



**Biblical Scriptures Jehovah's Witnesses Use to Ban
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Biblical Scriptures Jehovah's Witnesses Use to Ban Blood Transfusions

Jehovah's Witnesses follow the dictates of an organization called the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (also known as the Watchtower Society). Citing several passages of Scripture which they claim prohibit the transfusion of blood into the human body, the leadership of the Watchtower makes adherence to their unique interpretation of these verses, a matter of spiritual life or death for the rank and file Jehovah's Witness. Any person who is caught breaking these policies, is deemed to have violated the commands of Jehovah God and may be subjected to disciplinary action, often expulsion from the religion.

Disfellowshipping is a serious offense in which the Jehovah's Witness adherent is isolated from friends and family, completely cut off from communication, and worse yet, told that they are under Jehovah's God's condemnation. The pressure to conform to these standards when facing life or death medical decisions, such as in the case of deciding whether or not to take a life-saving blood transfusion, further compromises the emotional and physical well-being of the individuals caught in the grasp of the Watchtower Blood Policy.

Given these considerations, it is important to recognize that anyone dealing with these issues with a friend or loved one must be sensitive to the social and emotional issues at stake for the individual Jehovah's Witness. It is truly impossible for a Jehovah's Witness to consider changing their perspective on these points of doctrine without risking the severe consequences of being disfellowshipped and shunned by their Jehovah's Witness friends if they chose a course of action that violates Watchtower policy.

Examining the Jehovah's Witness Blood Policy

The key Scriptures Jehovah's Witnesses use to prohibit blood are Genesis 9:3-4, Leviticus 17:13-14 and Acts 15:28-29. While Christians of all denominations agree that these biblical passages disallow the eating of blood from killed animals, they strongly disagree with the Watchtower's claim that these verses also forbid the transfusion of human blood to replace what was lost in the circulatory system of another human.

Despite the medical evidence that that blood that has been transfused into the human body does not get metabolized (eaten) by the body, Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that blood transfusions fall under the same condemnation that eating sacrificial animal blood does in the Scriptures. The following examination of these biblical Scriptures reveals the flawed reasoning of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society:

GENESIS 9:3-4: "Every moving animal that is alive may serve as **food for you**. Just as I gave you the green vegetation, I give them all to you. Only flesh with its life—**its blood—you must not eat.**"¹

- In this passage of Scripture, God instructs humans not to eat the blood of animals for food. Notice that there is no reference to the medical use of blood for human organ or tissue transplants. Ironically, the Watchtower Society admits: "**Blood is an organ of the body, and a blood transfusion is nothing less than an organ transplant.**" (*Awake!* August 22, 1999, page 31) and they allow organ transplants saying: "The Witnesses do not feel that the Bible comments directly on organ transplants; hence, decisions regarding cornea, kidney, or other tissue transplants must be made by the individual Witness." (*How Can Blood Save Your Life?*, 1990, page 28). Yet, the Watchtower strictly prohibits organ transplants that are in the form of a blood transfusion.

LEVITICUS 17:13-14: "If one of the Israelites or some foreigner who is residing in your midst is hunting and catches a wild animal or a bird that may be eaten, **he must pour its blood out** and cover it with dust. For the **life of every sort of flesh is its blood**, because the life is in it. Consequently, I said to the Israelites: '**You must not eat the blood** of any sort of flesh because the life of every sort of flesh is its blood. Anyone eating it will be cut off.' " (*New World Translation*)

- This passage repeats God's command against eating the blood of an animal killed for food. Again, there is no mention of human blood in this passage, nor does it condemn the replacement of human blood being used to preserve life. Rather, the opposite is indicated by the statement that the "life of every sort of flesh is in its blood" God values all human life and would rather that human life be preserved through the preservation of human blood. Therefore, when this passage declares that the blood of a killed animal must be

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are quoted from the 2013 edition of the Jehovah's Witness Bible, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

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poured out on the ground, it is asserting that this action must take place to ensure the death of the animal before that animal is to be eaten. The pouring out of blood on the ground is not to preserve life, but to end it!

Consider this! The sole purpose of a blood transfusion is to preserve life, as “the **life of every sort of flesh is its blood**,” so when the Watchtower demands that human blood is to be poured out on the ground, like what is done with a sacrificed animal, the Watchtower Society has become guilty for the sacrificial death of countless devoted followers, as they not only have misapplied Scripture to prevent blood transfusions, but they continue to use this Scripture to reject the medical procedure of autologous transfusions, in which the patient's own blood is stored later use during surgery.

ACTS 15:28-29: “For the holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you except these necessary things: to **keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled**, and from sexual immorality. If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper. Good health to you!” (*New World Translation*)

- Here again, this statement to abstain from blood is packed within the context of not eating sacrificed animals and strangled meat. Yet, the Watchtower misapplies this phrase “to keep abstaining ...from blood” to prohibit the transfusions of blood and components of whole blood cells.

On page 73 of their publication, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, the Watchtower Society instructs Jehovah's Witnesses to view this passage in the context of intravenous feeding. They assert:

“In a hospital, when a person cannot eat through his mouth, he is fed intravenously. Now, would a person who never put blood into his mouth but who accepted blood by transfusion really be obeying the command to ‘keep abstaining from...blood’?...To use a comparison, consider a man who is told by the doctor that he must abstain from alcohol. Would he be obedient if he quit drinking alcohol but had it put directly into his veins?”

In this scenario, the Watchtower likens intravenous blood transfusions to intravenous feeding. The two are completely incomparable! When nutrition is fed into a person's veins, that substance does not retain its original composition but gets broken down, and in a sense, digested by the human body through the process of metabolism. Yet, when blood is transfused in the veins, it retains its composition and serves as a mere replacement of the blood that was lost. As such, it serves as an “organ” or “tissue” transplant. Even the Watchtower Society agrees with this medical aspect of a blood transfusions, as noted earlier, yet they still condemn transfusions as “eating” blood!

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It seems incredible that the Watchtower Society continues to deny blood transfusions for Jehovah's Witnesses while admitting that a blood transfusion is "nothing less" than an organ or tissue transplant, both of which are acceptable to Jehovah's Witnesses. Note the following statements from the Watchtower:

"When doctors transplant a heart, a liver, or another organ, the recipient's immune system may sense the foreign tissue and reject it. Yet, a **transfusion is a tissue transplant.**" — *How Can Blood Save Your Life*, p. 8

"The Witnesses do not feel that the Bible comments directly on **organ transplants**; hence, decisions regarding cornea, kidney, or other **tissue transplants must be made by the individual Witness.**" — *How Can Blood Save Your Life?*, 1990, p. 28

"**Blood is an organ of the body**, and blood transfusion is nothing less than an organ transplant." — *Awake!* August 22, 1999, p. 31

As noted in the prior section, there is nothing in Scripture that condemns that sustaining of human life through the transplanting of blood, tissue, or any other organ of the body, and even Jehovah's Witnesses today agree that anyone who would apply these passages of Scripture to reject an organ transplant would be misinterpreting Scripture. Yet, this is exactly what the Watchtower did when they banned vaccinations for their followers from 1921 to 1952,² and then rejected organ transplants from 1967 to 1980.³

In both instances, the Watchtower used the same faulty reasoning on these verses claiming that receiving an organ transplant or a vaccination amounted to eating blood! Yet, today they readily reject such flawed interpretation of Scripture when it comes to these other medical procedures, while vigorously defending the same flawed reasoning when it comes to their view of blood transfusions. With a history of twisted interpretations of the Bible being mixed with faulty medical advice, one has to question how Jehovah's Witnesses today can continue to blindly follow the medical dictates of the Watchtower organization, even to the point of losing their lives over these very same policies that may later be completely dropped.

JEHOVAH GOD ALLOWS BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS AND BLOOD COMPONENTS TO TRANSFER BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS NATURALLY IN HIS CREATED ORDER.

Doctors Frank Oski and Lawrence Naiman stated: "Accumulated evidence indicates that leukocytes [white blood cells], platelets, and erythrocytes [red blood cells] traverse the placental barrier....Fetal red cells can be demonstrated in the maternal circulation in approximately 50 per

² See *The Golden Age*, October 12, 1921, p. 17; *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1952, p. 764.

³ *The Watchtower*, November 15, 1967, p. 702; *The Watchtower*, March 15, 1980, p. 31.

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cent of all pregnancies.”⁴ Further evidence indicates that blood transfusion of whole white blood cells (Leukocytes) likewise transfer naturally from mother to baby when breastfeeding.⁵

Given the evidence that whole blood components and blood fractions transverse the placenta barrier in the womb, the Watchtower Society updated its no blood policy in 1990 to accept medical products made from blood fractions,⁶ yet they continue to reject transfusions of whole blood or any of its primary components.

Therefore, if Jehovah God allows blood transfusions to take place naturally in His created world, how can the medical transfusion of whole blood cells from one person to another be a violation of His law against eating blood? It is clear that the Watchtower's strict “no blood” policy is not followed by Jehovah God Himself.

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In light of this evidence that the Watchtower's current policy against blood transfusions goes against the proper interpretation of biblical Scripture and medical science that indicates a blood transfusion does not constitute “eating blood,” one can only conclude that any Jehovah's Witness who chooses to adhere to this flawed policy does so at the risk of making these 3 Big Mistakes:

1.) They Risk Sacrificing Themselves on the Altar of Deception.

If the current “no blood” policy of the Watchtower is wrong in its application to blood transfusions, could it not be considered a major deception that is being forced upon the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses who reject blood transfusions today? How do you think the Jehovah's Witnesses who lost their loved ones due to the Watchtower's previous ban against organ transplants felt when the Watchtower reversed its policy in 1980? Did their Jehovah's Witness relatives give their lives for a lie?

Considering the many reasons blood transfusions should not be viewed as a violation of God's blood law, how do we know that the Watchtower's current ban on blood transfusions won't be completely reversed in the near future? Is it worth sacrificing one's life over a policy that may be reversed and considered “old light” (i.e., wrong) in a few years?

⁴ *Hematologic Problems In the Newborn, 3rd Edition, 1982*, by Frank A. Oski M.D. and J. Lawrence Naiman M.D., p. 41. See also *A Pictorial Handbook of Anatomy and Physiology, 1978*, by James Brevan, p. 36.

⁵ See *Breastfeeding – A Guide for the Medical Profession, 4th edition*, by Ruth A. Lawrence (Mosby – Year Book, Inc 1994), p. 154.

⁶ See *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1990, p. 31.

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2.) They Risk Making Themselves Blood Guilty for the Death of Innocent People Under Their Care.

We have already seen how the Watchtower misapplies Leviticus 17:13-14 to claim that this Scripture requires human blood to be poured out on the ground once it has left the human body. Yet, that is a serious misrepresentation of Scripture as Jehovah God clearly condemns the pouring out of human blood.

At Genesis 9:5-6, immediately following the verses where Jehovah God commands us not to eat the blood of slain animals, God states: *"Besides that, I will demand an accounting for your lifeblood. I will demand an accounting from every living creature; and from each man I will demand an accounting for the life of his brother. Anyone shedding man's blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God's image He made man."*

Ironically, the very context of God's first command on blood shows a direct distinction between the handling of human blood and that of animal blood. Thus, anyone who would apply God's blood law to claim that human blood that is lost during surgery (or some other condition) must be poured out on the ground is severely misrepresenting Scripture. The context in each of the passages of God's blood law, refer to either pouring out sacrificial blood or shedding animal blood prior to food consumption. Since neither of these situations apply to the medical procedures that are used in saving a human life, these passages do not apply to human blood. Therefore, we can only conclude that just as it states in Genesis 9:5-6, anyone who misapplies these verses to shed human blood by refusing a blood transfusion will be held accountable for the loss of that life.

Furthermore, the Jehovah's Witness ban on blood transfusions extends far beyond the immediate reach of Jehovah's Witness adherents. As documented in the story below, not only are Jehovah's Witnesses pressured by their leaders to refuse blood transfusions for their own children, they are also pressured into refusing blood transfusions for non-Jehovah's Witness relatives who are under their care.

The Advocates for Jehovah's Witness Reform on Blood (<http://ajwrb.org>) is a website created by eight Jehovah's Witness elders who have been a part of the Watchtower Society's Hospital Liaison Committee. This committee is made up of a group of elders created by the Watchtower to advise medical personnel when treating Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. This website features a number of inconsistencies within the Jehovah's Witness blood policy and has officially challenged the Watchtower Society to reconsider its blood policies in light of the evidence.

Along with their articles, they present stories where Jehovah's Witnesses have nearly lost loved ones through the "no blood" issue. One story, "JW Elders Pressure Non-Believers to Conform" posted on August 17, 2017,⁷ tells of a situation where a Jehovah's Witness was given the choice to decide whether his non-Jehovah's Witness father could receive a blood transfusion that he

⁷ See: <http://ajwrb.org/jw-elders-pressure-non-believers-to-conform>

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needed prior to surgery. Being pressured into refusing the transfusion, his non-Jehovah's Witness brother drove 100 miles to the hospital to sign the medical directive for the badly needed transfusion, just in time before the last one of his father's veins was about to collapse. His father survived the surgery, due to the courageous act of this non-Jehovah's Witness brother.

This story, along with the 26 photos of children featured on the cover of the May 22, 1994 *Awake!* Magazine (a publication of the Watchtower) with the caption: "Youths Who Put God First," provides a visible representation of the countless lives that have been lost due to the decision of Jehovah's Witness caretakers and the "no blood" policy of the Watchtower Society. Is there any doubt that adhering to the "no blood" policy of the Watchtower Society has made these Jehovah's Witness caretakers "blood guilty"?

3.) They Risk Sacrificing Their Own Blood in Exchange for Christ's Sacrifice – Rendering the Blood of Christ Null and Void in Atoning for Their Sins.

Hebrews 9:22 states: *"Yes, according to the Law nearly all things are cleansed with blood, and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place."* In this passage, we see how God's blood law is applied to the killing of animal sacrifices which were required as a temporary atonement for sin. Until Jesus Christ fulfilled God's blood law by allowing His own blood to be shed to atone for the sins of all mankind, there was no other way to satisfy the justice of Jehovah God and yet grant the mercy that He offers to those who repent.

Only in personally accepting this ransom sacrifice of Christ and receiving His blood shed as a substitutionary payment for our sins, can this pardon for sin be applied to our sin-debt before Jehovah. Thus, Scripture goes on to state at Hebrews 9:26-28 and 10:14: *"But now he [Christ] has manifested himself once for all time... to do away with sin through the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is reserved for men to die once for all time, but after this to receive the judgement, so also the Christ was offered once for all time to bear the sins of many... and he will be seen by those earnestly looking for him for their salvation. ...For it is by one sacrificial offering that he has made those who are being sanctified perfect for all time."*

The apostle Paul echoed these ideas when he explained how his old method of trying to make himself righteous through obedience to God's law, only revealed how sinful he was. He explained at Romans 3:20: *"Therefore, no one will be declared righteous before him by works of law, for by law comes the accurate knowledge of sin."*

This is why, personal obedience to God's law today does not result in a person being declared righteous. It is because no matter how hard you try, you can never be good enough for God's standard of perfection, just as Jesus said at Matthew 5:48: *"You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* If we are to be righteous on our own, we must not break even one commandment given in the law: *"For if anyone obeys all the Law but makes a false step in one point, he has become an offender against all of it."* (James 2:10). This is why the Bible explains that the purpose of the law of God is to show us where we fall short so that we can see

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our need for the Savior to fulfil the law in our place and pay the price for our sin-debt that we couldn't pay. Paul explains in Galatians 2:15-16, 21:

"We ...recognize that a man is declared righteous, not by works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. So we have put our faith in Christ Jesus, so that we may be declared righteous by faith in Christ and not by works of law, for no one will be declared righteous by works of law. ...I do not reject the undeserved kindness of God, for if righteousness is through law, Christ actually died for nothing."

Thus, we see that anyone who seeks to earn Jehovah's approval by requiring his own blood to be "poured out" in so-called obedience to God's blood law, is essentially violating the very terms of God's blood law covenant that was fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice. By insisting that the individual's own blood be shed, he or she is essentially denying the substitutionary atonement of Christ's blood being spilt on his or her behalf and in so doing makes the blood of Christ null and void in taking away their sins.

The Scripture is clear *"...for if righteousness is through law, Christ actually died for nothing."* You can't have two simultaneous blood sacrifices. Either you are trusting Christ's shed blood to take away your sins before Jehovah God, or you are trusting your own shed blood. Therefore Galatians 5:4 states: *"You are separated from Christ, you who are trying to be declared righteous by means of law; you have fallen away from his undeserved kindness."*

In other words, if you try to obey a so-called blood "law" to earn righteousness before Jehovah God, *"you have fallen away from his underserved kindness."* Therefore, you are either trusting in Christ's blood shed for forgiveness of your sins or you are trusting in own shed blood. Both sacrifices are mutually exclusive. You are either trusting one or the other. You cannot have it both ways.

A CALL FOR REPENTENCE:

Here we see the bad news: *"There is not a righteous man, not even one. ... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:10, 23) Yet, the good news is that *"it is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus. God presented him as an offering for propitiation through faith in his blood."* (Romans 3:24-25) Do you have "faith" in the "blood" of Jesus? If so, repent of your sins and stop trusting your own blood to save you. Trust in the all-sufficient, shed blood of Christ and ask Him to stand in your place at the judgement seat of Jehovah God. Remember that Jesus says: *"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ...and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice."* Do you hear the "voice" of Jesus calling you "by name"? Then listen to his voice and come to Him with your prayer of repentance in order to receive His "free gift" of "eternal life." Jesus promises at John 10:27-28, *"My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*