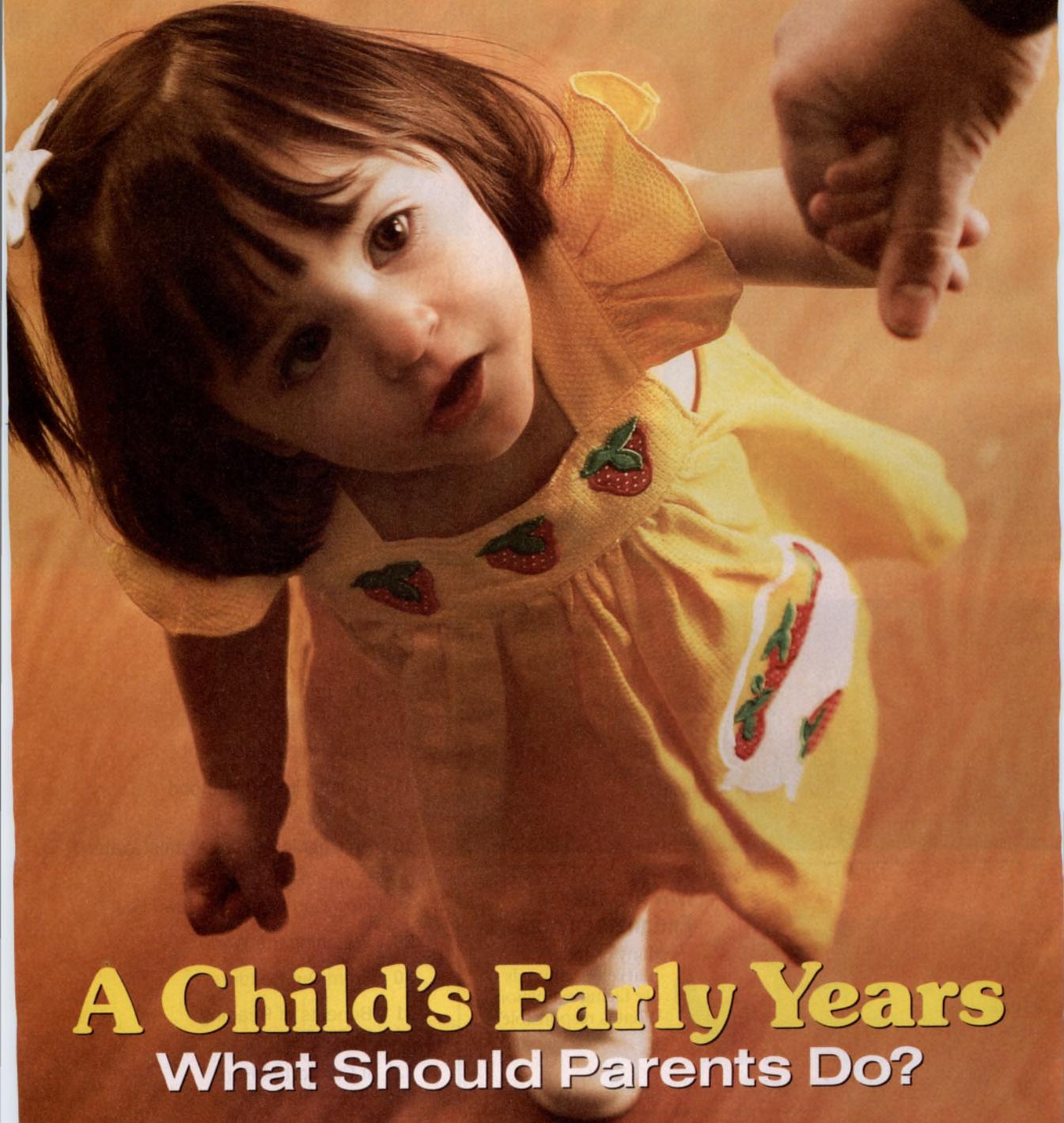


Awake!

OCTOBER 22, 2004



A Child's Early Years
What Should Parents Do?

A Child's Early Years

What Should Parents Do?

3-10

Parents want their children to develop into successful adults. What can they do to see that this occurs? What is the best way to develop your child's potential?



Beauty Hidden in the Dark 23

One of the largest systems of caves in the world is found in Slovenia. Learn about these marvelous underground masterpieces.

Arne Hodalic/www.ipak.org

Why Are They Endangered? 26

Many of India's marvelous animals are facing extinction. What is responsible?

- 3 How Important Is Early Child Training?
- 5 The Importance of Nurturing Your Child
- 7 Your Role as a Parent
- 11 Taught From Childhood to Love God
- 16 An Ongoing Battle Against Water
- 20 Young People Ask . . . How Can I Tell Him How I Feel?
- 28 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 Benefits of Reading to Children
- 32 It Comforted Her



FLORENCE was 40 years old and desperately wanted a child. During her pregnancy, however, a doctor warned her that her baby could be born with a learning disability. She refused to give up, and she gave birth to a healthy baby.

Shortly after the birth of her son, Stephen, Florence began reading to him and talking to him at every opportunity. As he got older, they played games, went on outings, practiced counting, and sang songs. "Even during bath time we played something," she remembers. It paid off.

While still in his mid-teens, Stephen graduated from the University of Miami with honors. Two years later, at age 16, he finished law school, and according to his biography, he later became the youngest lawyer in the United States. His mother, Dr. Florence Baccus—a former teacher and retired guidance counselor—has devoted much time to the study of early learning. She is convinced that the attention and stimulation she gave her son in his infancy changed his future.

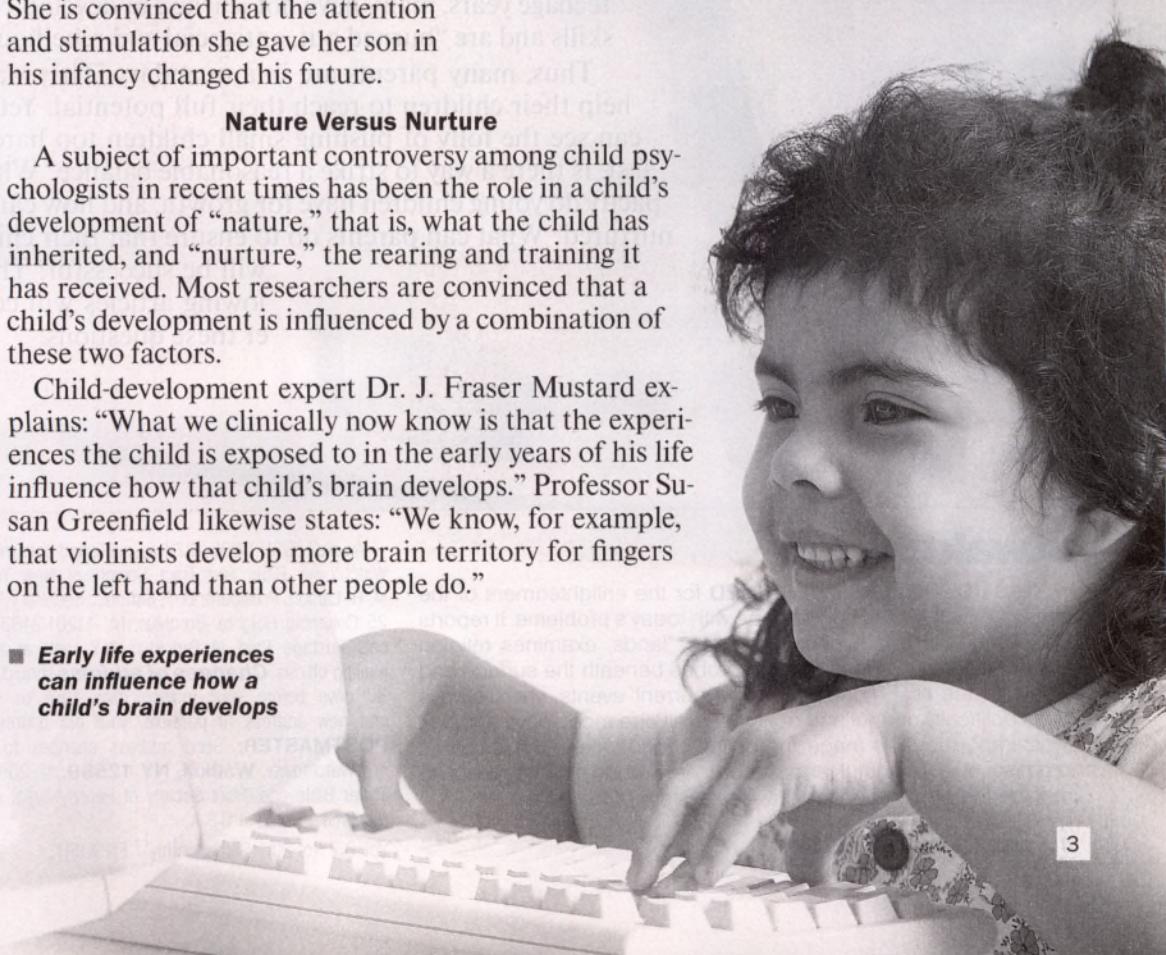
Nature Versus Nurture

A subject of important controversy among child psychologists in recent times has been the role in a child's development of "nature," that is, what the child has inherited, and "nurture," the rearing and training it has received. Most researchers are convinced that a child's development is influenced by a combination of these two factors.

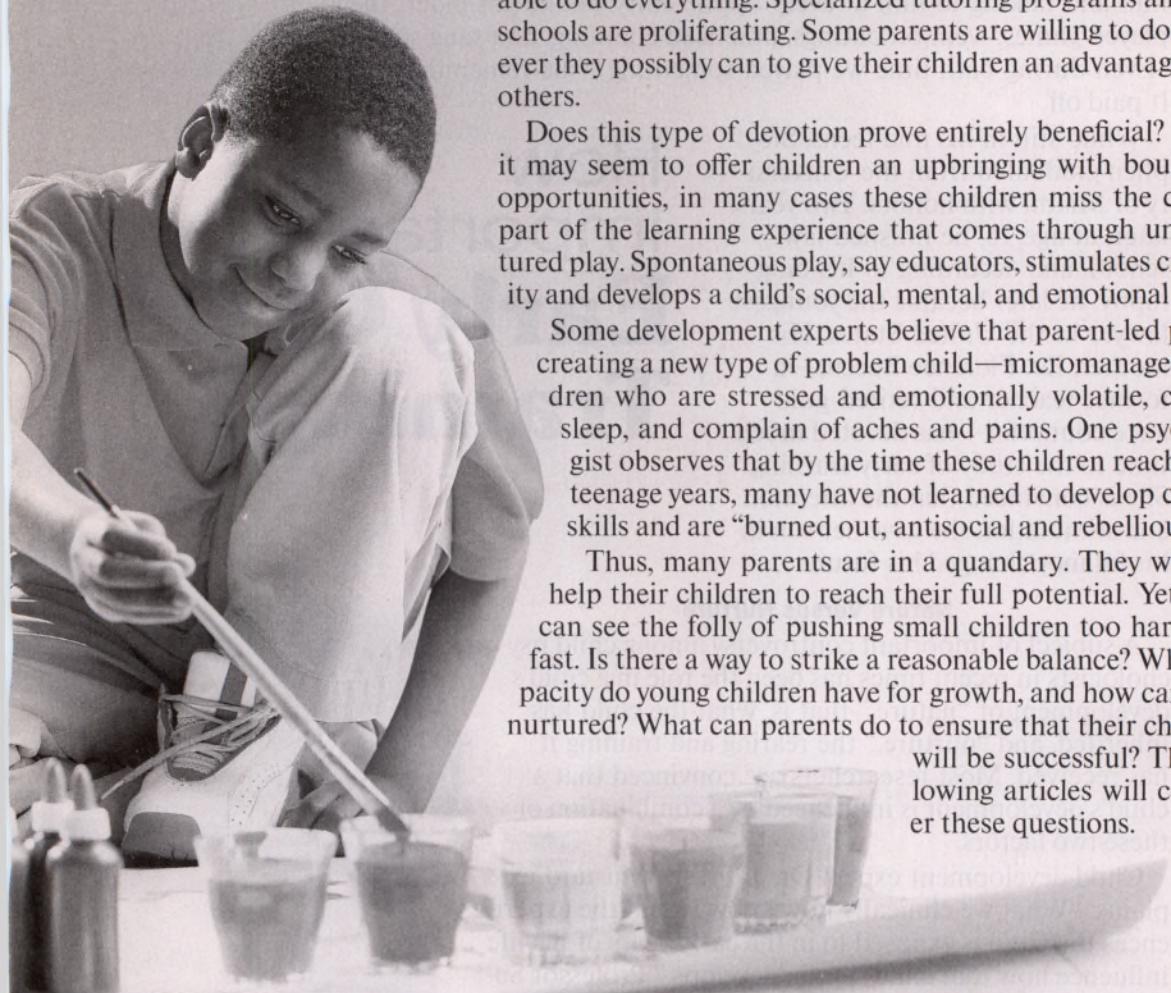
Child-development expert Dr. J. Fraser Mustard explains: "What we clinically now know is that the experiences the child is exposed to in the early years of his life influence how that child's brain develops." Professor Susan Greenfield likewise states: "We know, for example, that violinists develop more brain territory for fingers on the left hand than other people do."

■ **Early life experiences can influence how a child's brain develops**

How Important Is Early Child Training?



■ Play stimulates creativity and develops a child's skills



What Training to Provide

Taking a cue from these findings, many parents not only go to great lengths to send their children to the right day care but also spend lavishly on music and art classes. Some believe that if a child practices everything, when he gets older he will be able to do everything. Specialized tutoring programs and preschools are proliferating. Some parents are willing to do whatever they possibly can to give their children an advantage over others.

Does this type of devotion prove entirely beneficial? While it may seem to offer children an upbringing with boundless opportunities, in many cases these children miss the crucial part of the learning experience that comes through unstructured play. Spontaneous play, say educators, stimulates creativity and develops a child's social, mental, and emotional skills.

Some development experts believe that parent-led play is creating a new type of problem child—micromanaged children who are stressed and emotionally volatile, cannot sleep, and complain of aches and pains. One psychologist observes that by the time these children reach their teenage years, many have not learned to develop coping skills and are “burned out, antisocial and rebellious.”

Thus, many parents are in a quandary. They want to help their children to reach their full potential. Yet, they can see the folly of pushing small children too hard, too fast. Is there a way to strike a reasonable balance? What capacity do young children have for growth, and how can it be nurtured? What can parents do to ensure that their children will be successful? The following articles will consider these questions.

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.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Changes of address** should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. © 2004 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Vol. 85, No. 20 Semimonthly ENGLISH

WHAT a person learns or does not learn during childhood can affect his future abilities.

What, then, do children need from their parents to develop into balanced, successful adults? Consider what some have concluded based on research done in recent decades.

The Role of Synapses

Advances in brain-imaging technology enable scientists to study brain development in greater detail than ever before. Such studies indicate that early childhood is a critical time for developing the brain functions necessary to handle information, express emotions normally, and become proficient in language. "Brain connections are being wired at an extraordinarily rapid rate in the early years, as the landscape of the brain is shaped by moment-to-moment interactions of genetic information and environmental stimuli," reports *Nation* magazine.

Scientists believe that the majority of these connections, called synapses, are made in the first few years of life. This is when "a baby's potential future wiring for intelligence, sense of self, trust and motivation for learning is laid down," according to Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, a professional in the field of child development.

A baby's brain grows dramatically in size, structure, and function during the first few years. In an environment that is rich in stimulation and learning experiences, synaptic connections multiply, creating a broad network of neural pathways in the brain. These pathways make thinking, learning, and reasoning possible.

Semimonthly Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Croatian, Czech,⁷⁷ Danish,⁷⁸ Dutch, English,⁷⁹ Estonian, Finnish,⁸⁰ French,⁸¹ German,⁸² Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,⁸³ Japanese,⁸⁴ Korean,⁸⁵ Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,⁸⁶ Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,⁸⁷ Swahili, Swedish,⁸⁸ Tagalog, Ukrainian

⁷⁷ Audiocassettes also available.

⁷⁸ CD (MP3 format) also available.

Monthly Languages: Amharic, Bulgarian, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Georgian, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Nepali, Papiamento (Aruba), Papiamento (Curaçao), Sepedi, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

The Importance of Nurturing Your Child

Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America:** United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P. O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

It may be that the more stimulation an infant brain gets, the more nerve cells get turned on and the more connections are made between them. Interestingly, this stimulation is not merely intellectual, acquired through exposure to facts, figures, or language. Scientists have found that emotional stimulation is also needed. Research indicates that infants who are not held and touched and are not played with or stimulated will form fewer of these synaptic connections.

Nurturing and Potential

Eventually, as children get older, a sort of pruning takes place. The body appears to discard synaptic wiring that may be unnecessary. This could have a profound effect on a child's potential. "If a child does not get the right kind of stimulus at the right age," says brain researcher Max Cynader, "then the neurological circuits will not develop properly." According to Dr. J. Fraser Mustard, the result can be lower IQ, poor verbal and mathematical skills, health problems as an adult, and even behavioral problems.

So it seems that the experiences a person has as an infant can have a definite effect on his adult life. Whether the person is resilient or fragile, whether he learns to think in abstract terms or is lacking in this ability, and whether he becomes empathetic or not can be influenced by his early childhood experiences. So the role of parents is especially important. "One of the most critical aspects



■ Infants left alone without stimulation may not develop as well as others

of this early experience," notes a pediatrician, "is a sensitive parenting figure."

That may sound simple enough. Nurture and care for your children, and they will prosper. Unfortunately, parents know that understanding how to care for children properly is not always so simple. Effective parenting is not always intuitive.

According to one study, 25 percent of parents polled did not know that what they did with their child could enhance or hamper his or her intelligence, confidence, and love for learning. This raises the questions: What is the best way to develop your child's potential? And how can you provide the right atmosphere? Let us see.

In Our Next Issue

- **Obesity—What Is the Solution?**
- **Coping With the Trauma of a Terrorist Attack**
- **Raising Children in God's Discipline**

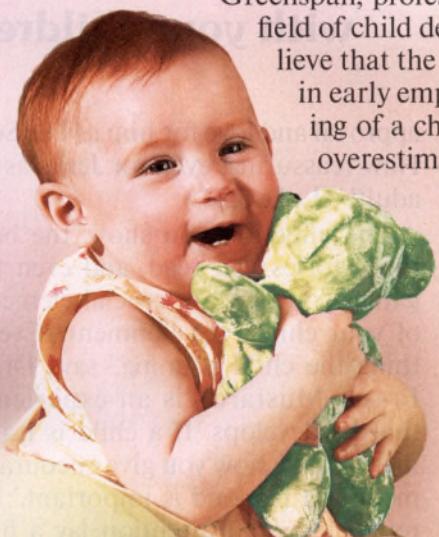
IF YOU make a child feel loved, connected, purposeful and inquisitive, brain development will follow," says Peter Gorski of Harvard Medical School. "Our role as parents is not to perfect brain circuitry, but to foster the development of healthy, sane and caring human beings."

How rewarding it is for you as a parent to see your child grow up to be a morally upright person who is considerate of others! For you to achieve such an outcome, much depends on the initiative you take in being an example, a companion, a communicator, and a teacher. Although all children are born with the basic capacity to act morally, parents must progressively impart moral values as their children mature.

Who Shapes Children?

Researchers differ as to who exerts the greatest influence in shaping children. Some believe that children are primarily shaped by their peers. Yet, Drs. T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley

Greenspan, professionals in the field of child development, believe that the role of a parent in early empathetic nurturing of a child cannot be overestimated.



Your Role as a Parent



Playing With Your Infant

- Infants have an extremely short attention span, so play only when they seem to enjoy it.
- If toys are used, make sure they are safe and stimulating to the child's senses.

- Play games that make things happen. Infants delight in making you do something over and over, such as picking up a toy that they drop.

Source: Clinical Reference Systems



Experiences later in life and peer influences complement a child's early growth. It is important that children be shown compassion and understanding in the family setting. They also need to be taught how to cope with their feelings in a mature way. Children who receive such assistance are generally better prepared to work cooperatively, compassionately, and empathetically with others.

Child training from infancy is hard work. For you to be successful—especially if you are new parents—it is the course of wisdom to seek guidance from others who are more experienced and then to follow a definite course of action. Experts have written countless books on child development. Very often what they say echoes reliable advice contained in the Bible. When applied, the sound principles of God's Word have helped parents to nurture their children effectively. Consider the following practical direction.

Be Generous in Expressing Love

Children are like young plants that develop and thrive when nurtured with regular, loving attention. Water and sunlight nourish a young plant and

stimulate healthy growth and stability. Similarly, parents who shower their children with verbal and physical expressions of love will nurture their children's mental and emotional growth and stability.

The Bible states simply: "Love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1) Parents who are generous in expressing love to their children are, in effect, imitating their Creator, Jehovah God. The Bible relates that on the occasion of Jesus' baptism, he heard the voice of his Father expressing

Spend time in enjoyable recreation with your children

approval and love for him as His Son. How reassuring, even for Jesus as an adult!—Luke 3:22.

The affection you show, the bedtime stories you read, and even the games you play are crucial elements of your child's development. 'Everything the child is doing,' says Dr. J. Fraser Mustard, 'is an experience that he develops. If a child is learning to crawl, how you give encouragement and respond is important.' Parental love and attention lay a firm foundation for your child to develop and to become a responsible and mature adult.

Companion and Communicator

Spending time with your children creates a bond. Furthermore, it promotes communication skills. This closeness—in the home and elsewhere and at any suitable time—is

encouraged in the Scriptures.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; 11:18-21.

Child-development experts agree that the time parents spend with their children is much more important than fancy toys or any specific activity. Inexpensive and everyday activities can allow for such periods with your children. For example, simply going to the park with them to observe nature can provide an ideal occasion for parents to ask meaningful questions and promote communication.

The Scriptures say that there is “a time to skip about.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4) Yes, carefree play is essential to a child’s developing intellectual, emotional, and social skills. According to Dr. Mustard, play is not merely valuable but absolutely essential. He says: “Children develop the wiring of their brains for a full variety of functions primarily through play.” The toys a child uses in unstructured play can be very simple, such as an empty cardboard box. Safe, everyday household items are just as intriguing to infants as expensive high-tech toys.*

Experts believe that overscheduling children with countless adult-led activities could stifle their imagination and creativity. Moderation is recommended. Allow your child to explore his own little world and test his own resourcefulness. Often, a child will find something to do to entertain himself. This does not, however, relieve you of the responsibility of knowing what your child is doing and where he is playing so that he does not harm himself.

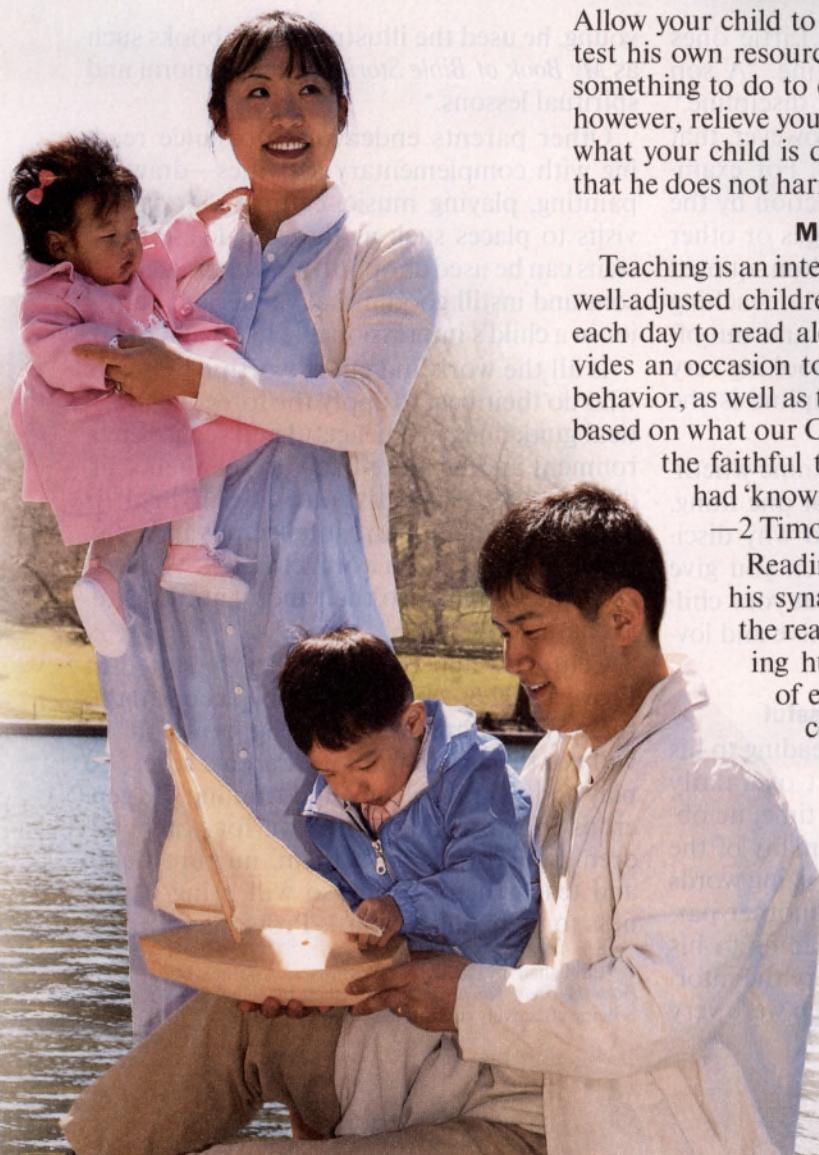
Make Time for It

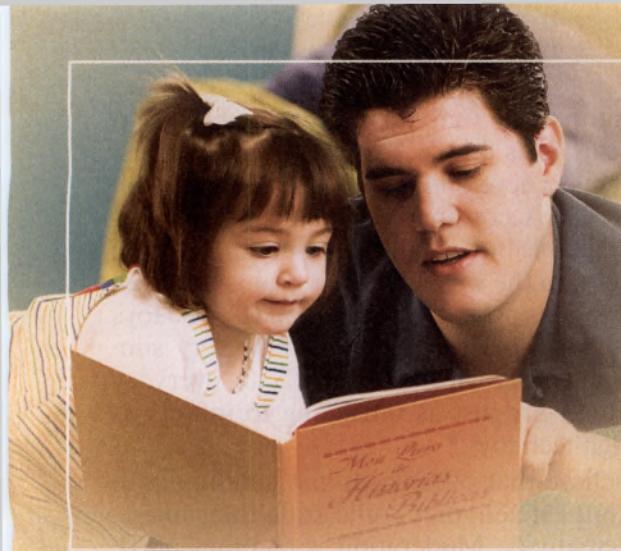
Teaching is an integral part of nurturing and raising well-adjusted children. Many parents set aside time each day to read aloud to their children. This provides an occasion to teach lessons about acceptable behavior, as well as to impart to a child moral values based on what our Creator says. The Bible notes that the faithful teacher and missionary Timothy had ‘known the holy writings from infancy.’

—2 Timothy 3:15.

Reading to your infant can stimulate his synaptic connections. A key is that the reading be done by an attentive, caring human. Linda Siegel, a professor of education, cautions regarding the content of what is read: “It should be at a level that children enjoy.” Also, try to keep the reading regular and at the same time each day. That way the child begins to look forward to it.

* See the article “African Toys for Free,” which appeared in the March 22, 1993, issue of this magazine.





Tips on Reading to Your Child

- Use good diction and pronunciation. A child learns language by hearing parents speak.
- With very young children, point out and name people and objects depicted in story-books.
- When the child is older, choose books that focus on his current favorite topics.

Source: *Pediatrics for Parents*

Teaching includes discipline. Little ones can benefit from loving discipline. “A son is wise where there is a father’s discipline,” says Proverbs 13:1. Remember, however, that discipline involves many things. For example, it can take the form of correction by the spoken word or denial of privileges or other forms of punishment. Dr. Brazelton, quoted earlier, says that discipline is “about teaching a child how to manage feelings and out-of-control behaviors. Every child is looking very hard for limits. After love, discipline is the most important thing you give.”

How can you as a parent determine whether your discipline is effective? For one thing, your children should understand why discipline is being administered. When you give correction, do it in such a way that your children sense that you are a supportive and loving parent.

Efforts That Prove Successful

Fred is one father who made reading to his daughter from her infancy part of a daily bedtime ritual. Over a period of time, he observed that she had memorized many of the stories and followed along, recognizing words and associated sounds. Chris is another parent who was conscientious in reading to his children. He made an effort to vary the information he read. When the children were very

young, he used the illustrations in books such as *My Book of Bible Stories* to teach moral and spiritual lessons.*

Other parents endeavor to balance reading with complementary activities—drawing, painting, playing music, camping, or family visits to places such as the zoo. These occasions can be used as opportunities to teach lessons and instill good moral values and behavior in a child’s impressionable heart and mind.

Is all the work and effort worth it? Parents who do their best to apply the foregoing practical guidelines in a peaceful and secure environment are far more likely to see their children develop a positive attitude. If in their early years you nurture intellectual and communication skills in your children, you will contribute greatly to their moral and spiritual character.

Centuries ago the Bible clearly stated at Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it.” Parents surely do play an integral role in child training. Be generous in expressing your love for your children. Spend time with them, nurture them, and teach them. Doing so will bring happiness to them and to you.—Proverbs 15:20.

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Another book, *Learn From the Great Teacher*, also published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, is being effectively used to teach young children.

Taught From Childhood to LOVE GOD

— AS TOLD BY ANATOLY MELNIK —



Many warmly call me Grandpa. The word tugs at my heartstrings because it reminds me of my own grandfather, whom I loved deeply and to whom I am so indebted. Let me tell you about him and how he and Grandma had a profound effect on the lives of the members of their family, as well as many others.

I WAS born in the village of Hlina, in the north of what is today known as Moldova.* In the 1920's, traveling ministers known as pilgrims came from across the border in Romania to our beautiful hilly region. My mother's parents responded immediately to the good news they heard preached from the Bible. In 1927 they became Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. By the time World War II started in 1939, there was already a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in our small village.

* The current country name, Moldova, will be used throughout this article instead of the former names Moldavia or the Soviet Republic of Moldavia.

With my parents outside our home in Moldova shortly before Father's imprisonment

In 1936, the year I was born, all my relatives were Jehovah's Witnesses except my father, who still attended the Orthodox Church. During the second world war, he began to reflect on the purpose of life and eventually dedicated himself to our Creator, Jehovah God, symbolizing this by water baptism. My grandfather contributed greatly to the spiritual growth of our family. He had a strong love for the Bible and knew hundreds of verses by heart. He could steer any conversation toward the Bible.

I would often sit on Grandpa's lap and listen to him tell Bible stories. He instilled in me a love for God. I am so grateful to him for that! At the age of eight, I went out preaching for the first time with Grandfather. Using the Bible, we showed fellow villagers who Jehovah is and how to draw close to him.

Oppressed by the Communists

In 1947, under the influence of Communist policy and the Orthodox Church, the authorities began persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses in Moldova. Agents of what was later called the KGB, as well as local police, would come to our home and ask us who were taking the lead in our preaching work, where the literature was coming from, and where we met for worship. They said they were going to stop



the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses, who, they claimed, "thwart the development of Communism in the country."

By this time Father, a well-educated man, had also come to love Bible truth deeply. Both he and Grandfather knew how to answer interrogators so as not to betray our Christian brothers and sisters. They both were courageous and loving men who cared for the welfare of fellow believers. Like them, Mother always remained calm and composed.

In 1948, Father was arrested and taken away. We were never informed of the charges against him. He was sentenced to seven years in a maximum-security prison and to an additional two years of exile. Eventually, he was sent to the Magadan region in the far northeast of Russia, well over 4,000 miles from our home. We did not see each other for nine years. It was difficult to live without a father, but Grandpa was a real support for me.

Sent Into Exile

On the night of June 6, 1949, two soldiers and an officer invaded our home. They said that we had two hours to leave the house and get into their vehicle. No further explanation was given. They simply told us that we were being exiled and would never return. So, along with Mother, Grandpa, Grandma, and fellow believers, I was sent to Siberia. I was only 13. After a few weeks, we found ourselves in the marshlands of the taiga, amid impenetrable forests. How different this was from my native surroundings, which I loved so dearly! Sometimes we would cry. Yet, we were confident that Jehovah would never forsake us.

The small village that we were taken to consisted of ten log huts. Other Witnesses were exiled to different villages throughout the taiga. To frighten the local people, as well as prejudice them against us, the authorities said that the Witnesses were cannibals. Soon,

however, the people realized that this was a lie and that there was no need to fear us.

For the first two months after our arrival, we were accommodated in an old hut. But we needed to build a more suitable dwelling before the arrival of harsh winter weather. Grandpa and Grandma helped Mother and me make a primitive shelter, half above ground and half below. We lived there for over three years. We were forbidden to leave the village without permission, and permission was never given.

In time, I was allowed to attend school. Since my religious views differed from those of the others there, teachers and fellow students often asked me questions. Grandfather's eyes would shine when I came home and told him how I was able to explain our beliefs.

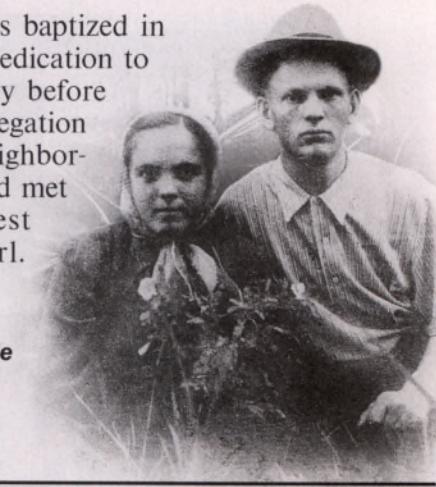
A Little More Freedom

After the death of the dictator Stalin in 1953, our life improved a bit. We were allowed to leave the village. This made it possible for us to associate with fellow believers and attend meetings in villages where other Witnesses had been exiled. To avoid attracting attention, we met in small groups. To get there, we walked up to 20 miles, at times in knee-deep snow and in temperatures of 40 degrees below zero. The following day, we would make the long trek home. En route, we would eat a pickle and a few lumps of sugar. Yet, how happy we were, like David of old!

—Psalm 122:1.

In 1955, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah. Shortly before that, at a congregation meeting in a neighboring village, I had met Lidiya, a modest dark-haired girl.

*With Lidiya in
1959, still in exile*



Like us, she and her family were Witnesses who had been exiled from Moldova. She had a beautiful singing voice and knew by heart almost all 337 songs in the songbook we used then. This impressed me because I also cherished our music and songs. In 1956, we decided to get married.

I wrote Father—we had learned that he had been exiled to Magadan—and we postponed getting married until we received his blessing. Soon afterward, Father was released and was able to join us where we were living in exile. He told us how, with God's help, he and fellow Christians had survived the terrible conditions in the work camps. Such accounts strengthened our faith.

Shortly after Father returned, while Mother was preparing some oil we used in paints and varnishes, there was a terrible accident. The big pot of boiling oil somehow tipped over, and its contents spilled over her. She died in the hospital. We were overwhelmed with grief. Later, Father's grief lessened, and in time he married Tatyana, a Witness from a neighboring village.

Expanding Our Ministry

In 1958, Lidiya and I moved from Kizak, the village where we were living, to the much larger village of Lebyaie, about 60 miles away. We had read that Christians in other lands preached from house to house. So we tried to do this in our new location. Of course, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* had been banned, but we received copies smuggled in from other places. Now we were notified that we would receive the magazines in Russian only. Up till then, we had also received copies in Moldavian. So we studied hard to learn Russian better. Even today I recall not only the titles of those articles but also some of the thoughts they contained.

To support ourselves, Lidiya worked at a grain elevator and I unloaded timber from wagons. The work was wearisome, and the wages were meager. Although the Witnesses were valued as conscientious workers, we didn't receive benefits or premiums. Officials openly said: "Jehovah's Witnesses have no place in a Communist society." Yet, we rejoiced that Jesus' words about his followers were true in our case: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." —John 17:16.

New Challenges

In 1959 our daughter Valentina was born. Shortly thereafter, a new wave of persecution began. *The Encyclopædia Britannica* notes: "A new antireligious move was initiated by Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev in 1959-64." Members of the State security told us that the goal of the Soviet government was to eliminate all religion, especially Jehovah's Witnesses.

When Valentina was nearly a year old, I was called to the army. When I didn't go, I was sentenced to five years in prison for remaining neutral. Once when Lidiya came to visit me, a KGB colonel told her: "We have received notification from the Krem-

lin that within two years not one of Jehovah's Witnesses will be left in the Soviet Union." Then he warned: "You must deny your faith, otherwise you will be put in prison." The colonel thought such threats would silence the women, claiming: "They are a feeble bunch."

Within a short time, most Witness men were in prisons and labor camps. Yet, courageous Christian women carried on the preaching work. And at great risk, they smuggled literature to those in prisons and work camps. Lidiya faced such tests and was also



Lidiya with our daughter Valentina while I was in prison

often subjected to unwanted advances from men who sought to take advantage of my absence. Further, she was told that I would never be released. But I was!

Release and a Move to Kazakhstan

My case was reopened in 1963, and I was later released—after three years in prison. But we were unable to get a residence permit anywhere, so I was unable to find work. A State law decreed: “No permanent residence, no work.” In fervent prayer we implored Jehovah for help. Then we decided to move to Petropavl in the north of Kazakhstan. The local authorities, however, had already received notice about us and refused to let us live or work there. About 50 Witnesses in this city suffered similar persecution.

With another Witness couple, we moved farther south to the small town of Shchuchinsk. No other Witnesses lived there, and the authorities knew nothing of our preaching work. For a week Ivan and I—the two husbands—looked for work while our wives stayed at the train station, where we slept at night. Finally we found work at the glass factory. We rented a small room for our families that had space for two beds and little else, yet we were content.

Ivan and I devoted ourselves to our work, and our employers were very pleased. By the time I was called up for military service again, the factory manager had learned that my Bible-trained conscience would not allow me to engage in military training. Surprisingly, he contacted the military chief and told him that Ivan and I were skilled workers and that the factory could not keep running without us. So we were permitted to stay.

Rearing Children and Serving Others

Our second daughter, Lilya, was born in 1966. A year later we moved to Belyye Vody, in the south of Kazakhstan near the Uzbekistan border, where there was a small group of

Witnesses. Soon a congregation was formed, and I was appointed presiding overseer. In 1969 we had a son, Oleg, and two years later Natasha, our youngest, was born. Lidiya and I never forgot that children are an inheritance from Jehovah. (Psalm 127:3) We discussed together what we needed to do to raise them to love Jehovah.

Even into the 1970's, most male Witnesses were still in work camps. Many congregations needed mature oversight and guidance. So while Lidiya assumed a greater role in rearing the children, filling in at times as both mother and father, I served as a traveling overseer. I visited congregations in Kazakhstan, as well as the neighboring Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. At the same time, I also worked to help support the family, and Lidiya and the children willingly cooperated.

Even though I was sometimes away for weeks at a time, I tried to show the children fatherly love and help with their spiritual development. Lidiya and I fervently prayed together that Jehovah would help our children, and we discussed with them how to overcome fear of man and develop a close relationship with God. Without the unselfish support of my dear wife, I couldn't have carried out my duties as a traveling overseer. Lidiya and our other sisters were not at all the “feeble bunch” that the army officer had claimed they were. They were strong—truly spiritual giants!—Philippians 4:13.

In 1988, when all the children were grown, I was appointed as a regular traveling overseer. My circuit included most of the countries of Central Asia. After the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses was legally registered in the former Soviet Union in 1991, other capable, spiritually mature men began serving the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Today there are 14 traveling overseers who serve these countries, where last year more

With Lidiya today



than 50,000 people attended the Memorial of Christ's death!

An Unexpected Invitation

Early in 1998, I received an unexpected phone call from the Russia branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. "Anatoly, have you and Lidiya considered full-time service?" I was asked. Of course, we had thought about such a privilege for our children. In fact, our son, Oleg, had been serving at the Russia branch office for about five years.

When I told Lidiya about the invitation extended to us, she asked: "But what about our home, our garden, and our belongings?" After prayer and discussion, we decided to make ourselves available. Eventually we were invited to serve at the religious center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Issyk, Kazakhstan, near the large city of Alma-Ata. Here work is done to

translate our Bible literature into the local languages that are spoken throughout the area.

Our Family Today

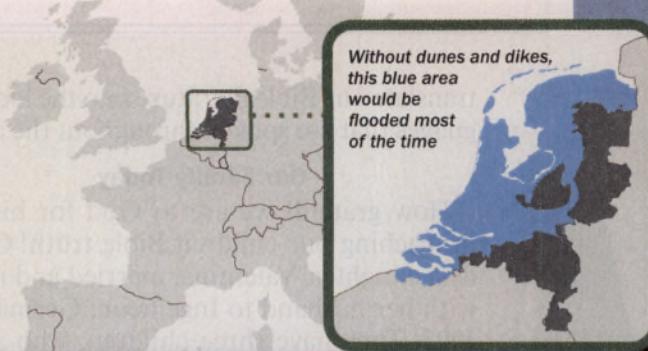
How grateful we are to God for his help in teaching our children Bible truth! Our eldest daughter, Valentina, married and moved with her husband to Ingelheim, Germany, in 1993. They have three children, who are all baptized Witnesses of Jehovah.

Lilya, our second daughter, has a family too. She and her husband, an elder in the congregation of Belyye Vody, are raising their two children to love God. Oleg married Natasha, a Christian sister from Moscow, and they serve together at the Russia branch office near St. Petersburg. In 1995 our youngest daughter, Natasha, married, and she is serving with her husband in a Russian congregation in Germany.

Now and then we gather for a big family reunion. Our children relate to their own children how "Mama" and "Papa" listened to Jehovah and raised their children to love and serve the true God, Jehovah. I can see that these discussions help our grandchildren to grow spiritually. Our youngest grandson resembles me when I was his age. Sometimes he gets up on my lap and asks me to tell him a Bible story. Tears well up in my eyes when I fondly recall how I often sat on Grandpa's lap and how he helped me come to love and serve our Grand Creator.

With our children and grandchildren, all serving Jehovah!





AN ONGOING BATTLE AGAINST WATER

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS

"With a mighty rush the ocean twice daily pours forth over an immense country, so that there is doubt as to whether the ground belongs to the land or the sea. A pitiable people lives there on high hills, erected by themselves to a height above the highest water levels known to them."



THE above is a description by the first-century Roman author Pliny the Elder of the battle waged against water by inhabitants of the low-lying regions along the North Sea. Today this battle continues. In fact, about half of the more than 16 million people in that region live and work below sea level.

Despite the continuing battle, these inhabitants of the Netherlands, or Low Countries, do not consider themselves pitiable. Grant-

ed, their country may be low and small,* but it is among the world's richest nations. And surprisingly, the Netherlands owes much of its prosperity to water and the battle against it.

An important reason why the Dutch, the inhabitants of the Netherlands, chose to stay in this region is the fertility of the land. It is well suited for agriculture, horticulture, and cattle raising. And because Europe's major

* The Netherlands covers an area of 16,000 square miles.



Huge sea dikes were constructed to protect the lower land behind the dikes

rivers flow into the sea here, the country's location is also economically strategic. No wonder that the Netherlands—including Rotterdam harbor, the world's largest port—is called the gateway to Europe!

Longtime Construction of Dikes

Prosperity, though, did not come naturally. For the past 900 years, the Dutch have been building dikes to protect themselves against the waters, both of the rivers running through the country and of the sea. As a result, the Netherlands is now protected against water from sea and river by thousands of miles of dikes—an impressive achievement!

Other countries have dikes as well. However, factors such as altitude make the dikes here crucial. Koos Groen, coauthor of the book *Dijken* (Dikes), said: "If the complete population of Switzerland were to choose to take a year-long holiday abroad, upon their return, their land would still be there. If the Dutch were to do so, upon their return half of their land and 75 percent of their houses would have disappeared."*

Today the millions of

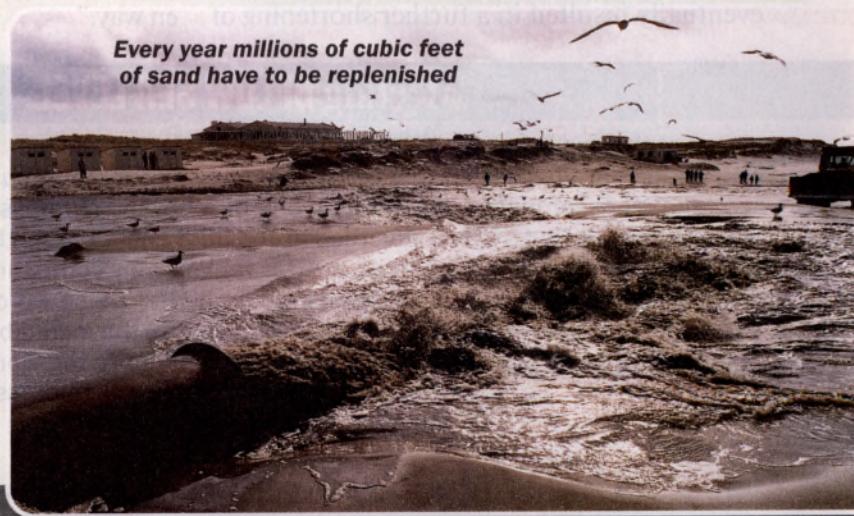
Dutch who live below sea level are able to keep their feet dry and sleep well at night because a constant battle is waged. Consider the effort involved in maintaining the beaches and the dunes.

Maintaining Beaches and Dunes

During the course of thousands of years, a natural barrier consisting of beaches and dunes came into being and shielded this region from the sea. But this barrier is constantly weakened by erosion. To compensate for this loss, special ships dredge up sand from the bottom of the sea some 6 to 12 miles off the coast and deposit it on or against the beach. Since 1970, nearly three billion cubic feet of sand has been moved to keep the country's dunes in shape!

Dune conservation, however, brings benefits to more than the human population. "Although the dunes take up only 1 percent

Every year millions of cubic feet of sand have to be replenished



* In the Netherlands, two fifths of the country consists of polders, areas that lie below sea level. These polders would be flooded if the dikes were not constantly maintained. Mountainous countries like Switzerland are situated above sea level and, therefore, do not face the same threat.

It is not uncommon for cars to travel at a lower level than ships

Top two photos: Met vriendelijke toestemming van het Nederlandse Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat

of the surface area of the Netherlands," according to the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, "three quarters of all bird species living in the country and two thirds of all higher plant species are found here."

The Line of Defense Shortened

The Dutch built the 20-mile-long Afsluitdijk, or closure dike, in 1932. In one fell swoop, this dike changed the Zuider Zee, or Southern Sea, from an inland sea into a lake, the IJsselmeer. At the same time, it reduced the country's coastline from about 1,180 miles to a little over 800 miles.

Some 20 years later, in 1953, after a disastrous flood killed 1,835 people, dike builders took on an even bigger project. Their goal was to close all sea inlets in the southwestern part of the country except for those leading to the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp. This Delta Plan, as the project was called, eventually resulted in a further shortening of



*The 1953
dike disaster*

the country's coastline to some 380 miles.

Protection Against the Rivers

The threat of water stems not only from the sea but also from rivers

that flow through the Netherlands before emptying into the sea. Toward the end of winter, after the long rainy period and at the time the mountain snow is melting, huge swells of water from Switzerland, Germany, France, and Belgium gush through these rivers and enter the Netherlands.

Such colossal quantities of water can cause serious problems. In February 1995, for example, rivers in the center of the country became so swollen that it was feared the dikes might break under the pressure. If there were a breach, water would cover the land behind the dikes to a depth of many feet. Groen, quoted earlier, says: "Few people realize what could have happened had the river dikes given way."

Meeting BELOW SEA LEVEL

One of the two Assembly Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Netherlands is situated 16 feet below sea level. "En route to our semiannual assemblies," commented one of Jehovah's Witnesses, "we often recall God's words recorded at Job 38:8 and 11: 'Who barricaded the sea with doors and said: 'This far you may come, and no farther; and here your proud waves are limited'?" These words remind us that the way in which Jehovah can control the incredible

force of water is far superior to the works of human hydraulic engineers, impressive though their accomplishments are."



A "Tub" Without a Roof

As no other country, the Netherlands is known for its polders, pieces of "new land" below sea level, enclosed by dikes. Until the end of the 19th century, the water level in polders was regulated by windmills. Nowadays computer-controlled pumping stations do the job. Peter Nowak, who maintains a pumping station near Amsterdam, explained what is involved.

"You could compare a polder to a bathtub," Nowak said. "A polder is often situated several meters below sea level. The surrounding dike prevents the polder from being flooded. But a dike is not a roof. Heavy rainfall could cause the area inside, or the tub, to be filled. In order to ward off serious trouble, the water has to be pumped out by force. But where should the water go?"

A polder contains a network of ditches that drain water to the pumping station. To prevent these ditches from becoming clogged, every farmer must clean the ones in the area he owns. The pumping station then pumps the surplus water from the polder into the *boezem*, an ingenious system of lakes and canals acting as a storage basin outside the polder. Excess water in the *boezem* is discharged into the sea during low tide.

"Maintaining the right water level in the

polder is vital for the Dutch economy," continued Nowak. "During dry summers, water is let in because farmers need water in their ditches to grow their grass or crops. Some polders grow one of the country's most famous exports—flowers."

Living Where the Sea Once Was

In the 20th century, polders were no longer viewed as merely additional farmland; they were also regarded as added living space. Half a century ago, when city planners set out to design towns in polders, they had little experience in organizing new communities. Today, however, if you visit the polders, you will see that the city planners succeeded in building livable communities on what used to be the bottom of the sea! Why don't you come and see for yourself?

Did you say that you feel a bit wary of taking a stroll below sea level? That's understandable, but many have been surprised to learn that they have already done so without knowing it. For example, if you have ever made a stopover at Schiphol Airport, near Amsterdam, your plane landed on the bottom of a reclaimed lake. The fact that you did not even notice that you were about 13 feet below sea level proves that the dikes in the Netherlands are still in good shape!

Who Looks After the DIKES?

Dikes and drainage systems need to be maintained and sometimes repaired. From the Middle Ages onward, local and regional water-management authorities, called water boards, have cared for this responsibility. These boards were based on a three-step principle: interest, payment, and say. He who has an interest in safe dikes must pay for management and maintenance. But he also gets a say in the authority guarding those interests and in the way the money raised should be spent.

Water boards have operated in the Netherlands since the 12th century. At present, more than 30 water boards exist. The power to set up, abolish, and regulate such boards rests with the provincial authorities. It is up to them to determine the size and makeup of the "dike army." The members of this army live in the area they have to protect. They have good motivation—the care and safety of their own families and their community. In times of high water, they patrol the dike, ready to go into action with sandbags and other equipment to prevent any breaches. This age-old system of water boards ensures that the dikes are well cared for.

Young People Ask . . .

How Can I Tell Him How I Feel?

"I would like an answer to the question, Who should be the one to declare that he or she is in love—the man or the woman?"

—Laura.*

HE IS someone you've recently met or possibly someone you have known for a while—and you would like him to be more than a friend. You are convinced that he feels the same way and that he is just too scared or shy to say anything. So you wonder if it might be a good idea for you to make the first move.[#]

Before going further, let us first think about the feelings of the people around you—those in your family and in your community. For example, does local custom say that it is your parents' job to find you a mate?[△] Granted, you might feel that courtship and marriage are personal matters. Still, Christians try to avoid causing needless offense to others. They also want to consider the feelings of family members and loved ones.

In many lands today, though, it is quite normal for couples to come together by their own choice in order to court before deciding

* Some names have been changed.

[#] Although this article is directed to young women, young men and others considering courtship will also find the Scriptural counsel helpful.

[△] Arranged marriages do not necessarily result in unhappiness. In Bible times, for instance, Isaac and Rebekah entered into an arranged marriage, and Isaac "fell in love with her." (Genesis 24:67) The lesson? Do not be too quick to disregard local customs as long as these do not conflict with God's law.—Acts 5:29.



whether to marry. Would it be wrong for the woman to take the initiative by expressing romantic interest in the man? Again, feelings of family and community might enter the picture. Would that course of action shock or offend many?

What further light does the Bible shed on the question of whether a woman could properly take the initiative? In Bible times a God-fearing woman named Ruth approached a man named Boaz about marriage. And Jehovah God blessed her efforts! (Ruth 3:1-13) Of course, Ruth was no child; she was a widow, obviously old enough to marry. Nor was she frivolous or flirtatious with Boaz. Instead, she closely followed God's laws on marriage.

—Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

Perhaps you are old enough to consider marriage, and there is a certain young man you are interested in. Even so, opening your heart to someone who may not feel the same way is a delicate, risky matter. It is like taking your heart and putting it in someone else's hands. Will he handle it tenderly or drop it on the ground? The best way to avoid unnecessary embarrassment or emotional devastation is to follow Bible principles.

Act With Shrewdness

It is easy to get caught up in romantic daydreams. You might even picture your wedding day and beyond. However, while reveries of this sort may be enjoyable, they are *illusions*. They can produce overwhelming desires that you have no means of satisfying. As the Bible says, “expectation postponed is making the heart sick.” (Proverbs 13:12) Daydreams can also distort your judgment. However, Proverbs 14:15 says: “The shrewd one considers his steps.” Being shrewd means having common sense and sound judgment. How can you be shrewd in the realm of romance?

First, try to “act with knowledge.” (Proverbs 13:16) As one young woman put it, “you really cannot love a person until you get to know him.” Before offering your heart to someone, pay attention to what he does and how he speaks. Observe how he treats people. “Ask his friends about him, adults who know him well,” suggests one young man. Is he “well reported on” by those in his Christian congregation? (Acts 16:2) Also, suggests a young woman named Isabel, “going out in groups and getting to know his family can be very helpful.” Group settings allow you to observe without being under a lot of pressure.

Getting to know someone in this way takes time and patience. But it will enable you to see attitudes, traits, and qualities that will either confirm your feelings or cause your feelings to change. Proverbs 20:11 states: “Even by his practices a boy [or young man] makes himself recognized as to whether his activity is pure and upright.” Yes, sooner or later his actions will reveal what he is inside.

Therefore, wisely stifle the temptation to push ahead and reveal your feelings prematurely. If you are hasty and he responds favorably, you may find out later that he is unsuit-

able as a marriage mate.* Having committed yourself, your ending the relationship may hurt the young man—perhaps deeply.

The Impression You Make

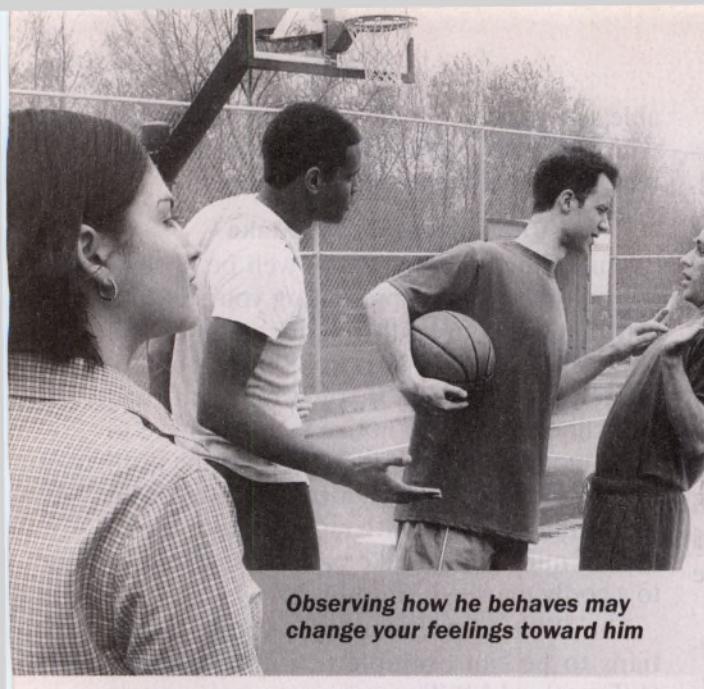
This young man may very well be observing *you* too! Are you presenting yourself in a way that lets your godly qualities shine? “I’ve noticed that a lot of girls do not dress appropriately,” says Isabel. “If you want a spiritually inclined person to notice you, you have to dress modestly.” Regardless of what the fashion world may dictate, adorning yourself “in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind,” will make you more attractive to a godly man.—1 Timothy 2:9.

The Bible also encourages young Christians to be “an example . . . in speaking.” (1 Timothy 4:12) The way you speak reveals a great deal about you. What should you do when opportunities arise to converse with the young man? If he is shy, he may be uneasy and nervous. A young woman named Abbie says, “You may have to start the conversation to see how he reacts.”

How? If you chatter nonstop about yourself, he might well conclude that you are self-centered and shallow. The Bible recommends “keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.” (Philippians 2:4) Asking a few appropriate questions about him or his interests may help him to open up a bit.

This is no time to resort to a “tricky tongue” or the “false lips” of flattery. (Psalm 120:2) A discerning man will see through such speech as insincere. At the same time, avoid saying things just because you think he wants to hear them. This is especially true if your conversations take a more serious turn and you begin discussing such things as your

* Chapters 28 to 31 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, can help you determine if someone might be a suitable marriage mate.



Observing how he behaves may change your feelings toward him

personal spiritual goals. Always be yourself, by being sincere, truthful, and genuine. Only then can you know if your lives are heading in the same direction.

If There Is No Response

What, though, if in spite of such modest efforts, no romantic spark is ignited? Perhaps several weeks—or months—have gone by and he still expresses no interest in you. Should you simply brush that off as shyness? You might ask yourself: ‘If he is really *that* timid, is he ready for marriage? If I were to marry him, would he be able to take the lead as family head, or would he expect me to do so?’ (1 Corinthians 11:3) Another question to ponder, ‘Is he really shy or simply not interested in me romantically?’ The latter would be a painful conclusion to draw. But facing it could spare you the embarrassment of revealing romantic feelings to someone who simply doesn’t feel the way you do.

You may feel that you have seen evidence of romantic interest. You feel that he is simply too *slow* about expressing it and that he would respond to a little encouragement. Perhaps. But if you decide to take the initiative, you must realize that this is risky. You should

give a lot of thought to not only what you will say but also what might be the right time to say it.

You may decide, for example, that to indicate that you welcome his attention would be better than blurting out that you are “in love.” In a relaxed and appropriate setting, you could simply say that you would like to know him better. Don’t worry if your expressions seem a little clumsy. The sincere feelings behind your words may say far more than the words themselves. Remember, too, you are only expressing a desire to begin a courtship, not proposing marriage. Even so, this may surprise him, so allow him time to absorb what you have said.

If you have truly come to know this young man and have seen for yourself that he is kind and considerate, you do not need to fear a nasty reaction or humiliation. But how should you react if his answer is a kind but firm no? And how should a young man behave in such a situation? A future article will consider these questions.

If you are romantically interested in someone, talk to responsible adults who know him



Beauty Hidden in the Dark

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SLOVENIA

GRASPING a small lamp, Luka Čeč slowly made his way through the dense subterranean darkness. Far below the earth's surface, he crawled high up on a rock and was rewarded with an incredible sight. A glittering, sparkling world opened before his eyes. What had he found? A new corridor of the Postojna Cave in Slovenia.

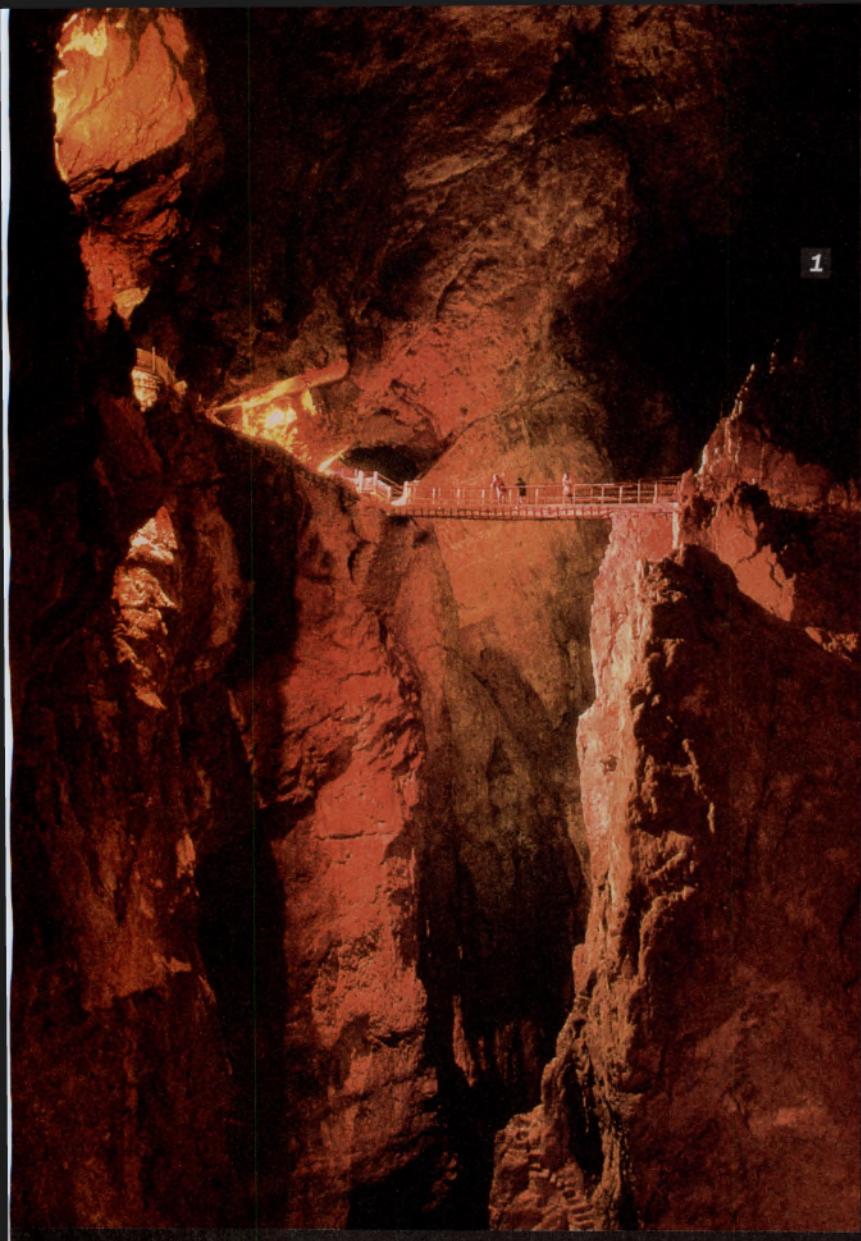
This discovery in the spring of 1818 marked the beginning of what is now a flourishing tourist industry. It also opened the way for further speleology, that is, "scientific study or exploration of caves." To take a closer look at this magnificent cave system, join us on a visit to Postojna, a town in western Slovenia.

A Terrain Where Caves Are Abundant

With over 12 miles of corridors and grottoes, the Postojna cave system is among the largest in Europe. The caves are located in the Kras, or Karst, region of Slovenia, which is a limestone plateau that extends some 30 miles inland from the Adriatic Sea, between the Julian and the Dinaric alps. The caves in Postojna are some of the thousands of caverns in this region.

Today the word "karst" carries a broad meaning. The term is used by geologists the world over to describe terrain that is similar to that of the Kras region. Karsts are found in many parts of the world, including Australia, Central America, China, Indochina, and Russia, as well as the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. Such terrain is characterized by barren, rocky ground in which erosion has produced caves, sinkholes, and underground streams and lakes.

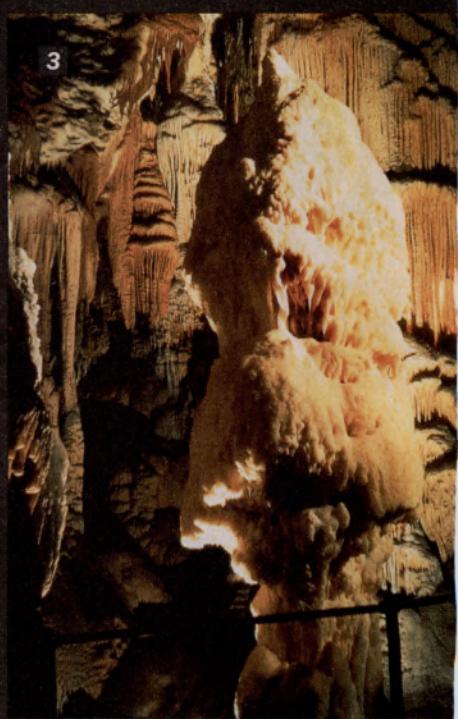
Since a large portion of Slovenia is karst topography, caves and other underground formations are plentiful in the country. The Postojna Cave ranks alongside such famous karst caves as Mammoth Cave in



1



2



3

1. A cavern in the Škocjan caves is 360 feet high
2. This fortress guards the mouth of Predjama Cave
3. The Postojna caves have become world renowned

The "Human Fish"



Proteus anguinus is known locally as the human fish because of the unusual color of its skin, which reminds some of human skin. This amphibious vertebrate is native exclusively to the subterranean waters in the karst region of northeastern Italy, Slovenia, and southward. Its colorless skin and atrophied eyes are no handicap, since it exists in total darkness from egg stage until death. Amazingly, some have reportedly lived for up to 100 years, and these fish can survive for several years without food.

Arne Hodalic/www.ipak.org

Kentucky, U.S.A., and the Reed Flute Cave of Kuei-lin, China.

A Look Inside the Caves

The first description of the Postojna Cave dates from the 17th century, when Slovenian scholar Janez Vajkard Valvasor wrote about it in his book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. Valvasor described the caves in the area as having "strangely shaped pillars." He likened these to "all kinds of vermin, snakes, and other animals . . . or different forms of monsters, deformed faces, ghosts, and the like." He added: "Horror and fear increases also because of the many passages, pits, and deep chasms on all sides." Little wonder that after reading such a menacing description, few dared to probe very far into the eerie darkness of the caves!

In time, however, the popularity of the Postojna Cave grew. This was especially true after Čeč made his discovery in 1818. The very next year, the caves were opened to the public. But it was not until a railway was added in 1872 and electric lighting in 1884 that many were able to see these natural wonders for themselves. What did they see?

Today the Postojna cave system is renowned for its beautiful passageways. The rich colors and bizarre shapes of stalactites and stalagmites give the caves' corridors a jewellike quality. Some sparkle as if dusted with diamonds, while others emanate warm shades of ocher and rust. Inscriptions on the walls reveal that visitors of past centuries also savored the rare beauty of the caves.

New Species Discovered

Exploration in these vast caverns has revealed not only new and unusual geologic formations but also previously unknown life-forms. To date, more than ten new species have been found in the Postojna cave system.

Čeč made one such discovery in 1831, much to the delight of speleologists the world over. Čeč discovered an unusual cave bee-

tle, which was named *Leptodirus hohenwarti*, meaning "narrow-necked one." As its name implies, this beetle has a thin neck. It also has a tiny head, a puffed abdomen, and unusually long antennae and legs. Unfortunately, the initial specimen was accidentally damaged, so an in-depth study was not possible until a second beetle was found 14 years later.

Another curious creature that was found in this area is the olm, a blind salamander. As early as 1689, Valvasor referred to it as 'the dragon's offspring.' This tiny amphibian has been the subject of numerous scientific studies.

Neighboring Caves

The Postojna caves are but one of many systems of caves in the region. The nearby Škocjan Cave, which has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1986, is especially remarkable. Visitors to this cave system are awed by the enormous proportions of the caverns and canyons. They are said to be the largest in Europe. For example, one part of the cave system measures 980 feet long, 330 feet wide, and 360 feet high!

Shielding the mouth of the Predjama Cave is a large fortress, the former residence of the legendary knight Erazem Jamski. It is claimed that the castle defied invaders for centuries. Provisions could be delivered through secret underground passageways that connected to the cavern underneath the castle. Erazem reportedly taunted attackers by tossing them fresh cherries or roasted meat, proving that he was not experiencing deprivation while confined within his castle walls. Whether the story is true or not, the secret passageways are a visible reality.

Exploring the fascinating world of caves in this karst region can bring many unexpected thrills. The world-famous sculptor Henry Moore described the Postojna Cave, saying: "This is the best exhibition of Nature's sculpture I have ever seen." If you have the opportunity to visit, you might just agree with him.



Sarus crane

Why Are They ENDANGERED?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN INDIA

MAJESTIC Bengal tigers, wild dogs, sarus cranes, ancient turtles, and Asian elephants—these are just some of India's animal species in danger of extinction. Consider the largest land mammal, the elephant.

The elephant's ivory tusks are very much in demand. Japan is one of the largest users of ivory, and there is similar demand in China, where ivory chopsticks are still popular. How has the demand for ivory had an especially adverse affect on the Asian elephant?

Some time ago *The Times of India* explained: "Unlike African elephants, only males among the Asian pachyderms, and just a few of them, have tusks. So adult tuskers are the main targets. According to the official figures, about a hundred [males] are killed each year in India, leaving the male-female ratio skewed." Such killings have threatened the very existence of this species.

For a Compact Mass of Hair

Consider also the rhinoceros, the second-largest land mammal alive today. India and Nepal are the last areas of protection for the one-horned rhino. Yet, Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary in the northeastern Indian state of



Bengal tiger

Some of
India's
endangered
animals



One-horned rhinoceros

Tibetan antelope

Crane: Cortesía del Zoo de la Casa de Campo, Madrid; antelope: © Xi Zhi Nong/naturepl.com

Assam is only some 15 square miles in size, a relatively small area to hold rhino. So the animals tend to wander into the agricultural lands nearby, where they may be shot or poisoned.

Man has invented a clever way of felling a rhino. Above the Pobitara Sanctuary run two high-voltage cables. The poacher hooks a wire on these cables using a long bamboo pole, and the wire hangs down close to the ground. Wildlife biologist Vivek Menon explains what happened when a rhino came in contact with the wire: "As the massive bolt of electricity charged through its body, it wheezed twice and with an amazing hastiness crumpled . . . The huge beast lay on its side, dead in less than a second."

Sadly, the giant animal is killed for its relatively little horn, which weighs a mere two pounds! The enormous commercial value of the horn—a compact mass of hair much like human nails—has placed the rhino in great danger.

For the Love of Shahtoosh Shawls

The Tibetan antelope, or chiru, produces a type of wool called *shahtoosh*. It is so fine that a shawl made from it can be pulled through an index-finger ring. Such a shawl may cost up to \$16,000, making it among the most expensive in the world. But what does this mean for the antelope that wears the wool?

"One shahtoosh shawl meant at least [the] lives of five chiru," says *The Indian Express*. About 20,000 chiru from the Tibetan plateau are said to be poached each year. This occurs even though the animal is supposed to be protected under various endangered species acts. Moreover, in 1979 a ban was placed on trade in *shahtoosh* wool. Yet, since then, the number of chiru has continued to diminish.

For Skin and Bones

The survival of tigers and other wild cats in India is also under threat. Elsewhere, some subspecies of tigers, such as the Caspian, the Java, and the Bali, are thought to be extinct

already. At the beginning of the 20th century, about 40,000 tigers roamed India's forests. Over the years their numbers have dwindled. This is because their habitat has progressively been destroyed and because they have been hunted for their skin and certain bones that are thought to have healing powers in Chinese medicine.

Concerning the effect of the lack of proper habitat on tigers, the book *The Secret Life of Tigers* says: "Populations of tigers can only increase when the area of forests that they live in increases. When this does not happen, tigers control their own population by fatal disputes among themselves over food and territory."

How do other wild cats fare on Indian soil? At a zoo in Junagadh, Gujarat, a visitor came across an empty cage. The sign outside the cage had a picture of an Asiatic cheetah and a message written in Gujarati, which read: "The cheetah became extinct in India in the 1950's."

What Does the Future Hold?

The future for India's endangered creatures does not appear bright. The evidence is overwhelming that humans have been selfishly ruining the earth, which has included the destruction of much of its magnificent wildlife. What will happen? The authoritative word of God, recorded in the Holy Bible, indicates that the time is near when the following prophecy will be fulfilled: "The nations became wrathful, and your [God's] own wrath came, and the appointed time . . . to bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

What will be the effect when the earth has been cleansed of all those who have despoiled it and its marvelous wildlife? What a wonderful time that will be! Humans will no longer endanger any animal species. This will take place under the rule of God's Kingdom, for which Jesus Christ taught humans to pray.—Isaiah 11:6-9; Matthew 6:10.

Watching the World

Stress in the Waiting Room

"German patients have to wait an average of 48 minutes in the waiting room before they are called in to see the doctor. Some wait much longer," says the magazine *Psychologie Heute*. A recent study of the practices of 610 doctors by the Institute for Business-Management Analyses, Consultation, and Strategic Development revealed "just how unhappy patients are with the situation." Where doctors did nothing to alleviate the problem, "regular patients diminished by 19 percent within one year," says the report. Stress levels in overcrowded practices were much higher for both doctors and assistants than in other offices, and work efficiency was one third lower. Moreover, assistants made twice as many errors.

Confused About Right and Wrong

"Nearly one in four Australians admitted to stealing stationery from their work," says *The Sun-Herald* of Sydney. A survey of more than 2,000 office workers revealed that common workplace practices also included accessing personal information about their colleagues, using the Internet for personal reasons on company time, downloading

Brain Overload?

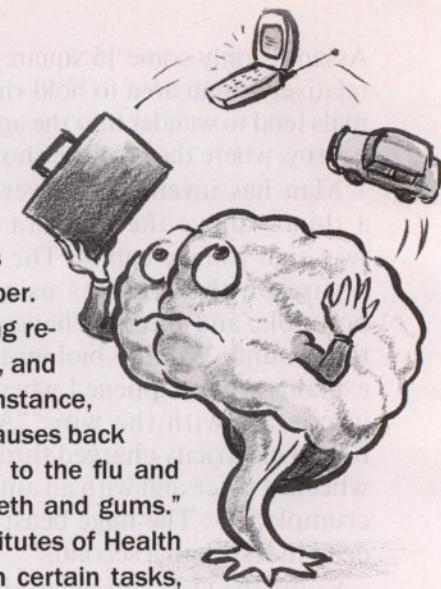
Some researchers say that "doing too many things at once is hard on the brain," reports Canada's *Toronto Star* newspaper. Studies suggest that multitasking results in lowered efficiency, errors, and even sickness. It may be, for instance, that it "compromises memory, causes back pain, can leave one susceptible to the flu and indigestion and it even hurts teeth and gums." Studies by the U.S. National Institutes of Health show that when people perform certain tasks, different parts of the brain are activated. But when they try to do two or more things at once, such as talking on a cellular phone while driving a car, "the brain actually begins to shut down," says Dr. John Sladky, an Emory University neurologist. "The brain not only can't do it, it refuses to do it." According to researchers, people have to slow down and accept the fact that their brain cannot do all that they are asking it to do.

unauthorized software onto work computers, and using office software at home. "There are many people who are clearly confused about what's right and what is wrong," said Garie Dooley, who supervised the survey.

Pet Funerals

—To Tax or Not to Tax?

Claiming that the income it receives from pet funerals, cremation, and ash storage should be tax exempt, a Buddhist temple in Japan recently filed suit against tax authorities, explains Japan's newspaper *IHT Asahi Shimbun*. The tax office argued



that cremation and religious services for pets constitute "contractual business" and that the storage of ashes puts the temple in the "warehousing business." The temple, on the other hand, claims that "a memorial service is a religious act, which aims to heal the sorrows of bereaved pet owners and to console the soul of animals," without a view to profits.

Air Crashes Decline

The number of air crashes worldwide in 2003 was the lowest since the 1950's, when records began, reports

Flight International magazine. The death toll of 702 was the lowest since 1990, despite a 40 percent increase in air traffic since then. London's *Daily Telegraph* says that one reason given "for the overall improvement in safety was a fall in incidents where navigational error caused the aircraft to hit high ground. New ground awareness warning systems are said to have played a part, but the technology is described as 'not infallible.'" Many older planes are not equipped with such systems.

Epsom Salts Saves Pregnant Women

A simple, inexpensive therapy using hydrated magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts) can halve the chances of women developing a potentially fatal complication of pregnancy, explains *The*

Times of London. Eclampsia, a dangerous form of high blood pressure that causes convulsions, annually kills over 50,000 women and their unborn children worldwide. Although a drip or injections containing magnesium sulfate have been used for years in the United States to treat preeclampsia, which can develop into eclampsia if untreated, the therapy has not caught on in most other countries. Hence, an international team of doctors at the Institute for Health Sciences in Oxford, England, "decided to test the benefits of the salts by conducting a trial on 10,000 women in 33 countries," says *The Times*. "After three years the... trial was stopped early when it became apparent how effective the treatment was: using magnesium sulphate on women with pre-

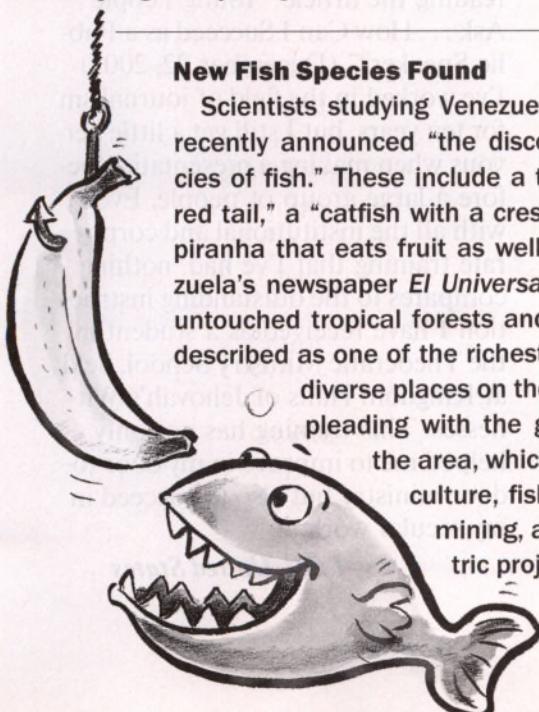
eclampsia reduced their risk of having a fit by 58 per cent. It reduced their risk of dying by 45 per cent." The treatment "costs only £3 [\$4.50] per woman, making it... accessible to women in developing countries."

Teenage Eating Habits

"A disturbing number of teenage schoolgirls are skipping meals because of anxiety about their body shapes and a desire to emulate fashion models and pop stars," says London's *Daily Telegraph*. A study of the eating habits of 300,000 pupils by Britain's Schools Health Education Unit revealed that over 40 percent of girls aged 14 and 15 "went to school without eating breakfast. Compared with similar data compiled in 1984, the number leaving home without eating has nearly doubled." The number of those skipping lunch also increased, from 2 percent in 1984 to 18 percent in 2001. Because of the heightened risk that students may develop eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, head teachers of girls' schools are being called on to monitor the weight of their students. Boys are also showing more interest in dieting. Among them, 31 percent of 12- and 13-year-olds and 25 percent of 14- and 15-year-olds want to lose weight, up from 26 percent and 21 percent respectively.

New Fish Species Found

Scientists studying Venezuela's Caura River basin recently announced "the discovery of ten new species of fish." These include a tiny fish "with a blood-red tail," a "catfish with a crest of tentacles," and "a piranha that eats fruit as well as meat," says Venezuela's newspaper *El Universal*. This area of almost untouched tropical forests and waterways has been described as one of the richest and most biologically diverse places on the planet. Scientists are pleading with the government to protect the area, which is threatened by agriculture, fishing, housing projects, mining, and possible hydroelectric projects.



From Our Readers

Children As soon as I received the series "Children—What They Need From Parents," I devoured it. (December 22, 2003) As a mother of five, my heart was deeply touched by those articles. I wish that all the world's mothers could read them.

C. M., France



The articles you publish seem to come just in time for me. When my husband and I found out that we were going to have a baby, you published information for pregnant women. (January 8, 2003) Now that we are the happy parents of a three-month-old son, you have printed wonderful tips on raising infants. For a young mother, these articles are very helpful.

D. K., Poland

Life Story I thank you for all the articles, but I especially enjoy the life stories. The story of Eileen Brumbaugh, "Dress and Grooming Was My Stumbling Block," stirred my heart. (December 22, 2003) What an earnest desire she had to find the true religion!

L. M., Russia

I was particularly interested in Eileen Brumbaugh's story because here in our area there is a very large population of Amish and Mennonite families. In the past I thought it pointless to talk to them about the Bible because they seem so convinced of their faith. From her experience I can see that by showing personal attention and sincere interest, we can help all types of people to come to an accurate knowledge of God.

M. H., United States

I too struggled with the idea that makeup and jewelry were strictly "worldly." It was the unhypocritical love among Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as their respect for the Holy Scriptures, that helped me to see past outward appearances.

A. C., United States

Herbal Remedies I enjoyed reading the article "Herbal Remedies—Can They Help You?" (December 22, 2003) I am a registered nurse, and I use a variety of natural remedies for my joints. I have found them to be very beneficial in my case. However, you did not mention that some herbs can lead to excessive bleeding in surgery. That some herbs must be discontinued prior to surgery is a major consideration for Jehovah's Witnesses.

J. H., United States

"Awake!" responds: We appreciate this important reminder. Before surgery, it is essential that a patient inform his or her doctor of all medications being taken—including herbs. This is particularly important for those who heed the Bible's command to 'abstain from blood.'—Acts 15:29.

Public Speaking I really enjoyed reading the article "Young People Ask . . . How Can I Succeed as a Public Speaker?" (December 22, 2003) I've worked in the field of journalism for ten years, but I still get a little nervous when making a presentation before a large group of people. Even with all the institutional and corporate training that I've had, nothing compares to the outstanding instruction I have received as a student in the Theocratic Ministry School, held at Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses. This training has not only helped me to improve in my door-to-door ministry but also to succeed in my secular work.

L. B., United States

BENEFITS OF Reading to Children

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN POLAND

Organizers of the annual campaign “All Poland Reads to Children” say: “Reading is the key to both knowledge and intellectual ability. . . . It opens the door to the treasury of human thought and knowledge.” If this is true, why do many adults and children consider reading to be just a necessary evil?

The originators of this campaign state: “The custom of reading and the love of books must be established in childhood.” They tell parents: “If you want your children to be wise and successful at school and in life, read to them aloud daily for 20 minutes.”

Parents are also encouraged not to postpone reading to their children but to “start as soon as possible.” When? “Let us read to an infant, holding him in our arms, looking at him with love, and arousing his interest with our voice,” parents are urged. “In this way a lasting association of reading with a feeling of security, pleasure, and closeness is formed. Additionally, it stimulates his mental development.”

The organizers of the campaign emphasize that “reading to children is now more important than ever before,” and they point to other benefits. Reading aloud teaches children to think, “helps them to understand other people, the world, and themselves, . . . arouses interest, develops imagination, stimulates emotional development, cultivates sensitivity and empathy, teaches moral values, . . . builds self-esteem.” Undoubtedly, it is “the antidote against many undesirable influences . . . that threaten children’s minds and hearts,” conclude the leaders of this campaign.

For reading to be especially effective, publications that encourage young ones to draw close to their heavenly Creator should be used. The Bible is the best book there is for helping us to draw close to God. “From infancy,” the Bible says, the youth Timothy had been taught “the holy writings.” (2 Timothy 3:15) In a program of reading aloud to children, parents can include such Bible-based books as *My Book of Bible Stories* and *Learn From the Great Teacher*, written especially for young ones and published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.





IT COMFORTED HER

■ A young adult from Japan recently wrote about suffering depression even as a preteen. What gave her comfort, the girl said, was a picture of a child in the arms of its father, which was published in our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*. The caption said: “Like the warm embrace of a loving father, Jehovah’s consolations can soothe our anxiety.”

The girl explained that reading the book *Learn From the Great Teacher* gave her similar comfort. How so? “It is written in the style of a papa talking to a little child. When reading it, I feel as though I am in Jehovah’s arms, and I cannot hold back my tears. Sometimes I would just like to have someone listen to me and other times talk to me so that I could listen to him. But that is something a young child would ask for, and I can’t tell anyone to hold me in their arms or that I want them to talk to me. So, for now, Jehovah is doing this for me through the book.”

