There will come to be plenty of grain [or, food] on the earth."—Psalm 72:16.

Fine houses and enjoyable work. On the Paradise earth, every family will have a home of its own. Everyone will do work that brings true happiness.—Isaiah 65:21-23.

Peace worldwide. No longer will people fight and die in war. God's Word says: "[God] is making wars to cease."—Psalm 46: 8, 9.

Good health. The Bible promises: "No resident [of Paradise] will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) Also, no one will be lame or blind or deaf or unable to talk.—Isaiah 35:5, 6.

An end to pain, sorrow, and death. God's Word says: "Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:4.

Bad people will be gone. Jehovah promises: "The wicked . . . will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."—Proverbs 2:22.

People will love and respect one another. No longer will there be injustice, oppression, greed, and hatred. People will be united and will live in harmony with God's righteous ways.—Isaiah 26:9.

PARADISE IS NEAR!

The bad things that are now happening on earth show that Paradise is near. The Bible said that we would see terrible times just before the Paradise would come. We are living in such times now! Here are some of the things that the Bible said would happen:

Great wars. “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” (Matthew 24:7) This prophecy has come true. Since the year 1914, there have been two world wars and many smaller wars. Millions of people have died in them.

Widespread disease. There would be “in one place after another pestilences.” (Luke 21:11) Has this come true? Yes. Cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS, and other diseases have killed millions of people.

A lack of food. Throughout the earth there are people who do not have enough food to eat. Millions of people die of hunger every year. This is another sign that the Paradise will soon be here. The Bible says: “There will be food shortages.” —Mark 13:8.

Earthquakes. “There will be . . . earthquakes in one place after another.” (Matthew 24:7) This also has come true in our time. Over a million people have died in earthquakes since 1914.

Wicked people. People would be “lovers of money” and “lovers of themselves.” They would be “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” Children would be “disobedient to parents.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Do you not agree that there are many people like that today? They have no respect for God, and they make trouble for those who try to learn about God.

Crime. There would also be an “increasing of lawlessness.” (Matthew 24:12) Likely you will agree that crime is worse than it was years ago. People everywhere are at risk of being robbed, cheated, or harmed.

All these things show that God’s Kingdom is near. The Bible says: “When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near.” (Luke 21:31) What is the Kingdom of God? It is God’s heavenly government that will bring Paradise to this earth. God’s Kingdom will replace human governments.—Daniel 2:44.

A WARNING FROM THE PAST

Jehovah will not allow bad people to ruin Paradise. Only his friends will live there. What will happen to bad people? To learn the answer, consider the true story of Noah. Noah lived thousands of years ago. He was a good man who always tried hard to do Jehovah's will. But the other people on earth did bad things. So Jehovah told Noah that He was going to bring a flood to destroy all those wicked people. He told Noah to build an ark so that he and his family would not die when the Flood came.—Genesis 6:9-18.

Noah and his family built the ark. Noah warned people that the Flood was coming, but they did not listen to him. They continued to do bad things. After the ark was finished, Noah took animals into the ark, and he and his family also went inside. Then Jehovah brought a great storm. Rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights. The water flooded all the earth.—Genesis 7:7-12.

The wicked people lost their lives, but Noah and his family were saved. Jehovah brought them safely through the Flood into an earth cleansed of wickedness. (Genesis 7:22, 23) The Bible says that once again the time is coming when Jehovah will destroy those who refuse to do what is right. Good people will not be destroyed. They will live forever on the Paradise earth.—2 Peter 2:5, 6, 9.

Today many people do bad things. The world is full of trouble. Jehovah sends his Witnesses again and again to warn the people, yet most do not want to listen to Jehovah's words. They do not want to change their ways. They do not want to accept what God says about right and wrong. What will happen to these people? Will they change someday? Many will never change. The time is coming when wicked people will be destroyed and will never live again.—Psalm 92:7.

The earth will not be destroyed; it will be made into a paradise. Those who become God's friends will live forever in the Paradise on earth.—Psalm 37:29.

WHO ARE GOD'S ENEMIES?

God's chief enemy is Satan the Devil. He is a spirit creature who rebelled against Jehovah. Satan continues to fight against God and causes great trouble for humans. Satan is evil. He is a liar and a murderer.—John 8:44.

Other spirit creatures joined Satan in his rebellion against God. The Bible calls them demons. Like Satan, the demons are enemies of humans. They like to hurt people. (Matthew 9:32, 33; 12:22) Jehovah will destroy Satan and his demons forever. They have only a short time left to make trouble for humans.—Revelation 12:12.

If you want to be God's friend, you must not do what Satan wants you to do. Satan and the demons hate Jehovah. They are enemies of God, and they want to make you an enemy of God. You must choose whom you want to please—Satan or Jehovah. If you want everlasting life, you must choose to do God's will. Satan has many tricks and ways to deceive people. Most people are being fooled by him.—Revelation 12:9.

WHO ARE GOD'S FRIENDS?

Jesus Christ is Jehovah's Son and his closest, dearest friend. Before he lived as a man on earth, Jesus lived in heaven as a mighty spirit creature. (John 17:5) Then he came to earth to teach people the truth about God. (John 18:37) He also gave his human life to save obedient humans from sin and death. (Romans 6:23) Jesus is now the King of God's Kingdom, a heavenly government that will bring Paradise to this earth.—Revelation 19:16.

The angels are also God's friends. The angels did not begin their lives as humans on earth. They were created in heaven before God made the earth. (Job 38:4-7) There are millions of angels. (Daniel 7:10) These heavenly friends of God want people to learn the truth about Jehovah.—Revelation 14:6, 7.

God also has friends on the earth; he calls them his witnesses. A witness in court tells what he knows about someone or something. Jehovah's Witnesses tell others what they know about Jehovah and his purpose. (Isaiah 43:10) Like the angels, the Witnesses want to help you learn the truth about Jehovah. They want you to be God's friend too.

HOW TO FIND THE TRUE RELIGION

If you want to be a friend of God, you must practice the religion that God approves. Jesus said that “the true worshipers” would worship God in harmony with “truth.” (John 4:23, 24) There is only one correct way to worship God. (Ephesians 4:4-6) True religion leads to everlasting life, and false religion leads to destruction.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

You can recognize true religion by watching the people who practice it. Since Jehovah is good, those who are his true worshipers must be good people. Just as a good orange tree produces fine oranges, the true religion produces fine people.—Matthew 7:15-20.

Jehovah’s friends have deep respect for the Bible. They know that the Bible is from God. They allow what it says to guide their lives, to solve their problems, and to help them learn about God. (2 Timothy 3:16) They try to practice what they preach.

Jehovah's friends show love for one another. Jesus showed love for people by teaching them about God, by curing those who were sick. Those who practice the true religion also show love to others. Like Jesus, they do not look down on those who are poor or are of a different ethnic group. Jesus said that people would know his disciples by the love they show for one another.—John 13:35.

God's friends honor God's name, Jehovah. If someone refused to use your name, would that person be your close friend? No! When we have a friend, we use his name and we say good things about that friend to others. So those who wish to be God's friends should use his name and talk about him to others. Jehovah wants us to do that.—Matthew 6:9; Romans 10:13, 14.

Like Jesus, God's friends teach people about God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is the heavenly government that will make the earth a paradise. God's friends share this good news about God's Kingdom with others.—Matthew 24:14.

Jehovah's Witnesses try to be friends of God. They respect the Bible and have love among themselves. They also use and honor God's name and teach others about God's Kingdom. Jehovah's Witnesses practice the true religion on earth today.

REJECT FALSE RELIGION!

Satan and his demons do not want you to serve God. They want to turn everyone away from God if they can. How do they try to do this? One way is through false religion. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) A religion is false if it does not teach the truth from the Bible. False religion is like false money—it may look like the real thing, but it is worthless. It can cause you much trouble.

Religious falsehood can never please Jehovah, the God of truth. When Jesus was on earth, there was a religious group who wanted to kill him. They thought that their way of worship was the right way. They said: “We have one Father, God.” Did Jesus agree? No! He said to them: “You are from your father the Devil.” (John 8:41, 44) Today many people think that they are worshiping God, but they are really serving Satan and his demons!—1 Corinthians 10:20.

Just as a rotten tree produces bad fruit, false religion produces people who do bad things. The world is full of trouble because of the bad things people do. There is immorality, fighting, stealing, oppression, murder, and rape. Many who do these bad things have a religion, but their religion does not move them to practice what is good. They cannot be God's friends unless they stop doing bad things.—Matthew 7:17, 18.

False religion teaches people to pray to idols. God says not to pray to idols. This is reasonable. Would you like it if someone never talked to you but only talked to your picture? Could that person be your true friend? No, he could not. Jehovah wants people to talk to him, not to a statue or a picture, which has no life.—Exodus 20:4, 5.

False religion teaches that it is all right to kill others in time of war. Jesus said that God's friends would have love among themselves. We do not kill people we love. (John 13:35) It is even wrong for us to kill bad people. When the enemies of Jesus came to arrest him, he did not let his disciples fight to protect him.—Matthew 26:51, 52.

False religion teaches that the wicked will suffer in hellfire. Yet, the Bible teaches that sin leads to death. (Romans 6:23) Jehovah is a God of love. Would a loving God torment people forever? Of course not! In Paradise, there will be only one religion, the one that Jehovah approves. (Revelation 15:4) All religions based on Satan's lies will be gone.

WHAT HAPPENS AT DEATH?

Death is the opposite of life. Death is like a deep sleep. (John 11:11-14) The dead are unable to hear, see, speak, or think anything. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) False religion teaches that the dead go to a spirit world to live with their ancestors. That is not what the Bible teaches.

Those who have died cannot help us, and they cannot harm us. It is common for people to perform rituals and sacrifices that they believe will please those who have died. This is displeasing to God because it is based on one of Satan's lies. It cannot please the dead either, since they are lifeless. We should not fear or worship the dead. We should worship only God. —Matthew 4:10.

The dead will live again. Jehovah will awaken the dead to life on a paradise earth. That time is yet future. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) God can awaken those who have died just as surely as you can awaken a person from sleep.—Mark 5:22, 23, 41, 42.

The idea that we do not die is a lie spread by Satan the Devil. Satan and his demons make people think that spirits of the dead are alive and cause sickness and other problems. Satan deceives people, at times through dreams and visions. Jehovah condemns those who try to talk to the dead.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT ARE BAD

Satan wants you to practice magic.

Many make sacrifices to ancestors or spirits to protect themselves from harm. They do this because they fear the powers of the spirit world. They wear magical rings or bracelets. They drink or rub on their bodies “medicines” that are supposed to have magical power. In their homes or in the ground, some people hide articles believed to have protective powers. Others use magical “medicine” because they believe it will bring success in business, school exams, or courtship.

Your best protection against Satan is to have Jehovah as your friend. Jehovah God and his angels are far more powerful than Satan and his demons. (James 2:19; Revelation 12:9) Jehovah is eager to show his strength in behalf of his friends—those who are completely loyal to him.—2 Chronicles 16:9.

God’s Word says: “You must not practice magic.” Jehovah condemns magic and witchcraft because those practices can put one directly under the power of Satan the Devil.—Leviticus 19:26.

GOD'S FRIENDS AVOID WHAT IS BAD

Satan tempts people to do bad things. A person who wants to be God's friend needs to hate what Jehovah hates. (Psalm 97:10) Here are some things that God's friends avoid:

Sexual sins. "You must not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) Having sex before marriage is also wrong.—1 Corinthians 6:18.

Drunkenness. "Drunkards . . . will [not] inherit God's kingdom."—1 Corinthians 6:10.

Murder, Abortion. "You must not murder."—Exodus 20:13.

Theft. "You must not steal."
—Exodus 20:15.

Lying. Jehovah hates "a false tongue."—Proverbs 6:17.

Violence and Uncontrolled Anger. “Anyone loving violence [Jehovah] certainly hates.” (Psalm 11:5) “The works of the flesh [include] . . . fits of anger.”—Galatians 5:19, 20.

Gambling. “Quit mixing in company with anyone . . . that is a . . . greedy person.”—1 Corinthians 5:11.

Racial and Ethnic Hatreds. “Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you.”—Matthew 5:43, 44.

The things God tells us are for our good. It is not always easy to avoid doing bad things. With Jehovah’s help and with the help of his Witnesses, you can avoid doing the things that displease God.—Isaiah 48:17; Philipians 4:13; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

GOD'S FRIENDS DO WHAT IS GOOD

When you have a friend whom you admire and respect, you try to be like him. “Good and upright is Jehovah,” says the Bible. (Psalm 25:8) To be God’s friend, we must be good and upright. The Bible says: “Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love.” (Ephesians 5:1, 2) Here are some ways to do that:

Be helpful to others. “Let us work what is good toward all.”—Galatians 6:10.

Work hard. “Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work.”—Ephesians 4:28.

Keep physically and morally clean. “Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God’s fear.”—2 Corinthians 7:1.

Treat your family members with love and respect. “Let each one of you . . . love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband. Children, be obedient to your parents.”—Ephesians 5:33–6:1.

Show love to others. “Let us continue loving one another, because love is from God.”—1 John 4:7.

Obey the laws of the land. “Let every soul be in subjection to the [government] . . . Render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax.”—Romans 13:1, 7.

SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR GOD

To keep a friend, you need to talk with him. You listen to him, and he listens to you. You also say good things about your friend to others. It is the same with being a friend of God. Consider what the Bible says about this:

Talk to Jehovah regularly in prayer. “Persevere in prayer.”—Romans 12:12.

Read God’s Word, the Bible. “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight.”—2 Timothy 3:16.

Teach others about God. “Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.”—Matthew 28:19, 20.

KINGDOM HALL of Jehovah's Witnesses

Draw close to God's friends. “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise.”—Proverbs 13:20.

Attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall. “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, . . . encouraging one another.”—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Help support the Kingdom work. “Let each one [give] just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”—2 Corinthians 9:7.

TO KEEP A FRIEND, YOU MUST BE A FRIEND

Friendship is based on love. The more you learn about Jehovah, the greater will be your love for him. As your love for God grows, your desire to serve him will also grow. This will move you to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19) By joining the happy family of Jehovah's Witnesses, you can experience God's friendship forever. What must you do?

You must show your love for God by obeying his laws. "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome."—1 John 5:3.

Apply what you learn. Jesus told a story that illustrates this. A wise man built his house on rock. A foolish man built his house on sand. When a great storm came, the house built on rock did not cave in, but the house built on sand fell with a great crash. Jesus said that those who hear his teachings and do them are like the wise man who built on rock. But those who listen to his teachings and do not do them are like the foolish man who built on sand. Which man do you want to be like?—Matthew 7: 24-27.

Dedication. This means that you go to Jehovah in prayer and tell him that you want to do his will forever. Doing God's will shows that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.—Matthew 11:29.

Baptism. “Get baptized and wash your sins away by your calling upon his name.”—Acts 22:16.

Become fully involved in serving God. “Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.”—Colossians 3:23.

BE GOD'S FRIEND FOREVER!

It takes effort to make a friend; it takes effort to keep a friend. Your efforts to become and remain a friend of God will be richly blessed. Jesus said to those who believed in him: “The truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) What does that mean?

You can enjoy freedom now. You can be free from the false teachings and lies that have been spread by Satan. You can be free from the hopelessness that fills the lives of millions of people who do not know Jehovah. (Romans 8:22) God's friends are even free from the “fear of death.”—Hebrews 2:14, 15.

You can enjoy freedom in God's new world. What marvelous freedom you can enjoy in the future! In the Paradise earth, there will be freedom from war, sickness, and crime. Freedom from poverty and hunger. Freedom from old age and death. Freedom from fear, oppression, and injustice. The Bible says of God: “You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing.”—Psalm 145:16.

God's friends will live forever.

Everlasting life is a precious gift that God will give to all who seek his friendship. (Romans 6:23) Just think of what endless life would mean for you!

You will have time to do many things. Perhaps you would like to learn how to play a musical instrument. Or maybe you want to learn to paint pictures or to be a carpenter. You might like to learn about animals or plants. Or possibly you want to travel and see different lands and peoples. Having everlasting life will make all these things possible!

You will have time to make many friends. Living forever will make it possible to get to know many others who have become God's friends. You will come to know their talents and fine qualities, and they will be your friends too. You will love them, and they will love you. (1 Corinthians 13:8) Having endless life will give you the time to befriend everyone on earth! Best of all, your friendship with Jehovah will grow ever stronger as the centuries pass. **May you be God's friend forever!**

Would you welcome more information?

Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address below.

gf-E