

# Jehovah's Witnesses & Blood Transfusions

## Does Jehovah God Forbid Blood Transfusions?

It is common knowledge in the medical profession, most hospitals, and even legal services, that Jehovah's Witnesses forbid their members to receive blood transfusions. They are not permitted to store up their own blood for a surgery nor receive any other type of blood product. There are no exceptions to this rule that has been orchestrated by the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society located in Brooklyn, New York.

Statistics from the American Red Cross and the distribution of blood products reveal that nearly 2000 Jehovah's Witnesses lives per week are placed in jeopardy. That could mean that 104,000 Jehovah's Witness men, women, and children may face this issue each year.

Hundreds, perhaps even thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses have died needlessly each year. Granted, as the Watchtower is quick to point out, many of them would have died whether they refused a blood transfusion or not. But then again, it's too late to find out if they could have survived. We know that blood transfusions and the use of blood products save lives every day, along with many other medical treatments available with today's technology.

The public needs to be informed more about who the Jehovah's Witnesses are, and of the consequences when our families and friends join them. There is more to these people than just being pesky door-to-door visitors. The first thing we need to know in regards to their prohibition on blood transfusions and the use of any blood products, is the fact that their decision for this ban is a religious one. This theological nightmare being upheld by the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society begs the following questions:

1. Are they breaking any laws, and is it the same as committing murder or suicide?
2. From a medical standpoint, are they being accurate and honest with their members when they say that receiving a blood transfusion is the same as eating or drinking blood?
3. Finally, from a Biblical perspective, does God forbid blood transfusions?

### Is It Legal?

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws to allow the signing of Living Wills, Advance Medical Directives, or both. As a result, passive euthanasia - the act of withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining technology, like a feeding tube or respirator, including a blood transfusion - is now commonplace. Therefore, as long as they stay within the limits of these written legal rights, they're not breaking any laws.

Yet, many of the non-Jehovah's Witness family members who have experienced this tragedy first hand still consider it murder or suicide. Even though the right-to-die movement is gaining popularity, mercy killing (Jack Kevorkian Style) is not legal - (Except for the State of Oregon whom recently began allowing assisted suicides). The social, political, and religious debate concerning euthanasia remains a subject of great controversy. For this reason the Watchtower's ban on blood transfusions and blood products are not related to mercy killings.

### Medical Viewpoints

Whole blood contains plasma, red cells, leukocytes, (white cells), platelets, albumin, and clotting factors. They are called the "components" of blood. The greatest single use of blood components is in surgery where patients sometimes need several different blood products at one time.

When a person has lost a great deal of blood because of hemorrhage (bleeding), or when illness has weakened the patient's own blood, so that for example it does not contain enough red cells, the usual treatment is a transfusion. Most blood transfusions are emergencies.

Doctors agree that most patients who need transfusions do not need whole blood. They find that packed red blood cells are much safer and much easier to administer. Separating blood components also allows doctors to tailor a transfusion to a patient's exact needs without introducing unnecessary risks. Millions of people in our country alone are grateful for the gift of blood donated by others who have made it possible for them to be alive today.

They are thankful for the doctors, nurses, hospitals, and those who have worked so hard to make blood transfusions safer and much more available. It is sad to think that the Jehovah's Witnesses would rather die or let a loved one die without trying any means possible to stay alive or save a life.

To equate the phrase, "being fed intravenously," with a blood transfusion as one and the same thing, along with saying, "it is the same as eating or drinking blood," is merely a tactic used by the Jehovah's Witnesses to make blood transfusions sound sacrilegious.

Blood would need to be poured into a patient's mouth or through a feeding tube into the stomach because eating or drinking involves our digestive system. Obviously, that is not the way blood transfusions are administered. Common sense tells us that consuming blood as food has nothing to do with a transfusion.

It should also be noted that being "fed" intravenously has to do with receiving glucose, saline solutions, or other chemicals that our bodies need but are not receiving due to complications with the digestive system.

It helps to prevent dehydration; it provides a convenient manner in which to administer medicines directly into the blood stream. However, a feeding tube must also be put into the patient if they are unable to naturally swallow food. In other words, an IV drip can only sustain the body for a short period of time. Without food the human body will starve.

The term “vascular container” is a good way to describe why transfusions are used to save lives. In emergency care the first hour after injury is known as the “golden hour.” If advanced life support is started and required surgery can begin during this hour many trauma patients have an improved chance of survival. The major problem to be cared for during this hour is shock. Once shock reaches a certain level of severity the patient cannot be saved.

Shock is the body's response to a failure of adequate perfusion, or blood flow through the capillaries, to all tissues and organs. There are many possible causes for shock, resulting from severe illness or injury. The heart and the blood vessels make up what is called the vascular container. It is the system that contains the body's blood. These three elements of the vascular system (blood, blood vessels, heart) can be related to the failure to keep the vascular container full and the consequent development of shock. Therefore, a blood transfusion can fill up the vascular container to a safe level. Every patient's circumstance is different so it makes sense that individual treatments will vary.

Bloodless surgery is becoming more common in major hospitals today. The techniques used are absolutely amazing. In most cases very little blood is lost because of the advanced procedures used in surgery. For example, kidney, gall bladder, and other various organs can be operated on without cutting large openings in the body to reach them. In fact, same-day outpatient surgery is popular.

With these things in mind, we can be sure that when a doctor wants to administer a blood transfusion the situation is serious! Their mission is saving lives. If the patient refuses to receive the treatment the doctor's hands are tied.

### “Biblical Perspectives”

Since the Jehovah's Witnesses insist that a blood transfusion is the same as eating or drinking blood, they look for various Bible verses to support their policies. For example:

**Genesis 9:4** *“Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”*

**Acts 15:29** *“that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”*

**Leviticus 7:26-27** *“And you are not to eat any blood, either of bird or animal, in any of your dwellings. Any person who eats any blood, even that person shall be cut off from his people.”*

**Leviticus 17:14** *“For as the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.’”*

So, does God forbid the eating of blood? Yes! There is no argument here. We also know there are many other reasons why we shouldn't eat or drink blood. However, the real issue at hand is what the punishment was if anyone did eat or drink blood among the Israelites.

In their Watchtower publications entitled, *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pg. 244; *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Question of Blood*, pg. 9; and *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. I, pg. 345; the Jehovah's Witnesses say that the punishment was death. They define the phrase “cut off” as being executed or put to death. This is terribly misleading and tragically dishonest. The Watchtower has lied to its members. The Bible tells us exactly what the punishment was for the offender. We can find the answer in the following Scripture:

“And when any person eats an animal which dies, or is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or an alien, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he will become clean.” (Leviticus 17:15)

Cutting off meant excommunication or outlawed from the people as the punishment. Eating blood, flesh, or fat from an animal improperly killed was atoned for by the washing of one's clothes and body, remaining unclean until evening. A person could return the following day. There's quite a difference between the punishment of bathing and washing your clothes, rather than being put to death, wouldn't you agree?

Fear, intimidation, manipulation or deception, whatever it may be called, the Watchtower is guilty of leading many of their members into a needless death as a sacrifice for the wrong reasons. Not only have they twisted the meanings of Scripture, but also the truth and facts about medical treatments.

The Watchtower prints the faces of children and teens on the front of their AWAKE magazine dated May 22, 1994. They say they are the faces of those who put God first and chose death rather than trying a chance to live by receiving a blood transfusion. It is a sacrifice they praise as equal to martyrdom. These people died believing that blood transfusions and the use of blood products are the works of the devil himself.

Often times I have thought about this continuing saga for the people of the Jehovah's Witnesses in hopes that one day it will end. At one time there were three rules imposed on the Jehovah's Witnesses that could put their health or even their lives in jeopardy: a ban on vaccinations, a ban on organ transplants, and the ban on blood transfusions.

Two of the bans have been withdrawn. The one on vaccinations and the other organ transplants. Yet all three were based upon what the Watchtower calls "God's Law." In "The Golden Age" magazine, 2/4/1931, (pp. 293-294) the Watchtower claimed that vaccinations were a violation of God's Law. They also lied to their members back then when they said that vaccinations never saved human life, and they did not prevent small pox. Obviously they had to change their minds because history proved differently. From 1920-1930 death from small pox ran from 30,000 to 100,000 annually. In recent years there has been about 55 cases of small pox annually with no deaths. The Watchtower told its members that blood was included as a base in the vaccine for small pox. The base for the vaccine was not blood but eggs instead.

Organ transplants were a violation because it was the same as eating human flesh. They said it was cannibalism. They lifted the ban and stated it may be a matter of personal decision. I wonder what their latest president of the Watchtower thinks about the ban being lifted on organ transplants? In a Detroit newspaper dated July 1965, Milton G. Henschel said, "Transplants of hearts and other organs are a form of cannibalism." Right after that he told the newspaper how the world was going to end in 1975. Henschel was the Watchtower's last president right before they decided not have a presidency any longer because of the increase of law suites concerning their ban on blood transfusions.

The world has been shocked by more than 900 deaths in the name of "religion" at Jonestown, Guyana, under the Rev. Jim Jones. America was shaken by Waco, Texas and David Koresh. We were alarmed by the 39 deaths of the Heaven's Gate cult. But yet, if the totals were added up, there is no doubt that the numbers would pale in comparison to the deaths of Watchtower victims because of their ban on blood transfusions.

I don't know, nor have I ever heard of anyone, who looks forward to a blood transfusion. I can understand and respect a person's decision to not want a transfusion. Some people have made that request and it's honored by their doctors. It may have nothing to do with religion in some cases. It's just a matter of being tired or simply being ready to die. But what I can't respect is the deception found in the Watchtower organization. Those who needlessly die are not sacrificing their lives to God as they think. They are sacrificing their lives to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. What they fail to see is the fact that the Watchtower makes it look like God keeps changing His laws. Yet the God of the Bible never changes (Malachi 3:6). His Word never changes. That alone should make the Jehovah's Witnesses stop and think about the Watchtower's history.

Perhaps you may feel a sense of sorrow, hate, anger, or frustration while reading these things. Regardless of what our thoughts might be in response to Watchtower deceptions, the truth will prevail.

Have you noticed that Jesus is not mentioned by the Watchtower where their law on blood is concerned? That's because they do not recognize Jesus for who He is. If they did, blood transfusions and many other attempts to save a life would not be outlawed.

For example, there was a law, one of the ten commandments: "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8). Verse 10 reads, "But the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God..." We learn in Numbers 15:35 that the punishment for the capital crime of not keeping the Sabbath holy was being put to death. Obviously it was a sin much more serious than eating blood. Did Jesus break the law of the Sabbath? On the contrary, in Matthew 12:8 He asserts His deity when He said, "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In Mark 2:27-28 Jesus makes it even more clear when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." The Jewish leaders who were accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath would not believe He was God the Son, the Messiah. Just as the Jehovah's Witnesses deny His deity today.

First, Jesus had to defend His disciples for picking grains of wheat and eating them on the Sabbath because they were hungry. (Matthew 12:1-5) Then He was accused of breaking the Sabbath when He healed a man with a withered hand in a Synagogue. (Matthew 12:9-10) In Matthew 12:11-13 Jesus shows us that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. In Luke 6:9 Jesus presented a question to the Pharisees that should shake the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses. Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?"

According to Jewish laws, breaking the Sabbath was a capital crime. But Jesus said it was lawful to do good, or to save a life on the Sabbath.

So when it comes to saving a life, which is really what blood transfusions are all about, Jesus would clarify His law for man concerning blood the same way He helped man understand the meaning of the Sabbath. He summed it up

in the following verse: Jesus said, "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." (Matthew 12:7)

Blood is sacred to the Lord. The writer of Hebrews 9:22 wrote, "and according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." All the sacredness of blood throughout the Bible points to the final sacrifice for mankind, the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In conclusion, it must be stated directly that Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians. They are a major non-Christian cult. They deny nearly every essential doctrine of the Christian faith such as the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus Christ, the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, the Bodily Resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Salvation by Grace Through Faith Alone, Eternal Damnation in Hell for Non-Believers, and the Inerrancy of God's Written Word. The Jehovah's Witnesses will say, "But we do believe in the inerrancy of God's Word." Then we should ask them why the Watchtower changed God's Word when they published their own version of the Bible called, "The New World Translation" in 1950. It is a false translation of the Holy Scriptures designed by the Watchtower to better fit their theology.

These things have been written not to condemn the Jehovah's Witnesses but to reach out to them before it is too late. It is compassion the Lord desires of us, not a sacrifice of death. Jesus already accomplished the final sacrifice for us on the cross. His shed blood is the life He offers to all who will call upon His name to be saved.

Be prepared to share this message with a Jehovah's Witness. God may give you the chance to help save someone in the physical sense of this life as well as the eternal state in the life to come. □