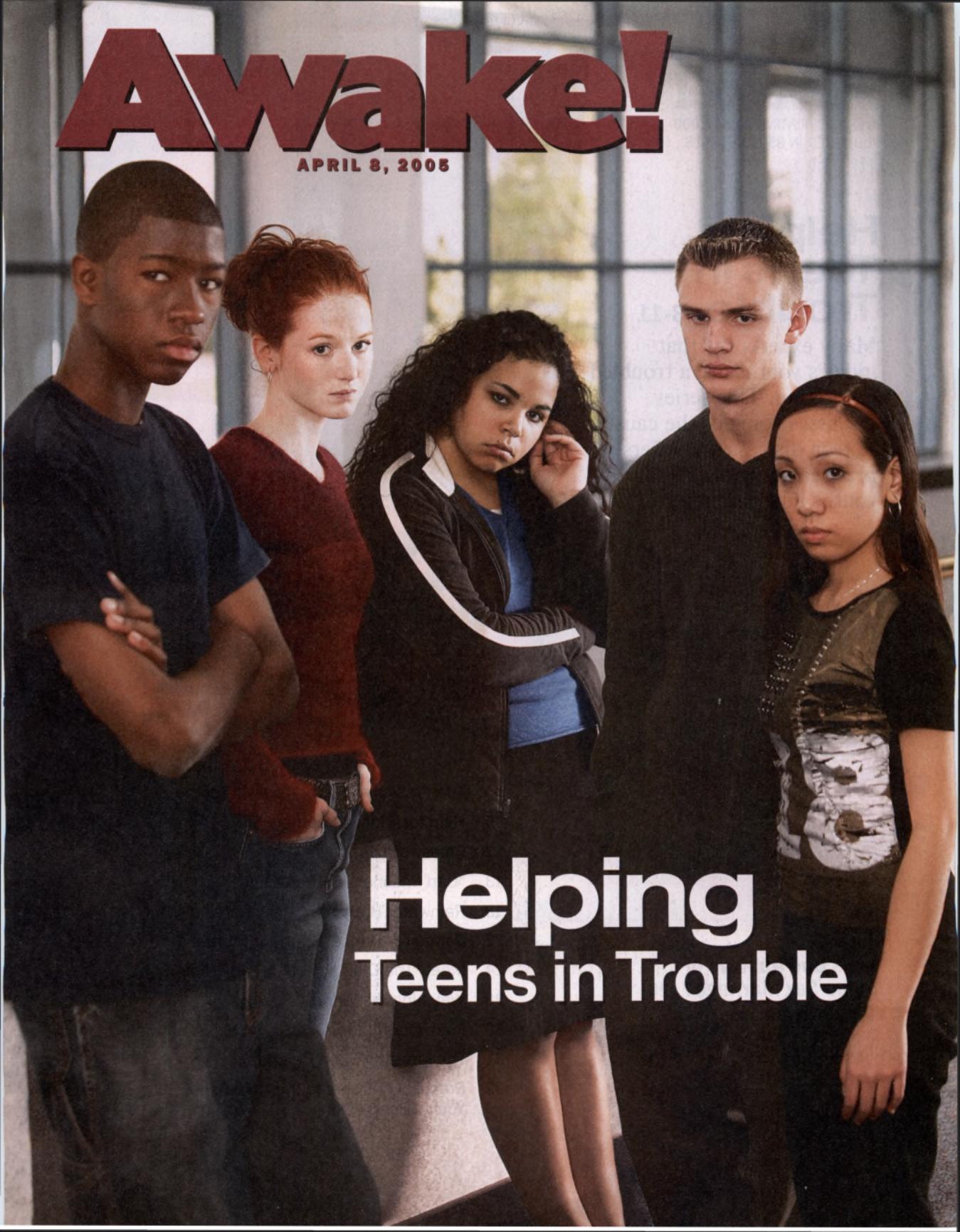


Awake!

APRIL 8, 2005

A black and white photograph of five teenagers of different ethnicities and styles. From left to right: a Black boy in a dark t-shirt; a Redhead girl in a maroon sweater; a Black girl with curly hair in a dark jacket over a blue shirt; a White boy in a dark t-shirt; and a Asian girl in a dark t-shirt with a graphic. They are all looking directly at the camera with serious expressions.

Helping
Teens in Trouble

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 22,842,000
PUBLISHED IN 85 LANGUAGES

Helping Teens in Trouble 3-11

Many experts say that today's youths are a troubled generation. This series discusses some of the causes of teen distress and offers practical suggestions for youths and parents.

Cherry Blossoms—Delicate Petals Long Admired 14

Read about the beautiful and popular cherry blossom.



Does God Approve of Same-Sex Marriage? 26

This issue has caused much controversy. What clear direction does the Bible give on the matter?



Photo by Chris Hondros/Getty Images

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Youths in Crisis

- In the United States, a 15-year-old student opens fire on his classmates, killing 2 and injuring 13.
- In Russia, a group of intoxicated teens brutally murder a nine-year-old girl and beat up her father and cousin.
- In Britain, a 17-year-old boy beats and stabs a younger teen. "I didn't intend to kill him at first," he tells the police, "but when I saw the blood I just let go."

SHOCKING incidents like these are not isolated events. They cannot be brushed off as mere aberrations. "Youth violence is a major problem in our society," says an article in *Professional School Counseling*. Statistics back this claim.

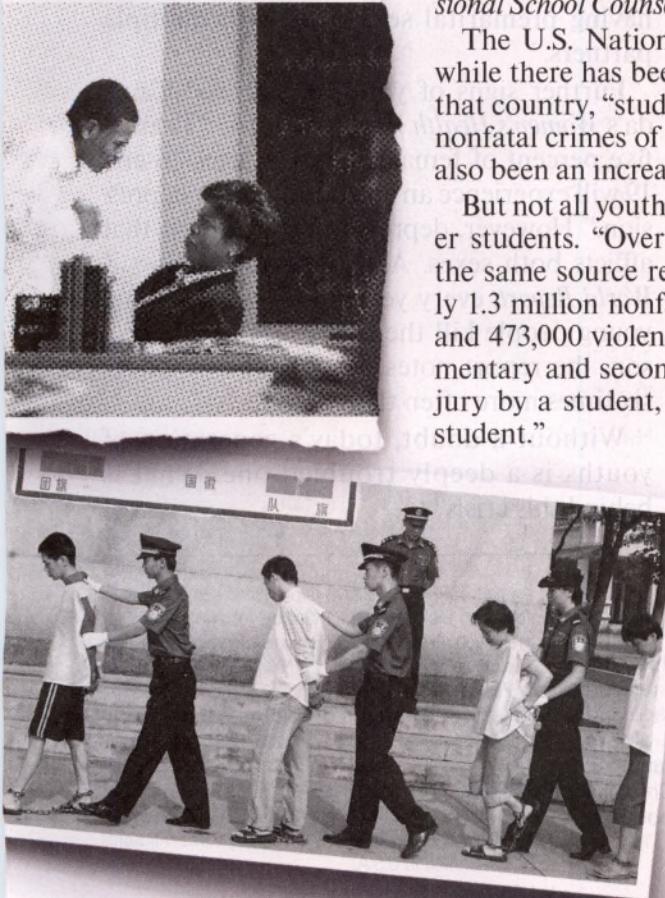
The U.S. National Center for Education Statistics notes that while there has been some decline in reported school violence in that country, "students ages 12-18 were victims of about 2 million nonfatal crimes of violence or theft at school in 2001." There has also been an increase in reports of school bullying.

But not all youth violence in the United States is directed at other students. "Over the 5-year period from 1997 through 2001," the same source reports, "teachers were victims of approximately 1.3 million nonfatal crimes at school, including 817,000 thefts and 473,000 violence crimes." Furthermore, "9 percent of all elementary and secondary school teachers were threatened with injury by a student, and 4 percent were physically attacked by a student."

The picture in other lands? "China arrested 69,780 juvenile delinquents in 2003," reports one news agency, "an increase of 12.7 percent over 2002." The news item notes that "gang crimes accounted for 70 percent of juvenile delinquency." A report from Japan in 2003 similarly said that youths were responsible for half the crimes committed in the preceding ten years.

Drugs—An Assault on Young Bodies

Further evidence of trouble involves the assault that many young ones are making



against their own bodies. A report by the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse states that about half of all teenagers in that land have tried an illicit drug before finishing high school. The report adds: "Alcohol use remains extremely widespread among today's teenagers. Nearly four out of every five students (77%) have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high school; and nearly half (46%) have done so by 8th grade."

Promiscuous Sex

In this age of AIDS, promiscuous sex is unquestionably dangerous. Yet, many youths seem to view sex as little more than a harmless game. Some American youths, for example, blithely speak of "hooking up"—a harmless-sounding euphemism for casual sex. They talk about having "a friend with benefits"—a sexual partner who makes no emotional demands.

Author Scott Walter describes the orgylike parties some suburban youths throw while their parents are at work. At one such party, a young girl announced that "she was going to have sex with all the boys there. . . . Children as young as 12 were involved in the parties."

Shocking? Not to experts who have studied teenage sexual behavior. "Over the past 20 years," writes Dr. Andrea Pennington, "we have seen the average age for teenagers engaging in sexual activity grow younger and younger. It is no longer unusual to find boys

and girls starting out as young as 12 years of age."

Particularly distressing was a report in the newspaper *USA Today*: "Increasing numbers of the country's youngest teens . . . are having oral sex. . . . Kids have convinced themselves that 'this is not really sex.'" According to one survey of 10,000 girls, "eighty percent said they are virgins, but 25% had had oral sex. And 27% described that act as 'something you do with a guy for fun.'"

Such views on sex have made inroads elsewhere. "Asia's youth are becoming increasingly susceptible to HIV through heterosexual relationships with many becoming sexually active at a younger age," reports UNESCO, adding: "Teenagers are increasingly shirking their parents' 'Asian values' by having premarital sex, often with multiple partners."

Further signs of youthful distress? Canada's *Women's Health Weekly* reports: "Twenty-five percent of females between ages 16 and 19 will experience an episode of major depression." However, depression is an illness that afflicts both sexes. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, every year up to five thousand young people kill themselves. For some reason, the report notes, "boys kill themselves six times more often than do girls."

Without a doubt, today's generation of youths is a deeply troubled one. What is behind this crisis?

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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The Pressures Facing Today's Youths

ADOLESCENCE—even under the best of circumstances—can be a turbulent time. During puberty young ones are assaulted by new feelings and emotions. They face daily pressures from teachers and peers. They are exposed to the relentless influence of TV, movies, the music industry, and the Internet. A United Nations report thus describes adolescence as “a period of transition commonly characterized by stress and anxiety.”

Unfortunately, young ones are often too inexperienced to handle stress and anxiety in a positive way. (Proverbs 1:4) Without proper guidance, they can easily fall into destructive forms of behavior. For example, the UN report says: “Research shows that the onset of drug abuse often occurs during adolescence or young adulthood.” The same can be said for other forms of misbehavior, such as violence and promiscuous sex.

Parents who dismiss such things as happening only among “the poor” or certain ethnic groups often prove to be sadly mistaken. The problems young ones are experiencing

today cut across economic, social, and racial lines. “If you think ‘juvenile delinquent’ only means a 17-year-old minority male from the inner city whose impoverished mother is on welfare, you haven’t been paying attention lately,” writes author Scott Walter. “Today’s problem child can be white, he can live in a middle- to upper-middle-class home, he can be under (far under) age 16, and he can just as easily be a she.”

Why, though, are so many young ones at risk? Did not youths of past generations also face challenges and temptations? Yes, but we live in a period that the Bible describes as “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) There are circumstances and pressures affecting youths that are unique to this particular time in history. Let us examine some of them.

Changes in the Family

Consider, for example, the changing family landscape. “More than a third of American children experience their parents’ divorce before reaching 18,” reports the *Journal*

Semimonthly Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,[#] Danish,[#] Dutch, English,^{#+o} Estonian, Finnish,[#] French,[#] German,[#] Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,[#] Japanese,[#] Korean,[#] Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,[#] Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,[#] Swahili, Swedish,[#] Tagalog, Ukrainian

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■ "I believe that the parenting trends that have evolved over the last thirty years promote the development of unattached, uncommunicative, learning-impaired, and uncontrollable children."—DR. ROBERT SHAW

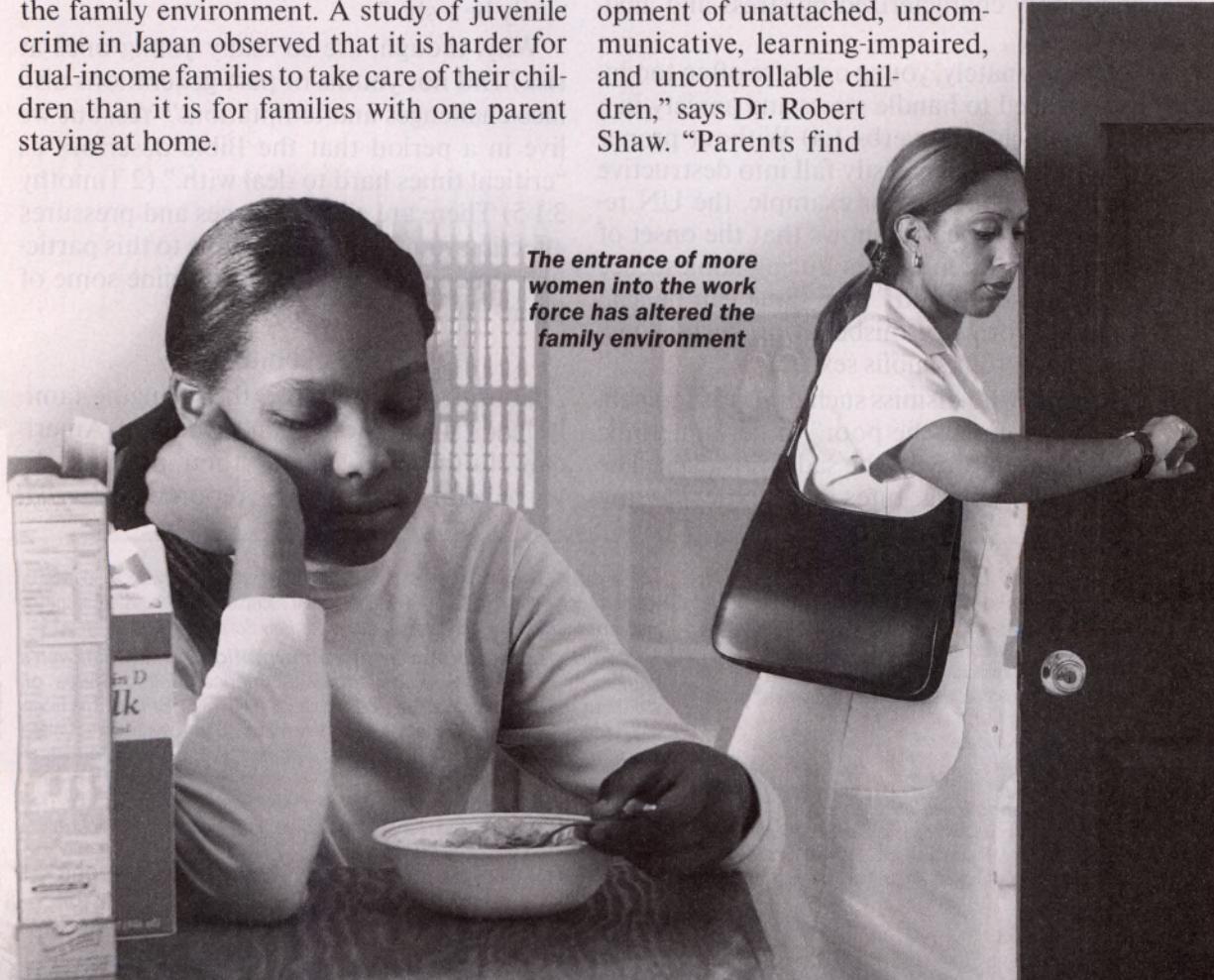
of *Instructional Psychology*. Similar statistics can be cited from other Western lands. As their parents' marital ties dissolve, young ones must often cope with painful emotions. "In general," says the *Journal*, "children who have recently experienced a family dissolution have a more difficult time with academic and social expectations at school than children from intact families or established single-parent or blended families . . . Additionally, parental divorce often affects the child's sense of emotional well being and self-esteem."

The increasing number of women who have entered the work force has also altered the family environment. A study of juvenile crime in Japan observed that it is harder for dual-income families to take care of their children than it is for families with one parent staying at home.

Granted, many families *need* two incomes simply to provide the necessities of life. Two incomes can also provide young ones with a more comfortable life-style. But there is a downside: Millions of children return from school to an empty house. When parents do arrive, they are often tired and preoccupied with problems at work. The result? Many teenagers are getting less parenting. "We don't spend time together in my family," one youth lamented.

Many observers feel that this trend does not bode well for young ones. "I believe that the parenting trends that have evolved over the last thirty years promote the development of unattached, uncommunicative, learning-impaired, and uncontrollable children," says Dr. Robert Shaw. "Parents find

The entrance of more women into the work force has altered the family environment





**Unsupervised
youths can easily
get into trouble**

themselves enslaved by a materialistic, overachieving society that leads them to spend so many hours at work and so much money that they can't make the time to do the things necessary to bond with their children."

Another threat to the welfare of teens: Children of working parents often have large amounts of unsupervised time. A lack of sufficient parental supervision is an invitation to trouble.

Changing Views of Discipline

Changing views regarding parental discipline have also had an effect on today's youths. As Dr. Ron Taffel bluntly put it, many parents "abdicate their authority." When this happens, young ones grow up with few, if any, rules or guidelines to regulate their behavior.

In some cases, it appears that parents are reacting to the negative experiences they had in their own childhood. They want to be

friends with their children—not disciplinarians. "I was too lenient," admits one mother. "My parents were real strict; I wanted to be different with my child. I was wrong."

Just how far do some parents go in this regard? Reports *USA Today*: "A new survey of nearly 600 teens in drug treatment in New York, Texas, Florida and California indicated that 20% have shared drugs other than alcohol with their parents, and that about 5% of the teens actually were introduced to drugs—usually marijuana—by their moms or dads." What would move a parent to do such an irresponsible thing? One parent confessed: "I told her I'd rather have her do it at home where I could keep an eye on her." Others apparently feel that sharing drugs is a way to "bond" with their children.

Assault From the Media

Then there is the powerful influence of the media. According to researcher Marita Moll, one survey revealed that on the average young ones in the United States spent four hours and 48 minutes a day in front of a TV or computer screen.

Is that necessarily bad? An article published in *Science* magazine reported that "six major professional societies in the United States," including the American Medical Association, came to the unanimous conclusion that media violence is linked to "aggressive behavior in some children." "Despite the consensus among experts," observed *Science* magazine, "lay people do not seem to be getting the message from the popular press that media violence contributes to a more violent society."

Consider, for example, music videos. Parents are often shocked at just how graphic and sexually explicit some of these videos are. Can they really affect the way some teenagers behave? According to one study of 500 college students, "violent music lyrics increase aggressive thoughts and feelings." According

to another recent study, "teens who spend more time watching the sex and violence depicted in . . . 'gangsta' rap music videos are more likely to practice these behaviors in real life." This study of over 500 girls revealed that heavy viewers of gangsta videos were more likely to hit a teacher, get arrested, and have multiple sexual partners.

Teenagers and Computers

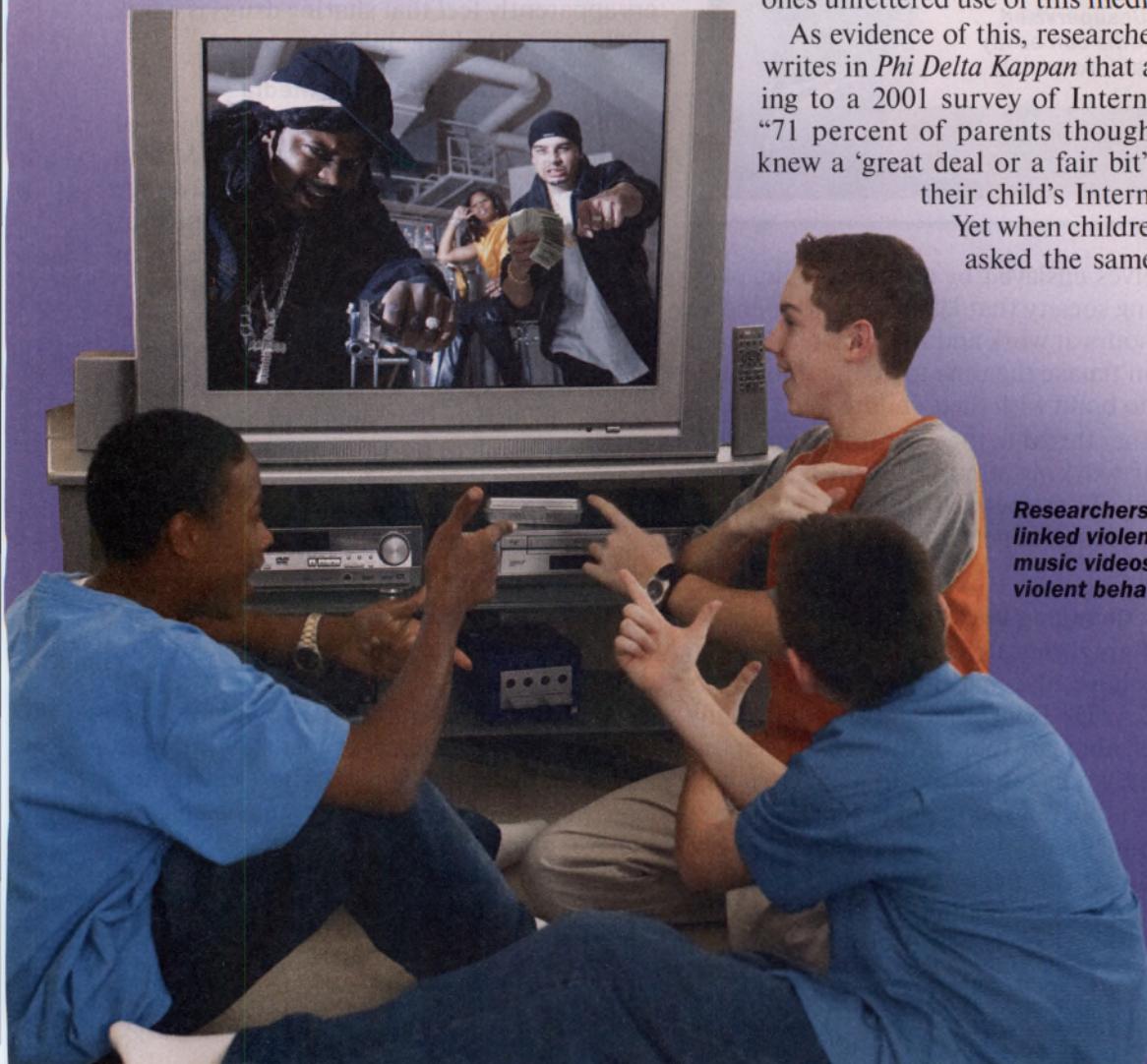
In recent years the computer has also taken on a prominent role as a molder of young minds. "The number of personal computers in the home has increased dramatically in recent decades," says the journal *Pediatrics*. "Nationwide [in the United States], two

thirds of households with a school-aged child (6-17 years of age) had a computer . . . The percentage of children who were 3 through 17 years of age in the United States and lived in a household with a computer increased from 55% in 1998 to 65% in 2000." Computer use has increased in many other lands too.

A young person does not need to own a computer to have access to one, however. One researcher thus claims that "about 90% of young people ages 5 to 17 use computers, and 59% of them use the Internet." This gives young ones unprecedented access to information—a good thing if the computer is used responsibly, with sufficient adult supervision. But far too many parents have allowed young ones unfettered use of this medium.

As evidence of this, researcher Moll writes in *Phi Delta Kappan* that according to a 2001 survey of Internet use, "71 percent of parents thought they knew a 'great deal or a fair bit' about their child's Internet use.

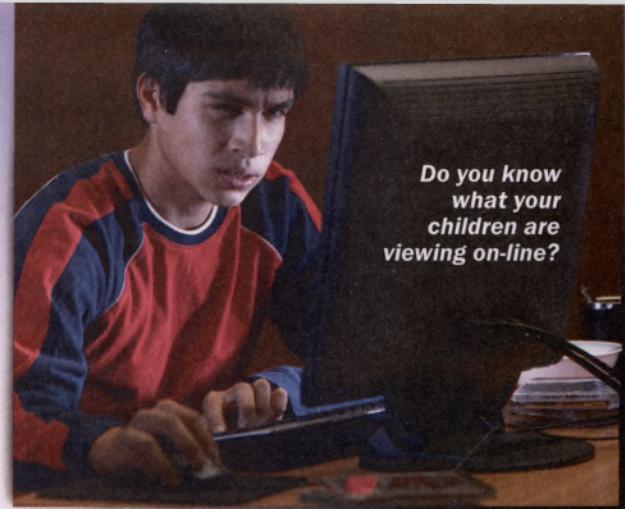
Yet when children were asked the same ques-



Researchers have linked violent music videos to violent behavior

tion, 70% said their parents knew ‘very little or nothing’ about their online activities.” According to this survey, “30% of 9- to 10-year-olds said that they visited private and adults-only chat rooms. The problem gets worse, with 58% of 11- to 12-year-olds, 70% of 13- to 14-year-olds, and 72% of 15- to 17-year-olds reporting such activity.... In a British survey of Internet use at home, one in seven parents admitted having no idea what their children were viewing online.”

Unsupervised Internet use may expose young ones to pornography. The risks, however, do not stop there. Taffel, quoted earlier, laments: “Our kids are making friends at school and in cyberspace—and, as a result, spending time with children whom we often don’t get to meet.”



Clearly, today’s youths are exposed to pressures and problems unknown to past generations. Little wonder that many youths are acting in disturbing ways! Is there anything that can be done to help today’s youths?

Help for Today’s Youths

YOUTHS today are growing up in a world that can at times seem frightening. Some of them watch helplessly as their parents separate or divorce. Others see their schoolmates succumb to the perils of drugs and crime. Many face pressure from peers of *both* genders to get involved in sex. And nearly all adolescents suffer occasional periods of feeling misunderstood, lonely, and depressed.

What do youths need if they are to cope with the challenges that face them? “Children need a firm moral center,” writes Dr. Robert Shaw, “the kind of anchoring that helps them pick appropriate friends, make the right decisions, and view others empathetically.” The Bible provides the best moral center possible,

for it contains the thoughts of the Creator. Who could know more than Jehovah God about what we need in order to cope with the troubled times that we live in?

A Realistic, Practical Guide

The principles of the Bible are realistic and practical. They are invaluable to parents and other adults who want to help youths navigate the course to adulthood.

For example, the Bible realistically acknowledges that “foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy,” or, as rendered in *Today’s English Version*, “children just naturally do silly, careless things.” (Proverbs 22:15) Some adolescents seem mature for their age, but they are still inexperienced youths. As such, they are susceptible to the insecurities, desires,

and troubled feelings that are part of growing up. (2 Timothy 2:22) How can these youths be helped?

The Bible encourages ongoing communication between parents and children. It urges parents: "Speak of [God's standards] when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Such conversation has two benefits. First, it instructs the young one in God's ways. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Second, it keeps parents and children talking. This is especially vital as young

ones pass through adolescence, when they can become withdrawn and lonely.

Of course, most adolescents go through temporary bouts of feeling isolated. Some, though, become *chronically* lonely. "These kids say that it is hard for them to make friends at school, that they have no one to talk to, that they feel alone, that it is hard for them to get other children to like them, and that they feel there is no one they can go to when they need help," says one reference work on adolescence.*

Parents and concerned adults can reach out to teens and help them to cope with their struggles. How? "The only way to find out what's going on in teenagers' minds is to ask them," writes the executive editor of a magazine for teens. Obviously, it takes time and patience to help young ones reveal the concerns of their heart. But the rewards are worth the effort.—Proverbs 20:5.

* The same reference notes that unlike the teen who experiences occasional loneliness, the chronically lonely teen feels isolated most of the time and over a significant period. He or she "believes that being friendless is stable, uncontrollable, and due to defects within the self" and that the situation "cannot or will not change."

**Talk out your
concerns with
a caring adult**



The Need for Reasonable Boundaries

In addition to communication, young ones need—and, deep down, want—reasonable boundaries. The Bible states that “a boy let on the loose will be causing his mother shame.” (Proverbs 29:15) Experts believe that a lack of clear limits can be at the root of juvenile delinquency. “If a child is endlessly indulged and never hears the word ‘no’ or experiences limits,” says Shaw, quoted earlier, “he never has a chance to learn that other people have lives, emotions, needs, and wills of their own. Without a well-developed sense of empathy, the child will not be able to love.”

Dr. Stanton Samenow, who has worked for many years with troubled youths, expresses a similar thought. “Some parents believe that children should be free spirits,” he writes. “Naively, they believe that to impose obligations or requirements will place an unfair burden on their offspring and deprive him of his childhood. But their failure to set limits may have disastrous results. These parents do not realize that a boy or girl who receives little discipline may find it difficult to become self-disciplined.”

Does this mean that parents simply need to be strict? By no means. Setting limits is just one aspect of effective parenting. If taken to an extreme, the setting of rigid rules can result in a harsh atmosphere in the home. The Bible says: “You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted.”—Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4.

Hence, from time to time, parents need to review their methods of instruction and discipline, especially as their children grow older and begin showing signs of maturity. Perhaps certain rules or restrictions could be relaxed or adjusted, in keeping with the young one’s ability to act responsibly.—Philippians 4:5.

Building Bridges

As pointed out in our preceding article, the Bible foretold

that before God steps in to rid the world of badness, the world would face “critical times hard to deal with.” Evidence shows that we are living in that very period—“the last days” of this ungodly system of things. Like adults, young ones must endure life in a world that is characterized by people who are “lovers of themselves, . . . having no natural affection, . . . without self-control.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5.*

Parents who feel that they have lost touch with their adolescent son or daughter can take steps to build bridges, one conversation at a time. commendably, many parents are striving hard to be a positive force and a real presence in the lives of their children.

The Bible is a most valuable tool in this regard. It has helped many parents to fulfill their role and has helped youths to avoid disastrous pitfalls. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Psalm 119:9) Since the Bible is from the Creator, Jehovah God, we can be confident that it provides the best help for today’s youths.[#]

* See chapter 11 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

[#] Jehovah’s Witnesses have found the Bible-based book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work* to be a great help. Each of its 39 chapters deals with a thought-provoking question. Some of the titles are: “How Can I Make Real Friends?” “How Can I Cope With Peer Pressure?” “How Can I Make My Loneliness Go Away?” “Am I Ready to Date?” “Why Say No to Drugs?” “What About Sex Before Marriage?”

Questions
Young People Ask
Answers That Work



Crossword Puzzle

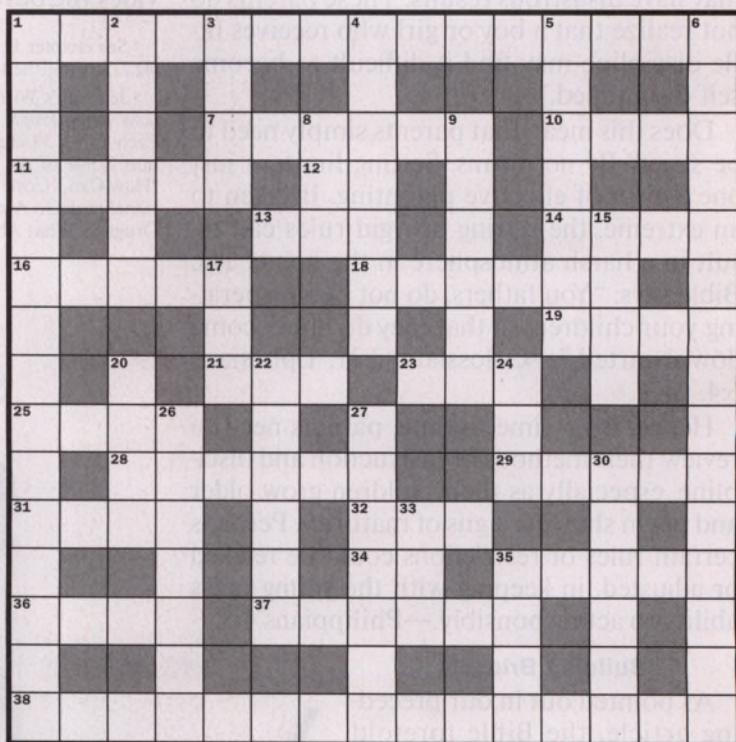
Clues Across

1. The disciples were rowing in this direction when they saw Jesus walking on the sea [2 words] (Mark 6:45-48)
7. The name that Jesus gave to Simon the son of John (John 1:42)
10. One of the mighty men of David's military forces (1 Chronicles 11:29)
11. Whoever wants to become the first among his brothers must become this to them (Mark 10:44)
12. Jehovah directed Abram to leave this city in Chaldea (Genesis 11:31; 12:1)
13. Father of Shimei, one of Solomon's 12 deputies who provided food for the king and his household (1 Kings 4:18)
14. Situation or occurrence thought to portend good or evil (1 Kings 20:33)
16. A postexilic ancestor of Jesus Christ in the line of his earthly mother, Mary (Luke 3:25)
18. When you do this, said Jesus, focus on those who are poor, crippled, lame, and blind (Luke 14:13)
19. For the dead, this has already perished along with love and jealousy (Ecclesiastes 9:6)
21. For Jehovah, a thousand years is the equivalent of this (2 Peter 3:8)
23. Through this, mature people train their perceptive powers to distinguish both right and wrong (Hebrews 5:14)
25. A she-ass squeezed this part of Balaam against a wall (Numbers 22:25)
28. Jesus surprised a Pharisee by not washing before this (Luke 11:38)
29. The apronlike garment that the high priest wore over his blue sleeveless coat (Exodus 28:6)
31. Remove from the surface (Isaiah 30:14)
32. Seventh letter of the Greek alphabet
34. The second city conquered during the Israelite invasion of Canaan (Joshua 8:18, 19)
35. Elijah was sent to a widow from Zarephath, a dependent town of this Phoenician city (Luke 4:26)
36. A priest and ancestor of Adaiah, who served at the temple in the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 11:12)
37. A well dug by Isaac's servants, named because of their dispute over it with the shepherds of Gerar (Genesis 26:21)

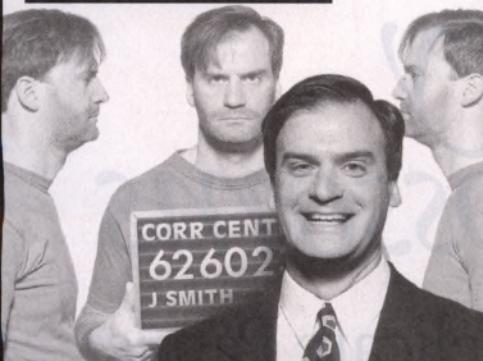
38. Jesus taught this principle on how to deal with those who hate us [3 words] (Matthew 5:44)

Clues Down

1. Collective name of God's chosen people in pre-Christian times [4 words] (Judges 1:1)
2. Solomon's mother wove one for him on his marriage day (Song of Solomon 3:11)
3. Because of unforeseen occurrences, the swift do not always win it (Ecclesiastes 9:11)
4. The second son of Joseph, whose name was applied to the tribe of Israel that descended from him (Genesis 41:52)
5. A Levite son of Elkanah of the family of Kohath (1 Chronicles 6:25)
6. Jacob said that his had lasted 130 years [2 words] (Genesis 47:9)
8. A country noted for its skilled archers (Isaiah 66:19)
9. Paul indicated that no soldier does this at his own expense (1 Corinthians 9:7)
15. Jesus ate one with his disciples the evening before he died (Luke 22:20)
17. Jesus' opponents accused him of being this (John 10:20)
20. A Zebulunite whose son Gaddiel represented his tribe in spying out the Promised Land (Numbers 13:10)
22. This paralytic, confined to his cot for eight years, was healed by the apostle Peter (Acts 9:33, 34)
24. She became "the mother of everyone living" (Genesis 3:20)
26. Samson's father-in-law was called this because of his connection with a certain city (Judges 15:6)
27. One of Jehovah's titles highlighting his unique abilities (Isaiah 42:5)
30. Father of the Amasa who was one of the heads of Ephraim in the days of King Pekah of Israel (2 Chronicles 28:12)
33. Of the six products of the ancient metallurgist's furnace, this one had the lowest melting point (Ezekiel 22:20)
35. To do this for the Israelites, sealskin was used (Ezekiel 16:10)



Awake!



Can Prisoners Be REFORMED?



■ "Having been a prisoner for the last eight years, I see that what is really successful is the Bible educational work that Jehovah's Witnesses carry out in prisons. While I was in the penitentiary in Atlanta, I had the privilege of working with five of those shown in your article. I was so grateful for their love and support. I thank brothers like this, who show love to those of us who have made a mistake but are trying to correct it and become better people."—**R. J.**

■ "I am currently in a correctional facility, and brothers from the local Kingdom Hall were able to set up a wonderful teaching program here. As a result, a fellow inmate has been baptized, and I, though once disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation, have now been reinstated. Many others are studying the Bible. It is encouraging to know that we are part of a global teaching work. How wonderful it is to serve Jeho-

"Can Prisoners Be REFORMED?"

That was the question posed on the cover of the May 8, 2001, issue of "Awake!" Many readers expressed appreciation for this series of articles, which included a report on the Bible-based educational program that Jehovah's Witnesses are carrying out in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. Following are some excerpts from the many letters received.

vah, no matter where we are!"

—**J. M.**

■ "In 1970, I was imprisoned for a crime I did not commit. I served a 14-year sentence. While in prison, I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. I was deeply impressed with their honesty and concern. After I was released, I continued studying and was baptized shortly thereafter. At times, I still feel frustration and anger over the injustice I endured. But I remind myself that in the near future, Jehovah will bring an end to all injustice and suffering. Prisoners can be reformed if they follow the instructions found in the Bible. They can also be grateful for the efforts of our hardworking brothers who give of their time to help them. I know I am!"

—**R. S.**

■ "I came to prison smoking cigarettes, doing drugs, using bad language, and feeling no respect for authority. I was also in a gang. In addition to all of that, I had been disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. Now I am reinstated, and I am making good progress. Thanks to the truth, I feel that I am already free!"

—**I. G.**



Cherry Blossoms

SINCE ancient times the Japanese have extolled the beauty of the sakura—the Japanese flowering cherry. So beloved are its delicate petals that the cherry blossom has risen above all other flowers in popularity and holds a special place in the history and culture of Japan. In fact, in some contexts the word “flower” in Japanese has come to mean the sakura. For more than a thousand years, the Japanese have adored cherry blossoms.

Numerous cherry trees gracefully dot the Japanese isles. You do not have to travel very far to come across one of the 300 or so varieties grown here. Each flower usually has five petals that are notched at the edges, although some varieties have many more petals. Several flowers form a single cluster. The colors of the petals range from nearly white to pink and even crimson, also including the subtle hues in between. The form and color of these blossoms have long been associated with symbols of purity and simplicity.

The sight of a cherry tree in full bloom commands attention. When bathed in soft sunlight filtering through clouds, its dainty petals give off a pinkish-white glow. An entire grove of cherry trees is even more stunning to behold.

A Magnificent Display

The Yoshino Mountains have been renowned for white cherry blossoms. This area has four large groves with over 100,000 cherry trees. One section is called *Hitome Senbon*, meaning ‘a thousand cherry trees at a glance.’

Delicate Petals Long Admired

Literally as far as the eye can see, white blossoms brighten the surrounding hillside, giving it the appearance of being covered with snow. No wonder, then, that upwards of 350,000 people flock there each year to see the magnificent display!

Depending on how the cherry trees are planted, fascinating effects can be obtained. For example, parallel rows of cherry trees whose boughs reach out to touch one another form a ‘cherry tunnel.’ Imagine the cluster upon cluster of cherry blossoms overhead providing a pinkish-white canopy while underfoot the ground is sprinkled with petals.

The delicate flowers, however, do not last long—their peak being only two to three days. Depending on the weather, it may be even shorter.

Hanami—A Picnic Under Cherry Trees

The first wave of delicate blossoms begins in the south of the Japanese archipelago, in Okinawa, during January and continues progressively northward to Hokkaido until late May. This movement is also known as the cherry blossom front. Television, radio, newspapers, and even the Internet regularly report on the progress of the front. The news

Flowering Cherry Trees

The fine wood from the cherry tree can be used for carvings, furniture, and block printing. But such uses have not given the cherry tree its distinction in Japan. Neither has its fruit. Unlike its cousins in other parts of the world, the Japanese cherry tree is grown mainly for its blossoms, which have won the hearts of so many.

Flowering cherry trees can easily be produced from seedlings. Thus, cherry trees have been planted along riverbanks and main thoroughfares as well as in numerous parks and gardens throughout the country.

Cherry Blossom Blizzard

A unique illusion of pink snow is created when the cherry tree sheds its myriad of petals. Suddenly and without warning, the petals leave the bough and gracefully fall to the ground. A strong gust of wind can send down a flurry of these—randomly scattering them. The Japanese call this phenomenon *sakura fubuki*, or cherry blossom blizzard. The ground below becomes covered with a delightful pink carpet. Few scenes in nature can match the serenity of these fragile fallen petals.





that the Japanese cherry trees are blooming causes millions to throng to areas where they can see them.

The custom of *hanami*, or “flower viewing,” dates back to the ancient past. And the flower in this case is always the cherry blossom. Already in the Heian era (794-1185), the nobility held parties to admire the sakura. In 1598 a warlord by the name of Hideyoshi Toyotomi held a cherry-blossom viewing party at the Daigoji temple in Kyoto. All the feudal lords as well as distinguished guests gathered under the flowering trees and recited poems that praised the blossoms. The women adorned themselves with garments featuring the elegant pattern of the sakura.

In the Edo period (1603-1867), the common people adopted this form of leisure—picnicking under blooming cherry trees.

They ate, drank, sang, and danced while admiring the blossoms with their family and friends. The popular custom of *hanami* continues to be followed down to our day, with multitudes heading to their favorite retreat to enjoy the profusion of petals.

Recurring Theme

Woven into the fabric of Japanese history and culture is the recurring theme of the sakura. Its motifs abound in literature, poetry, theater, and music.



A 'cherry tunnel'

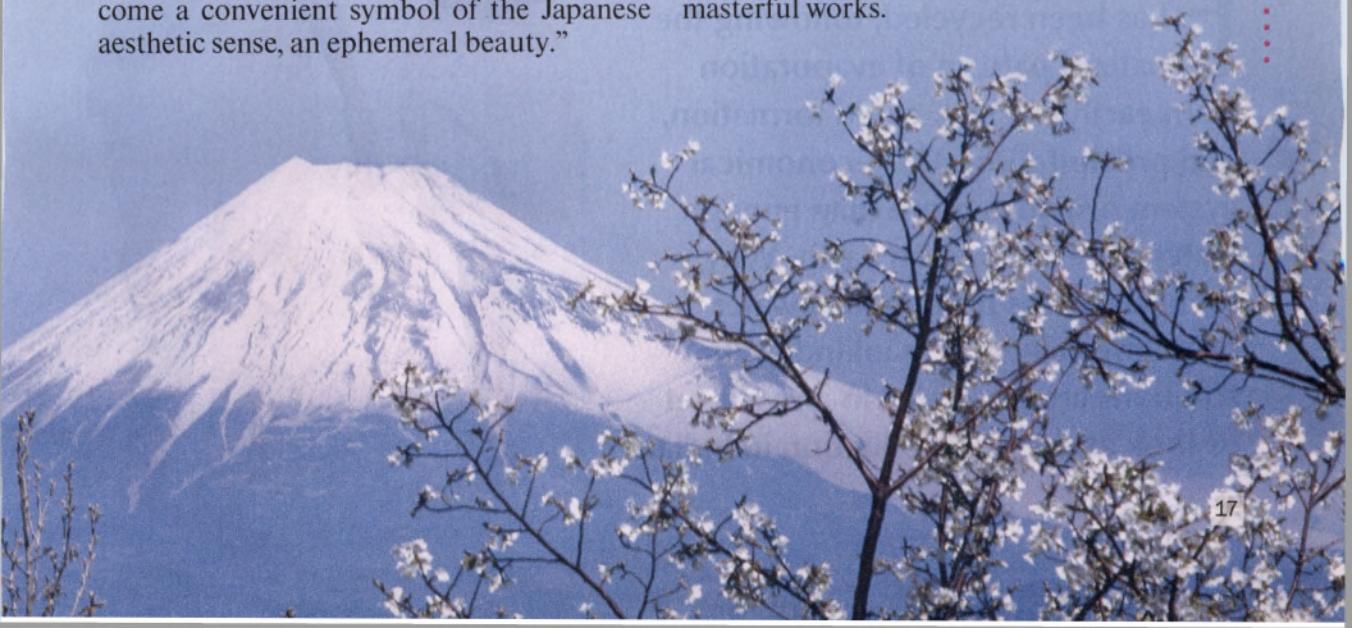
"Hanami"—picnicking under blooming cherry trees

Throughout the centuries, artists have captured the splendor of the cherry blossoms on surfaces ranging from pottery to folding screens.

The samurai also adopted sakura. Being completely devoted to their master, they were expected to offer up their life at a moment's notice. The samurai saw in cherry blossoms a symbol of the brevity of life. Concerning this the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* comments: "Since the cherry flowers bloom very briefly and then scatter, they have also become a convenient symbol of the Japanese aesthetic sense, an ephemeral beauty."

The national admiration of the sakura continues until today. The lovely kimono often has the pattern of cherry blossoms. The sakura design can also be found on household items, scarves, and clothing. So dearly loved is this flower that parents will even proudly name their beautiful baby girls Sakura, in honor of the cherry blossom.

Fragile in form and yet powerful enough to influence the culture of a nation, the cherry blossom is an outstanding example of the subtle beauty found among our Creator's masterful works.



Rainwater Harvesting

ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN INDIA

FOR millennia the same water has been recycled, following the natural pattern of evaporation from earth and sea, cloud formation, and precipitation. This economical system provides more than enough water for everyone on earth. Why, then, are there tremendous water problems plaguing mankind? What solutions are possible? In answer, let us look at the water situation in India.



With a population of over one billion, India finds that its water resources are being stretched to critical limits. Where does India's water come from? In the far north, rivers are fed in springtime by melting snows and glaciers in the Himalaya Mountains. But most of the Indian subcontinent depends on annual monsoon rains to soak the dry earth, fill wells and lakes, and swell the mighty rivers crisscrossing the country. The monsoon in India is temperamental and is described as "one of the most maddeningly elusive phenomena," which, "despite all the advances in modern technology, from satellites to powerful supercomputers . . . , can be surprisingly difficult to predict."

A normal monsoon season lasts from three to four months, but rather than fall steadily over the entire period, much of the rain falls in brief spells in the form of torrential downpours. As a result, dams fill up and water has to be released. Rivers overflow their banks, flooding fields and homes. Because modern industrialization and urbanization have resulted in widespread deforestation, there are often not enough trees to hold the precious rain in their roots and let it gradually soak into the earth. So the torrents wash away topsoil, denuding the land. Silt builds up in lakes and ponds, making them shallow, so that they hold less water. For all practical purposes, a large portion of the precious rainwater is lost.

Then monsoon season is over. For the rest of the year, there is sunshine every day, bringing months of scorching heat! Quickly the land dries up, and the fields bake and crack. Raging rivers become trickles in wide, sandy riverbeds. Waterfalls disappear. Bore wells are sunk deeper and deeper to bring up water from underground aquifers, and the water table is lowered. When rainfall is poor, drought sets in, crops fail, cattle die, and villagers migrate to cities, adding to urban water problems.

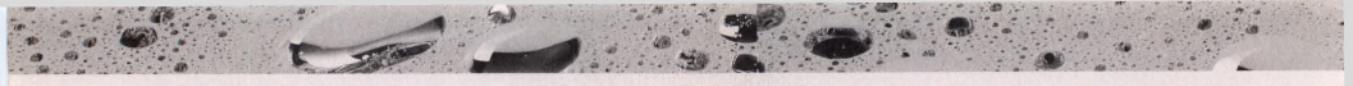
But it was not always this way. In ancient times people throughout the length and breadth of India learned that it was best not to depend solely on the rivers and lakes, which would dry up when the monsoon rains were over. They developed the art of catching the rain where it fell, using it for immediate needs, and storing it for when the rain stopped falling. This was rainwater harvesting.

The Need for Rainwater Harvesting Today

One would imagine that with modern technology and the building of huge dams, barrages, and irrigation canals—all of which are abundant in India—there would be little if any interest in ancient systems of water catchment. After all, most of those methods fell into disuse when people could get water from a tap in their homes or villages. But there is reason for concern. Megaprojects in water management over the past 50 years have been unable to keep up with burgeoning population needs and the rapid change from an almost totally agricultural society to an industrialized one. Not enough water has been saved to satisfy the country's thirst.

Crossword Solutions

T	O	W	A	R	D	B	E	T	H	S	A	I	D	A
H	R	R	A	A	P	P	H	A	S	I	L	A	I	
E	E	S	L	A	V	E	U	R	E	M	E	E		
O	O	T	E	L	A	R	R	O	M	E	N			
N	A	H	U	M	I	N	V	I	T	E	R			
S	S	A	M	E	H	A	T	E						
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F	O	O	T	E	C	V								
S	K	I	M	E	E	T	A	E	P	H	O	D		
R	R	N	A	A	I	S	I	D	O	N				
A	M	Z	I	S	I	T	N	A	H	L	C			
E	E	T	O	O	R	E	N	E	M	I	S			
A	M	Z	I	S	I	T	N	A	H	L	C			



Now environmentalists and concerned authorities feel the need to promote personal involvement in water conservation. Rainwater harvesting is being encouraged in homes, factories, schools, and anywhere that water storage on a small scale is practical. Why, many cities and states have made it compulsory for new buildings to have rainwater harvesting facilities!

Millions of gallons of rainwater falls in areas where it is not channeled into storage but simply evaporates or runs off into the sea. In rainwater harvesting, though—which is based on the concept of catching water where it falls—water is saved by individuals. And unlike water from dams and canals, which has to be paid for and is thus an expensive burden for the poor, this water is free!

Taking the Lead

Many concerned people in India are therefore getting involved in water conservation. Some have been recognized internationally with awards, as was the case with Rajendra Singh, who received the prestigious Magsaysay Award for community development in 2001. Working through a nongovernmental organization, which he had established, Singh revived the almost extinct Aravari River in the state of Rajasthan, a boon to a state with 8 percent of the country's population and only 1 percent of its water resources. Over a period of 15 years, Singh's group planted trees and built 3,500 tanks—traditional *jhads* for harvesting water—bringing prosperity to local villagers. Others work at saving water, unnoticed by most, but with the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping out.

Industrialists are seeing the benefits of rainwater harvesting to supplement city water supplies. In a factory on the outskirts of Bangalore, in south India, a simple, inexpensive system of roofwater harvesting was set up. Rainwater, which formerly poured onto

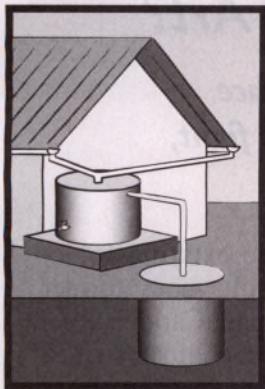
the highway and was lost, is channeled into a tank with a capacity of 10,000 gallons. During monsoon, 1,300 gallons a day of harvested water is processed for cleaning the food vessels and the factory canteen. No water is drawn for these purposes from the city supplies.

'A drop in the bucket,' you might say. But imagine you have a bank account to which money is added once a year. For your daily needs, you have to withdraw from your account, but gradually you take out more than is put in. One day you will have an overdraft. If, however, for a few months of the year, you get work with more than sufficient pay to cover your daily needs, your account will have a chance to build up. Now apply this principle to water conservation. Multiply your small savings millions of times, and what do you have? Replenished water sources, a raising of the water table, a filling up of aquifers, and a supply of water to fall back on when the "pay" in the form of harvested rainwater ends. Remember, available water is limited; there can be no overdraft when no water is available.

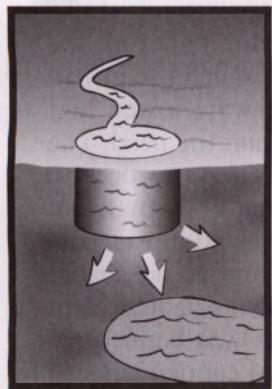
The Permanent Solution

Our planet provides bountifully for its residents. However, over the centuries man's greed and shortsightedness have created ruinous living conditions for millions of earth's inhabitants. Despite the efforts of sincere individuals, humans clearly do not have the power to eradicate totally earth's environmental problems. Happily the Creator of the earth has promised to "bring to ruin those ruining the earth" and to restore the balance of the water cycle, so that "in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain." Indeed, "the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water." What a refreshing harvest of rainwater that will be! —Revelation 11:18; Isaiah 35:6, 7.

Reviving Ancient Methods of Harvesting Rainwater



ROOF WATER: Simple and inexpensive. Slightly sloping roofs allow water to run into gutters, down pipes, and into specially prepared drums. Filters of wire mesh, sand, gravel, and charcoal clean the water. It is funneled into underground sumps or aboveground tanks. Tanks are sealed to keep out air, sunlight, and organic matter; treatment with alum reduces turbidity; and bleaching powder kills bacteria. This water can be used for gardening, flushing toilets, washing clothes. Further treatment can make it potable. Excess water can be collected into wells or directed underground to replenish the water table. Most popular urban method.



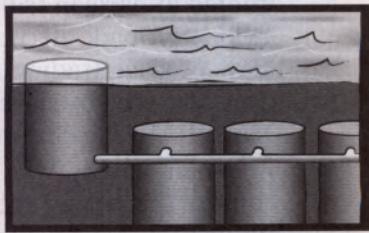
PERCOLATION TANKS, RAPATS:

Small tanks built on sandy or rocky soil to store rainwater. Some of the water is used, but the remainder percolates through to aquifers, which replenish wells.

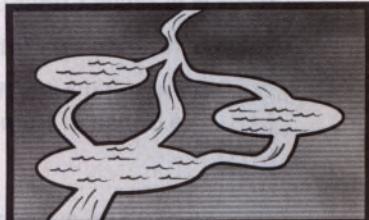
BHANDARAS: Underground tanks built to intercept water from springs, channeling it to storage tanks for city use.



QANATS: Vertical shafts in hilly areas to catch rainwater. The water is collected in underground channels that carry it by gravity over long distances to storage wells.



INTEGRATED TANKS: Tanks that overflow into a series of lower tanks to catch the rainwater that is funneled through gutters.



Capoeira

Dance, Sport, or Martial Art?

By Awake! writer
in Brazil

"The balance and flexibility of acrobatics, the grace and strength of dance, the speed and cunning of the fight, and the rhythms of the music."

THAT is how one writer defined the essence of the Brazilian art named capoeira. According to one writer, capoeira has become "a truly global phenomenon."

Choreographer and researcher Edward Lunda calls it "a unique fusion between a dance, martial art, game, and ritual." *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* describes it as a "folk dance." How is it performed? Players and onlookers form a circle, inside of which "two men face each other, emulating the blows and parries of 'the fight' in time with the rhythms of the *berimbau*, or musical bow."

While there is much debate over the origins of capoeira, most researchers believe it is rooted in African tribal dances and rituals. It evidently made its way to Brazil during the days of slave trading. For decades the dance was practiced by slaves—despite the suppression of African culture by slave owners.

When slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888, "the newly freed slaves," according to one Brazilian writer, "did not find a place

for themselves within the existing socio-economic order." As a result, many former slaves joined criminal gangs. Capoeira became a form of violent street combat. Armed with knives and sticks, these gangs terrorized neighborhoods.

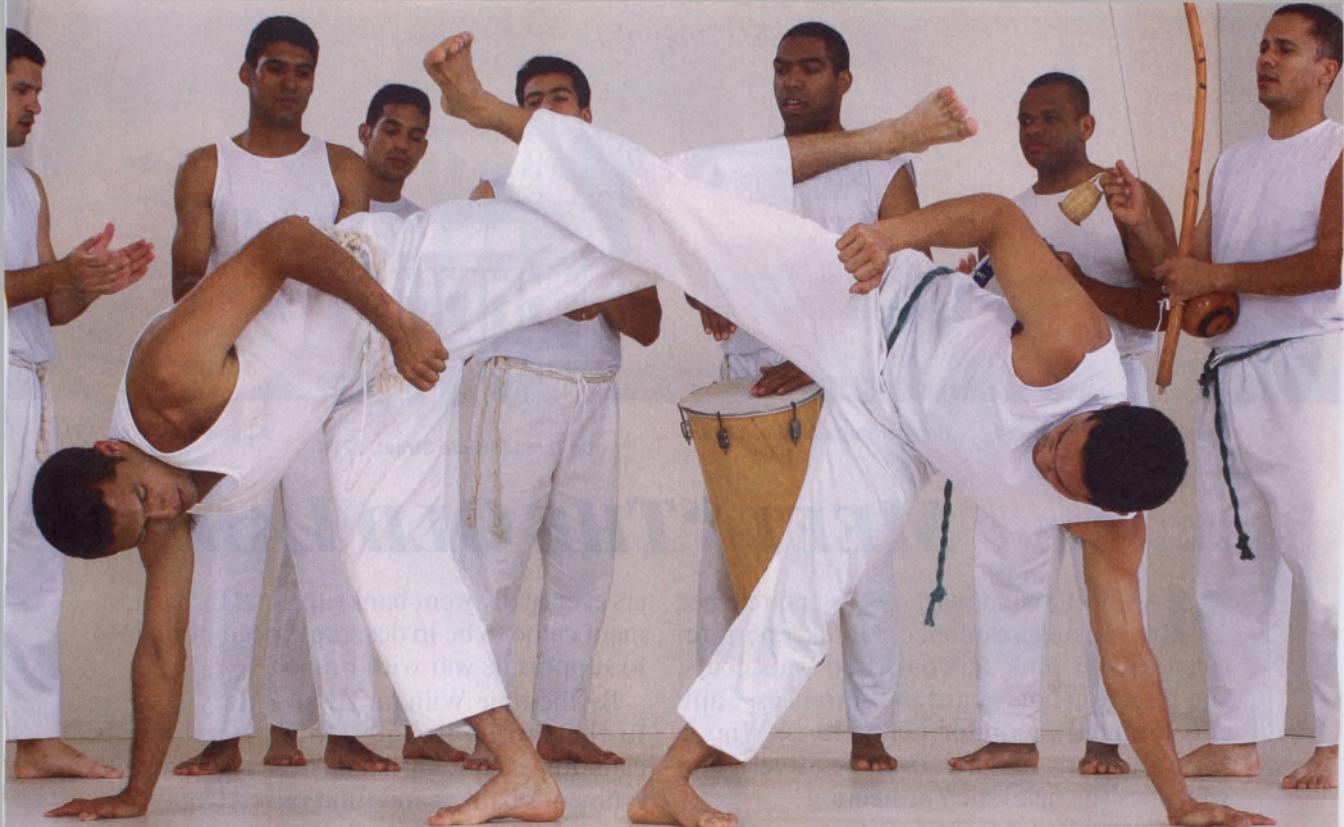
The journal *Planet Capoeira* admits that the street form of the dance was "rough stuff." It explains: "Its teachers eliminated all the pretty moves that were not much use in real fights. For example, kicks were lower, and aimed at the body rather than the head. The hands were used in various ways to deceive or to deliver punches to the body or finger strikes to the eyes. There was no music, [and there were] no cartwheels and no acrobatics except those that were combat-oriented." Not surprisingly, then, capoeira was banned nationwide in 1890. Convicted capoeiras faced prison sentences, up to 300 lashes, and even deportation.*

In the 1930's, Manuel dos Reis Machado, known in capoeira circles as Mestre Bimba, opened an academy for teaching the art. Of course, since the practice was still illegal, he was careful not to say publicly that he was teaching capoeira. In 1937 after winning the approval of Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas, capoeira gained the status of an authentic Brazilian sport. Today an estimated 2,500,000 Brazilians practice capoeira, and it

In Our Next Issue

- Is Jesus Christ God?
- "Should I Try Internet Dating?"
- Facing Illness With a Sense of Humor

* The Portuguese word *capoeira* refers both to the art and to the person who practices it.



Capoeira is performed to the rhythm of the “berimbau” and the “atabaque,” traditional Brazilian musical instruments

is taught in many public institutions, such as schools, universities, and military academies.

Folk Dance or Martial Art?

While capoeira has dancelike moves, many still classify it as a martial art. Augusto, who learned capoeira with his father, is convinced that “despite being a form of dance, it incites violence and violates principles of peace and love.” He observes:

“It would be easy to use capoeira in a moment of anger to hurt someone.” Even when performers seek to avoid physical contact, a mistimed movement can result in serious injuries.

Many also feel that capoeira has strong religious overtones. Pedro Moraes Trindade, a capoeira master from Bahia State, Brazil, describes it as “a fusion of the body and the mind.” He

adds: “By viewing capoeira as just a sport, you minimize its history and its philosophy.” Edmilson, who practiced capoeira for eight years in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, notes: “Some *chulas* [introductory songs] and rituals associated with capoeira are clearly related to spiritism.”

A careful examination of Bible principles led Edmilson and Augusto, mentioned earlier, to quit performing capoeira. They decided that their spiritual and physical health were too precious to be put at risk. Although they once enjoyed the contagious rhythm and graceful movements of capoeira, they have decided that it is not compatible with the Bible, which teaches men to ‘learn war no more.’ —Isaiah 2:4.



Bank's first charter, 1694



Handwritten £5 note, 1793



On Threadneedle Street, 1794



£1 gold sovereign, 1911

BY AWAKE! WRITER
IN BRITAIN

MEET “THE OLD LADY OF

MASSIVE, windowless walls encircle her imposing residence. Gatekeepers resplendent in pink tailcoats, red waistcoats, and black top hats guard the entrances. Cameras discreetly monitor her visitors. Who is “The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street,” and why does she need such protection?

The “Old Lady” is one of the major financial institutions in the world—the Bank of England. But how did a bank get such a strange name? Threadneedle Street lies in an area of London where many guilds once flourished, its name likely coming from the three needles in the coat of arms of the Needlemakers’ Company. About a hundred years after the bank’s establishment, politician and playwright Richard Sheridan referred to it in Parliament as “an elderly lady in the city of great credit and long standing.” The cartoonist James Gillray was quick to seize on the idea of a bank being like an old lady, and from that time on, it was popularly known as The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.

Demand for a National Bank

In the 17th century, goldsmiths ran most of the banking in London. This arrangement worked reasonably well until kings of the Stuart dynasty began borrowing money but not repaying it. Leading goldsmith bank-

ers eventually went bankrupt, and the government came to be in desperate need of finance to support its war with France.

By the time William III and Mary II came to the throne in 1689, there were urgent calls for a national bank to act as the government’s banker and fund-raiser. Out of various schemes submitted, Parliament, despite strong opposition, eventually accepted Scottish merchant William Paterson’s proposal. London’s citizens were asked to lend sums of money that would hopefully total 1,200,000 pounds. In return, the government would pay the subscribers 8 percent interest and incorporate them as the Governor and Company of the Bank of England. Within a fortnight the money arrived, and in 1694 the Bank of England commenced business.

Forty years later, the bank moved to premises on Threadneedle Street. The present structure, dating from the 1930’s, is seven stories high with vast vaults deep beneath the ground. It occupies an entire three-acre block.

Ups and Downs

At first, the bank issued handwritten receipts on bank paper to customers



Part of the first cartoon
by James Gillray, 1797



Ten-shilling note, 1928



Current building, since 1939

THREADNEEDLE STREET”

depositing their pounds, shillings, and pence for safekeeping. These notes could be converted back into gold or coinage by anyone presenting them for payment. Of course, if all demanded their money at the same time, the bank would risk going out of business. There were a few close calls. For example, by 1797 war with France had again almost bankrupted the country. When investors withdrew their savings in panic, the bank ran out of cash and, as a result, had to issue low-denomination notes instead of gold for the next 24 years. It was during this “restriction period” that the bank gained its nickname The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. These hastily prepared bank notes were very tempting to counterfeiters, but the penalty was harsh in those days. Over 300 people were hanged for forgery.

The bank also had a narrow escape of a different nature. In 1780, rioters in London tried to storm the building. Thereafter, every night until 1973, a detachment of soldiers patrolled the perimeter to ensure the safety of the nation’s gold.

During the 19th century, the British pound and the Bank of England notes became the soundest currency in the world. However, World War I changed all that. The heavy cost of fighting damaged the country severely.

ly. So many investors scrambled to convert their bank notes into gold that gold coins soon disappeared. These were replaced by small-denomination bank notes. Gold coins for everyday use were gone forever. In 1931, Britain left the gold standard entirely, which meant that the value of the pound sterling was no longer linked to a fixed quantity of gold.

Throughout its history, the bank had been a privately owned company. In 1946, however, it was taken over by the government.

The “Old Lady” Keeps Busy

The Bank of England is a central bank. It acts as the government’s banker, advising it on financial policy and keeping the currency as stable as possible by setting appropriate interest rates. Its other customers are commercial banks and central banks of foreign countries. Within its subterranean vaults, it safeguards the country’s gold reserves. Outside London, at another secure site, it oversees the printing of new bank notes.

Located near the center of the world’s time zones, the City of London never sleeps. Inside the city the bank plays a key role. What goes on behind those windowless walls reverberates throughout the rest of the financial world. Yes, “The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street” is as active as ever, keeping a tight hold on the purse strings of the nation.



DOES GOD APPROVE OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

DURING the church ceremony, the two men stand hand in hand before a renowned Episcopal bishop. They make a "covenant . . . before God and the church." Clothed in ornate gold-and-white vestments, the bishop publicly blesses their union. Afterward the couple hug and kiss and are given a standing ovation. According to this bishop, such homosexual relationships "are holy and deserve to be blessed, . . . deserve to be called what they are: sacred."

However, other religious leaders voice strong opposition to same-sex unions. "We are so disturbed by this [bishop's] deci-

sion," stated Cynthia Brust, spokesperson for the American Anglican Council, a group of conservative Episcopalian. "Same-sex blessings contradict the clear teaching on marriage and sexuality from the Bible," she said, adding that "sexuality . . . is to be confined to a man and woman in holy matrimony."

The fire storm of controversy over this issue is not restricted to religion. Internationally, heated political debates are raging, since the social, political, and economic implications involving pensions, joint health care, and taxes are great.

Photo by Chris Hondros/Getty Images

Issues involving civil rights and legal recognition are often very complicated and divide public opinion. True Christians are careful to maintain neutrality by avoiding political debates. (John 17:16)* Still, some who respect the Bible find themselves confused regarding the subject of same-sex marriage and homosexuality. How do you view same-sex marriage? What is God's standard for marriage? What impact does your attitude have on your relationship with God?

Our Creator Sets the Standard

Our Creator established rules governing marriage long before governments began regulating the institution. The opening book of the Bible tells us: "A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) The Hebrew word "wife," according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, "connotes one who is a female human being." Jesus confirmed that those yoked together in marriage should be "male and female."—Matthew 19:4.

Thus, God intended marriage to be a permanent and an intimate bond between a man and a woman. Men and women are designed to complement each other so they may be capable of satisfying each other's emotional, spiritual, and sexual needs and desires.

The well-known Biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals God's feelings about homosexuality. God declared: "The cry of complaint about Sodom and Gomorrah, yes, it is loud, and their sin, yes, it is very heavy." (Genesis 18:20) The extent of their sinful depravity at that time was apparent when two guests visited the righteous man Lot. "The men of Sodom . . . surrounded the house, from boy to old man, all the people in one mob. And they kept calling out to Lot and say-

* Even when the laws of the land are in conflict with their Bible-trained conscience, Jehovah's Witnesses do not engage in protests or any form of political campaigns in order to change such laws.

ing to him: 'Where are the men who came in to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have intercourse with them.'" (Genesis 19:4, 5) The Bible says: "The men of Sodom were bad and were gross sinners against Jehovah."—Genesis 13:13.

The men became "violently inflamed in their lust toward one another, males with males." (Romans 1:27) They had "gone out after flesh for unnatural use." (Jude 7) In countries where homosexual rights campaigns are pervasive, some may object to using the word "unnatural" to describe homosexual behavior. However, is not God the final arbiter when it comes to nature? He commanded his ancient people: "You must not lie down with a male the same as you lie down with a woman. It is a detestable thing."—Leviticus 18:22.

Your Accountability to God

The Bible is clear: God does not approve of or condone homosexual practices. He also disapproves of people who "consent with those practicing them." (Romans 1:32) And "marriage" cannot give homosexuality a cloak of respectability. God's direction that "marriage be honorable among all" precludes homosexual unions, which he considers detestable.—Hebrews 13:4.

Still, with God's help, anyone can learn to "abstain from fornication," which includes homosexual acts, and "get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor." (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4) Admittedly, this is not always easy. Nathan*, who formerly pursued a homosexual life-style, said: "I thought I could never stop." But he did change with help from "the spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11) As Nathan discovered, no problem is too big for Jehovah, who can provide the strength and help needed to meet His standards and receive His blessings.—Psalm 46:1.

* Not his real name.

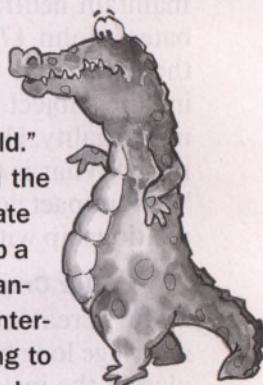
Watching the World

White Crocodiles Found



"Forest officials in Bhitarkanika National Park in Orissa have found 15 rare white crocodiles . . . during the annual crocodile census," says India's newspaper *The Hindu*. White crocodiles are extremely rare and "are not found anywhere else in the world."

Because of relentless poaching, the saltwater crocodiles in the area were on the verge of extinction in the 1970's, but the state government, with the help of United Nations programs, set up a crocodile-rearing project within the park. An abundance of mangroves, unpolluted waters, a rich food supply, and less human interference have made the breeding program a success. According to *The Hindu*, there are now some 1,500 crocodiles with normal coloration in the park along with the rare white ones.



Sheep Remember Faces

"We have found that sheep can recognise the faces of at least 50 other sheep and 10 humans," writes neurobiologist Keith Kendrick in *New Scientist*. Kendrick and his team found that after seeing the 60 faces over the course of a few weeks, the sheep remembered all of them "for at least two years." Not only did the sheep recognize the faces but, like humans, they were also able to "pick up on emotional cues in facial expressions." The journal reports that sheep "can distinguish between different expressions in humans, and that they can detect changes in the faces of anxious sheep. They also prefer smiling human faces to angry ones." The researchers found that "the faces of humans who look after sheep can end up being categorised

in the same way as a highly familiar member of the flock." Says Kendrick: "Friendly humans effectively become honorary sheep. This implies that sheep feel an affiliation with their shepherds."

Australia's Greenhouse Pollution

"Australians have the highest greenhouse emissions per person of all industrial countries," states The Australia Institute. Australia produced an average of 27.2 tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases per person during 2001. A report from the research institute states that this high figure is due to Australia's reliance on coal-generated electricity and motorized transport as well as its production of aluminum. The next-largest per capita greenhouse gas emitters were Canada (22 tons) and the Unit-

ed States (21.4 tons). The lowest reported figure for 2001 was Latvia, which produced 0.95 tons of greenhouse gas per person. Despite Australia's modest population size, its total greenhouse emissions "exceed those of major European economies such as France and Italy (each with around three times Australia's population)," the report said.

Nightingales' Songs Versus Traffic Noise

"When the noise increases, nightingales sing louder," declares the German newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*. A study conducted by Henrik Brumm of the Institute of Biology at the Free University of Berlin found that the volume of the songs, which are intended to establish a bird's territory and to attract females, varied by 14 deci-

bels, depending on the surrounding noise level. "This does not sound [like] much," said Brumm, "but it corresponds to a fivefold increase in sound pressure, which means that the pressure in the bird's lungs must be five times greater." In peaceful localities, the birdsongs registered 75 decibels. But in places with high traffic density, the birds sang at 89 decibels. "What surprised the researcher in particular," states the paper, "was the fact that the birds seem to adapt to the situation anew each day. On the weekend, with no commuter traffic, the birds routinely sang more softly than on weekdays."

Crime in Polish Schools

"Twenty thousand robberies were committed in schools [in Poland]" in 2003, reports the Polish journal *Zwieriadło*. It adds that "80 percent of [Polish] schoolchildren do

not like their school because they feel lonely and find it difficult to get along with teachers and other students." Why are there so many problems? "Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They are a reflection of what is happening in society," says mental-health worker Wojciech Eichelberger. "We create the world of social norms and values in which schools are immersed." Eichelberger recommends that to counteract the problem, parents should spend time with their children, thus teaching them that they feel their children are important.

The Struggle With Body Image

"Young people—and girls in particular—are struggling with their body image at an increasingly young age, and that could have serious health consequences," says Canada's *Globe and Mail* newspaper. Girls aged 10 to

14 were surveyed as to their eating attitudes, and over 2,200 responded. The *Globe* reports: "Less than 7 per cent of the girls were overweight, but more than 31 per cent described themselves as 'too fat' and 29 per cent said they were currently dieting." Why do healthy girls want to lose weight? According to the paper, much of the blame rests with adult role models who themselves constantly diet and who ridicule people who are overweight. "The media also play a big role in influencing teenage behaviour, by constantly creating ultrathin role models," says the *Globe*. Dr. Gail McVey, a research scientist at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children, points out that children, parents, and teachers alike need to realize that "weight gain is normal and necessary for children growing into adolescence."

Tobacco, Poverty, and Illness



tor in causing illness," the paper reports. In Spain, where the yearly mortality rate attributed to tobacco has reached 60,000, smoking has become "the principal cause of illness, disability, and avoidable death."

"The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that almost 84 percent of smokers live in poor countries, where tobacco and poverty have become a vicious cycle," states the Spanish newspaper *Diario Medico*. Moreover, in every country "those who smoke the most and experience the greatest number of problems related to tobacco consumption belong to the most deprived sector of the population." Although consumption of tobacco has diminished in most developed countries, worldwide it has become "the fourth most significant risk factor in causing illness," the paper reports. In Spain, where the yearly mortality rate attributed to tobacco has reached 60,000, smoking has become "the principal cause of illness, disability, and avoidable death."

From Our Readers

Science and God I was excited to read the series “Can Science Help You to Find God?” (June 22, 2004) I have sent a copy to my youngest stepbrother, who is a nuclear physicist. The articles were exactly correct

about the peer pressure in the scientific community to be an atheist. I believe that atheism has become the religion of the scientific world because of the gross misrepresentation of the Bible by religious dogmatists. I thank you so much for addressing these subjects.

A. B., United States

The series was another gem. The excellent pictures improved our grasp of the four fundamental physical forces that make life possible on our earth. And your questions to religionists uncovered their frailty when it comes to integrity and modesty. Please accept my thanks for the entire series of articles.

F. W., United States

Concorde I am 16 years old, and I would like to thank you for the article “The Concorde Flies Into Aviation History.” (June 22, 2004) Ever since I was small, I have been fascinated by this ‘flying racer.’ It is amazing to see what man is able to build, thanks to the intelligence and wisdom that God has given him.

T.D.C., France

I was able to fly on the Concorde. I especially enjoyed watching the sun “rise” in the west after we had left London in evening darkness and landing just three hours later in the bright sunshine of a New York afternoon!

R. M., United States

Abusive Boyfriend Thank you for the article “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Stop My Boyfriend From Mistreating Me?” (June 22, 2004) I was once in a relationship that was both physically and emotionally dangerous. I was in fear of my boyfriend, which served to prolong the abusive relationship.

Fortunately, I was able to end the relationship with the help of my parents, Christian elders, and Jehovah God. This article will benefit those in desperate need of help.

J. A., United States

I hope this article will keep someone from getting married to a man who mistreats her. Verbal, emotional, and physical abuse should be rejected from the start! I learned that lesson the hard way.

T. G., Canada

Reformed Boss For five years I worked for a mild, compassionate man. Then the company was sold, and a new boss was put in charge. I became his verbal punching bag. Humiliation, insults, and lies were my daily lot. I was very depressed and stressed out. Then I received the May 8, 2004, issue with the series “Victimized at Work—What Can You Do?” I left a copy on my desk where he could see it and read it if he wanted to. He did. Since then his behavior has changed remarkably. He no longer harasses me. He even says that I have made progress in my work. What a relief!

K.D.A., Côte d'Ivoire

Loneliness The cover series “Alone but Not Lonely” was phenomenal. (June 8, 2004) I especially enjoyed the suggestions listed in the box on page 7, “What You Can Do About Loneliness.” I have used many of these suggestions, and I know that they will be a great source of encouragement to others.

E. M., United States



The Amazing Maya Calendar

By Awake! writer in Mexico

FOR the ancient Maya,* the passing of time was of great significance. Their beliefs about events that would recur in certain cycles were reflected in their calendars.

What some authorities call the **tzolkin** (count of days) calendar consisted of a 260-day cycle divided into 13 numbered periods. Each period lasted 20 days, each day having its own distinctive name. The tzolkin calendar was the basis of the Maya's ceremonial life and was used in divination.

Running concurrently with the ritual calendar was the civil, or **haab**, calendar. This was a solar calendar of 365 days. It had 19 months, 18 of them lasting 20 days; and one month had only five days, which brought the total to 365 days. Agriculture and everyday life were based on this solar year. The ingenious Maya combined both of these calendars into something researchers call the Calendar Round, thus producing dates from elements of each calendar. It took 52 years for this huge cycle of days to repeat itself.[#]

No artifact has been found that actually represents the entire Maya calendar. Scholars have gained their understanding of the calendar system by deciphering the handful of Maya books that have survived and by studying glyphs on Maya stelae and monuments.

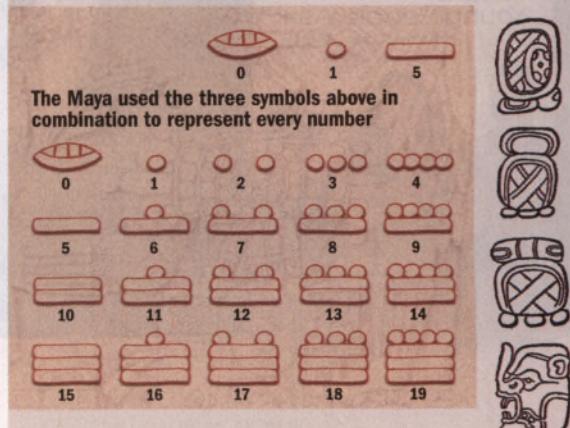
Today, after centuries of research, the Maya calendar still delights the experts. It possessed such sophisticated features as precise adjustments to the length of the solar year and extraordinarily accurate mappings of the lunar and planetary cycles. Yes, all of this was skillfully calculated by the ancient Maya, who accurately marked the passing of time.

* See the article "The Maya—Yesterday and Today," in the September 8, 2001, issue of Awake!

[#] In addition, the Maya used the Long Count calendar, which was essentially a continuous record of days from an ancient base date.



The date highlighted on the stela above is 6 Caban 5 Pop and corresponds to February 6, 752 C.E.



Rather than 7 days, the **tzolkin** calendar had 20 days with names. Below are some of the symbols

Some symbols (glyphs) for the 19 months of the **haab** calendar



Practical answers to the questions you've been asking!

- Why don't my parents understand me?
- Why did Dad and Mom split up?
- How can I make real friends?
- Why do I get so depressed?
- Why won't the kids leave me alone?
- What about sex before marriage?

