



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' NO BLOOD TRANSFUSION DOCTRINE DOES GOD ALLOW BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS?

By George Lujack

According to official Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine, Scripture prohibits the human-to-human transfusion of blood, even in the case of a medical emergency where the patient faces certain death. This article will reveal that blood transfusions are permissible with God and will expose the Jehovah's Witnesses' No Blood Transfusion doctrine as erroneous and misguided.

The (8) basic tenet beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses' blood doctrine are discussed and refuted here to reveal the truth and expose the falseness of these doctrines.

THE 8 - BASIC TENETS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' NO BLOOD TRANSFUSION DOCTRINE:

1. Blood is sacred to God [1].

REBUTTAL:

Scripture does not say that blood, in and of itself, is sacred. Only Yeshua Messiah's (Jesus Christ's) blood was sacred. Yeshua (Jesus) is the Son of God and everything about Yeshua (Jesus) is and was sacred, including Yeshua's (Jesus') blood that was shed on the cross.

2. Blood means life in God's eyes [2].

REBUTTAL:

Blood does not mean life in God's eyes. The life OF THE FLESH is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), meaning that the life of flesh is impossible without blood. Life is of the flesh and blood *is a fluid* that SUSTAINS life (Leviticus 17:14).

3. Blood must not be eaten or transfused [3].

REBUTTAL:

While it is true that blood should never be eaten, Scripture does not address human-to-human transfusion of blood for the purpose of sustaining life. Scripture directly forbids the EATING OF BLOOD FROM BIRDS AND BEASTS (Leviticus 7:26, 17:13). Scripture does not forbid human-to-human transfusions of blood.

4. Blood leaving the body of a human or animal must be disposed of, except for autologous blood transfusions considered part of a 'current therapy' [4][5][6].

REBUTTAL:

Blood leaving the body of animals, AFTER BEING KILLED either for food or sacrifice, is to be drained and that blood should normally be properly disposed of (Leviticus 17:13; Deuteronomy 12:16, 15:23). However, Scripture also records that animal blood obtained from sacrifices was gathered and handled by priests and used in various rituals as commanded by God (Exodus 24:6-8, 29:12-21; Leviticus 1:5-11, 3:2-13, 4:5-34, 5:9, 6:27-30, 7:2-14, 8:15-30, 9:9-18, 14:14-28, 51-52, 16:14-19, 17:6; Numbers 18:17, 19:4-5, 2 Chronicles 30:16, 35:1). Additionally, during the Exodus from Egypt, Hebrews placed blood above and around their doors to avoid God's final plague of the death of the firstborns of Egypt (Exodus 12:13-23). Autologous blood transfusions (blood donations made by the donor to be used by the donor - typically for a scheduled surgery) are not forbidden. Furthermore, human-to-human blood transfusions are not prohibited in Scripture.

5. Blood was reserved for only one special use, the atonement for sins, which led up to Jesus' shed blood [4][7].

REBUTTAL:

Shed ANIMAL BLOOD was typically reserved for one use in Scripture, which was for the temporary atonement of sins, until Yeshua's (Jesus') shed blood became a permanent atonement for sin that rendered animal blood sacrifice rituals obsolete (Hebrews 10:1-18). In the times that Scripture was written, there was no other use for animal blood, as there is no other use for *animal blood* today. With the advancements in science in the fields of medicine, human-to-human blood transfusion became possible, for the purpose of life preservation. Human blood can and is used to save lives.

6. When Christians abstain from blood, they are in effect expressing faith that only the shed blood of Jesus Christ can truly redeem them and save their life [8].

REBUTTAL:

God commands us to abstain from *EATING THE BLOOD* from animals as part of the human diet. Yeshua's (Jesus') shed blood on the cross was meant to redeem our SPIRITUAL LIFE, and was not meant to spare our earthly bodily life from death. Human-to-human blood transfusions can save a person's earthly life, whereas Yeshua's (Jesus') shed blood on the cross was not meant for that purpose.

7. Even in the case of an emergency, it is not permissible to sustain life with transfused blood [9].

REBUTTAL:

The Good Samaritan, who saw a dying man along the roadside, came to help and preserve the life of the dying man. A priest and a Levite had passed by the dying man earlier, but avoided the dying man and did not help him. Yeshua (Jesus) posed a question as to who had done right to the dying man. A lawyer answered identifying the Samaritan. Yeshua (Jesus) said to go and do likewise (Luke 10:30-37). Is it really conceivable that Yeshua (Jesus) would not permit people to sustain and preserve the life of our neighbor(s), whom we are commanded to love as ourselves, through human-to-human blood transfusions?

8. Conscientious violation of this doctrine is considered a serious offense, after which a member is subject to organized shunning [10][11][12][13].

REBUTTAL:

Organized shunning by believers against believers, especially over an issue that is not addressed specifically in Scripture, goes against what Scripture tells us to do. Believers are not supposed to fight and shun one another over disputes about food, days, or circumcision (Acts 15:1-21; Romans 14).

If Jehovah's Witnesses truly feel that blood transfusions are related to the prohibition against man consuming blood, they should follow the advice of the Apostle Paul and not get into disputes, or promote shunning, of their members or other Christians who do not believe in their blood transfusion doctrines.

Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrines on blood are man-made doctrines.

These false doctrines are no different than other doctrines of men, such as the washing of hands before eating doctrine (Matthew 15:1-9) or the many man-made doctrines imposed by the Catholic Church [14].

GENESIS 9:4:

But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

LEVITICUS 3:17:

This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood.

LEVITICUS 17:11-14:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood. Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its BLOOD SUSTAINS LIFE.

Therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.

DEUTERONOMY 12:23:

Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, *for the blood is the life*; you may not eat the life with the meat.

Jehovah's Witnesses' blood doctrine is based on the belief that HUMAN-TO-HUMAN BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS are tantamount to the *EATING OF ANIMAL BLOOD*. The belief is that after digestion, food is broken down and enters the bloodstream. Therefore if a person has TRANSFUSED HUMAN BLOOD DIRECTLY INJECTED INTO THEIR BLOODSTREAM, according to Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine, it is virtually the same as if a person consumes and digests human blood.

While it is forbidden to consume animal blood, the transfusion of human blood is not mentioned in Scripture at all. Where Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine misguides is that God's Dietary Commandments concerning blood prohibit humans from *EATING THE BLOOD* of Scripture-sanctified clean animals. Scripture does not address consuming human blood. It would be wrong, of course, to consume human blood, as all blood is forbidden by God to be consumed. Cannibalism, in any form, is evil.

Scripture does not address the issue of human-to-human BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS. A human-to-human blood transfusion, in which blood is directly transferred from one person to another or stored blood is infused into a patient, is far different than blood being consumed and passing through the human digestive system where it eventually breaks down and winds up in the human bloodstream *AFTER* DIGESTION. It is unlawful to eat human blood, which serves no purpose, but blood transfusions can and do save lives.

God describes all animal blood as 'the life' of the animal. No animals or human beings can live without blood circulating throughout their body. A human-to-human blood transfusion preserves the life of the receiver of the blood and it is a gift of life preservation from the donor.

God's dietary law prohibiting the eating or drinking of animal blood is meant to preserve human life from sickness and disease. A human-to-human blood transfusion is a measure used to preserve life in the event of an emergency.

If a person allows a neighbor to die, because he or she would not donate some blood to save the neighbor's life, would this not be a form of murder by neglect?

The Good Samaritan may have technically broken the Sabbath to save a dying stranger on the roadside (Luke 10:30-35). If the Good Samaritan acted on the Sabbath day, he broke the Sabbath to uphold a greater part of God's law: to love his neighbor.

There is a time when God asks us to lay down our life. When asked to deny Messiah (Christ) or the gospel, even under the threat of death to ourselves, we are commanded to never deny Him (Matthew 10:28-33, 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24). God never commanded us to lay down our life or that of our neighbor by refusing to partake in a blood transfusion.

Yeshua (Jesus) miraculously healed a woman with a blood issue (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). Although this was not a blood transfusion, Scripture provides believers with an example that demonstrates that blood may be treated for blood-related ailments to be made free from disease.

There are dangers inherent in blood transfusions, which Jehovah's Witnesses are often eager to point out to support their doctrine. Of course, there are dangers with blood transfusions as there are dangers with any medical procedure. Believers are not forbidden to undergo medical procedures because there are dangers.

There are operations meant to extend people's lives, but are risky and the patient could die on the operating table. A person diagnosed with a narrowing of an aortic valve may be informed that he or she has less than one year to survive unless open-heart surgery is undergone. To replace the valve on this patient would risk the possibility of death on the operating table. However, if the patient was to survive, the life expectancy of the patient could be extended for many more years. Therefore the patient must make a decision whether to risk his or her 'short-term' life for the chance of living a 'long-term' life.

In the case of a blood transfusion, where there is *NO OTHER VIABLE ALTERNATIVE* available to preserve life, a patient or relative of a patient may be concerned about the risk of acquiring a blood-borne disease from tainted blood. This is a valid concern of course, but if the alternative were death, it would be better to get tainted blood. If someone loses a limb, and the physicians are able to reattach the limb, most patients are unlikely to stop the medical procedure because the limb may not function as well as it did

before it was severed. Most people would choose life with the possibility of receiving imperfect tainted blood, rather than death.

Blood screening and testing standards are different around the world. Blood is often screened and tested for diseases that are more prevalent in the donors' particular part of the world and blood testing costs often determine whether blood gets extensively tested or not [15]. Better blood screening and testing procedures mean a safer blood supply. The World Health Organization recommends that donated blood be minimally tested for hepatitis B & C, HIV, and syphilis. In 2006, the WHO reported that 56 out of 124 countries surveyed did not use these minimally basic tests on all blood donations [16].

Blood-borne diseases that recipient patients have acquired through blood transfusions include HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, STD's, and many other diseases. A patient may also suffer immune system reactions from a blood transfusion. There will always be some risk in receiving a blood transfusion, and a blood transfusion from an unknown donor should only be accepted if there is *no other alternative* to preserve a life.

There is virtually no danger to a blood donor when giving blood. Hospital staffs are required to use new needles to safely draw a minimal amount of blood from a donor, typically one pint. The human body will quickly remanufacture the lost blood of the blood donor, who can typically resume normal activities immediately after donating his or her blood.

Believers living sexually pure and faithful lives should be encouraged to donate blood, because the blood acquired from God-fearing believers is much less likely to be contaminated with disease than blood received from the general population at large.

The eternal spiritual aspects of God often reflect the temporal earthly aspects of man. Yeshua (Jesus) shed His blood on the cross to save our eternal spiritual lives (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). When believers donate blood, the purpose is to shed some of their blood to save or preserve the earthly life of a loved one or neighbor.

1. The Watchtower, June 15, 2004 p. 21
2. How Can Blood Save Your Life, published by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1990 p. 24
3. The Watchtower, June 1, 1969 pp. 326, 327
4. The Watchtower, February 1, 1997 p. 29
5. Instructions for Filling in The Advance Decision Document, published by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 2005 p.1.
6. The Watchtower, October 15, 2000 pp. 30-31
7. Awake!, August 2006 p. 11
8. Awake!, August 2006 p. 11
9. The Watchtower, September 1, 1986 p. 25
10. Statement to the media, Jehovah's Witnesses Public Affairs Office, June 14, 2000
11. The Watchtower, January 15, 1961 p. 63
12. The Watchtower, July 15, 1982 p. 20
13. Jehovah's Witness media release dated June 14, 2000
14. Peter R. Kraemer- Catholic Church Extension Society (1975), Chicago, Illinois: "We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws."
15. Summary of Meeting of Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Blood and Tissues and Organs for Transplantation (MSBTO), 28 June 2005.
16. "World Blood Donor Day 2006" World Health Organization.