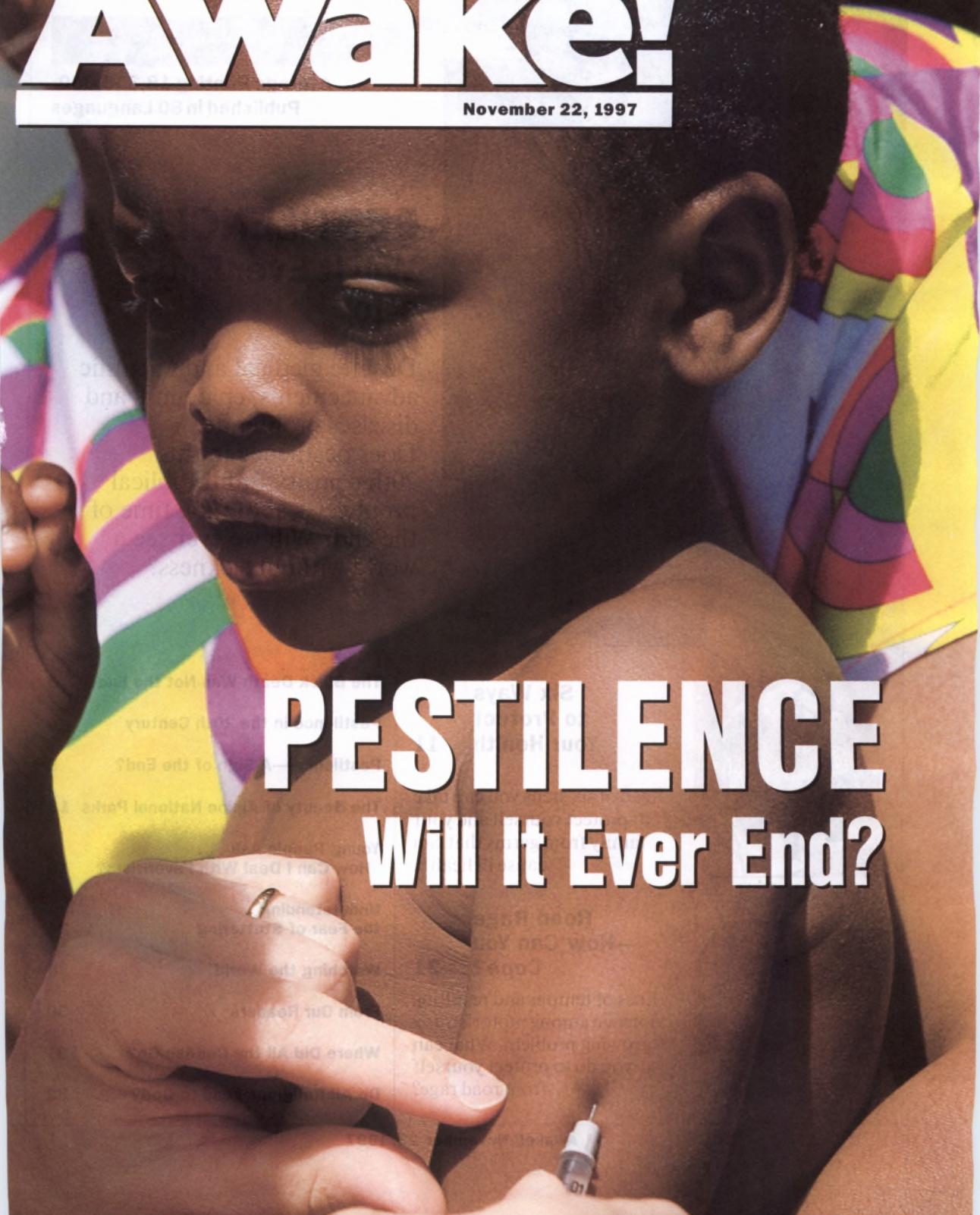


# Awake!

Publication of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania

November 22, 1997

## PESTILENCE Will It Ever End?



## **PESTILENCE** **Will It Ever End?**

**3-10**

Despite medical and scientific advancements, epidemics and diseases proliferate. Does pestilence in this 20th century fulfill Biblical prophecies about the time of the end? Will we ever see a world without sickness?



### **Six Ways to Protect Your Health** **11**

Read of six steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from germs that can cause ill health.



### **Road Rage —How Can You Cope?** **21**

Loss of temper and resulting violence among motorists is a growing problem. What can you do to protect yourself from road rage?

<b>The Black Death Was Not the End</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pestilence in the 20th Century</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Pestilence—A Sign of the End?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Beauty of Alpine National Parks</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Young People Ask . . . How Can I Deal With Favoritism?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Understanding the Fear of Stuttering</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Watching the World</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>From Our Readers</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Where Did All the Codfish Go?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Do All Religions Lead to God?</b>	<b>32</b>

# The Black Death Was Not the End

DURING October of 1347, trading ships from the East entered the harbor of Messina, in Sicily. At the oars were diseased and dying men. On their bodies were dark, egg-size swellings that oozed blood and pus. The sailors suffered intense pain and died within several days of the appearance of the first symptoms.

Rats from the ships scurried to join the local rodent population. The rats carried fleas infected by a bacillus lethal to humans. Thus spread the epidemic disease known as plague, the Black Death, the worst pestilence in European history up to that time.

The plague took two forms. One form, passed on by the bite of an infected flea, spread through the bloodstream and caused swellings and internal bleeding. The other, passed to others by a cough or a sneeze, infected the lungs. Because both forms were present, the disease spread quickly and with terrible ferocity. In just three years, it cut down a fourth of the population of Europe; perhaps 25 million people died.



Archive Photos

No one then knew how the disease passed from person to person. Some believed that the air was poisoned, possibly because of an earthquake or an unusual alignment of the planets. Others thought people became sick merely by looking at an infected person. Though opinions varied, clearly the disease was highly contagious. A French physician observed that it seemed as though one sick person "could infect the whole world."

People knew no prevention and no cure. Many reflected on Biblical prophecies such as that recorded at Luke 21:11, which foretells pestilences during the time of the end. Though money poured into the churches, the plague raged on. Wrote an Italian at the time: "No bells tolled and nobody wept no matter what his loss because almost everyone expected death . . . people said and believed, 'This is the end of the world.'"

However, it was not the end. By the close of the 14th century, that plague had played out. The world continued.

# Pestilence in the 20th Century

**T**HE Black Death of 14th-century Europe did not lead to the end of the world, as many were predicting. But what about our time? Do the epidemics and diseases of our day suggest that we are living in what the Bible calls "the last days"?—2 Timothy 3:1.

'Surely not,' you may think. Medical and scientific advancements have done more to help us understand and fight disease now than at any time in human history. Medical scientists have developed a wide range of antibiotics and vaccines—powerful weapons against diseases and the microbes that cause them. Improvements in hospital care as well as in water treatment, sanitation, and food preparation have also helped in the battle against infectious diseases.

A few decades ago, many thought that the struggle was nearly over. Smallpox had been eradicated, and other diseases

were targeted for eradication. Drugs effectively subdued countless maladies. Health professionals surveyed the future with optimism. Infectious disease would be defeated; conquest would follow conquest. Medical science would prevail.

But it did not prevail. Today infectious disease remains the world's leading cause of death, killing over 50 million people in 1996 alone. The optimism of the past is being replaced by a growing concern for the future. *The World Health Report 1996*, produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), warns: "Much of the progress achieved in recent decades towards improving human health is now at risk. We stand on the brink of a global crisis in infectious diseases. No country is safe."

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disease remains  
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cause of death,  
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50 million people  
in 1996 alone**

## Old Diseases Become More Deadly

One reason for concern is that well-known diseases, once thought conquered, are making a

**Awake!**

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**Despite improvements in health care, medical science has been unable to stop the spread of infectious diseases**

comeback in forms more lethal and more difficult to cure. An example is tuberculosis, a disease once regarded as virtually under control in the developed world. But tuberculosis did not disappear; it now kills about three million people a year. If control measures are not improved, about 90 million people are expected to develop the disease during the 1990's. Drug-resistant tuberculosis is spreading in many countries.

Another example of a reemerging disease is malaria. Forty years ago doctors had hopes of quickly eradicating malaria. Today the disease kills about two million people every year. Malaria is endemic, or always present, in over 90 countries and threatens 40 percent of the world's population. Mosquitoes that carry the malaria parasites have become resistant to pesticides, and the parasites themselves have become so resistant to drugs that doctors fear that some strains of malaria may soon be incurable.

### Disease and Poverty

Other diseases relentlessly kill despite the existence of effective weapons to combat them. Consider, for example, spinal meningitis. There are vaccines to prevent meningitis and drugs to cure it. An outbreak raged in sub-Saharan Africa early in 1996. You likely



WHO photo by J. Abcede

heard little about it; yet, it killed more than 15,000 people—mostly poor people, mostly children.

Lower respiratory infections, including pneumonia, kill four million people each year, most of them children. Measles kills one million children yearly, and whooping cough a further 355,000. Many of these deaths too could be prevented by inexpensive vaccines.

Some eight thousand children die *each day* from diarrheic dehydration. Almost all these deaths could be prevented by good sanitation or clean drinking water or by the administration of oral rehydration solution.

Most of these deaths take place in the developing world, where poverty is abundant. About 800 million people—a sizable part of the world's population—have no access to health care. Stated *The World Health*

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## Antibiotic Resistance

Many infectious diseases are becoming harder to cure because they have become resistant to antibiotics. This is what happens: When bacteria infect a person, they constantly multiply, passing on their genetic traits to their offspring. With the production of each new bacterium, there is a chance of a mutation—a slight copying error that will give the new bacterium a new trait. The probability that a bacterium will mutate in a way that makes it able to resist an antibiotic is extremely small. But bacteria reproduce by the billions, sometimes producing three genera-

tions of offspring in an hour. Thus, the unlikely does happen—every once in a while, a bacterium occurs that is difficult to kill with an antibiotic.

So when the infected person takes an antibiotic, the nonresistant bacteria are wiped out, and the person probably feels better. However, the resistant bacteria survive. But now they no longer must compete for nutrients and territory with fellow microbes. They are free to reproduce unchecked. Since a single bacterium can multiply into over 16 million bacteria within a single day, it does not take long before

the person again becomes ill. Now, however, he or she is infected by a strain of bacteria resistant to the drug that was supposed to kill it. These bacteria can also infect other people and in time mutate again to become resistant to other antibiotics.

States an editorial in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*: "The rapid development of bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic resistance to our present therapeutic armamentarium makes one wonder not if, but when we will lose this war of man against the microbial world." —Italics ours.

*Report 1995:* "The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill-health and suffering across the globe is listed almost at the end of the International Classification of Diseases. It is given the code Z59.5—extreme poverty."

### Newly Recognized Diseases

Still other diseases are newcomers, only recently identified. WHO stated recently: "During the past 20 years, at least 30 new diseases have emerged to threaten the health of hundreds of millions of people. For many of these diseases there is no treatment, cure or vaccine and the possibility of preventing or controlling them is limited."

Consider, for example, HIV and AIDS. Unknown only 15 years or so ago, they now afflict people on every continent. Presently, about 20 million adults are infected with HIV, and more than 4.5 million have developed AIDS. According to the *Human Develop-*

*opment Report 1996*, AIDS is now the leading cause of death for adults under 45 in Europe and North America. Worldwide, some 6,000 people are infected each day—one every 15 seconds. Projections suggest that the number of AIDS cases will continue to rise steeply. By the year 2010, life expectancy in African and Asian nations hit hardest by AIDS is expected to drop to 25 years, according to one U.S. agency.

Is AIDS a unique, one-of-a-kind, disease, or could epidemics of other diseases emerge to create similar or even worse havoc? WHO answers: "Without doubt, diseases as yet unknown but with the potential to be the AIDS of tomorrow lurk in the shadows."

### Factors That Favor the Microbe

Why do health experts worry about future disease epidemics? One reason is the growth of cities. One hundred years ago, only about 15 percent of the world's population lived in

**Diseases spread easily when people live  
jammed together in squalid conditions**

cities. Forecasts estimate, however, that by the year 2010, over half the world's people will live in urban areas, notably in the megacities of less-developed countries.

Infectious agents flourish in densely populated areas. If a city has good housing as well as adequate sewage and water systems and good health care, the risk of epidemics is reduced. But the cities that are growing fastest are those in poor countries. Some cities have only one toilet for every 750 or more people. Many urban areas also lack good housing and safe drinking water as well as medical facilities. Where hundreds of thousands of people live jammed together in squalid conditions, the likelihood of disease transmission is greatly increased.



Does this mean that the epidemics of the future will be limited to overcrowded, poverty-stricken megacities? The journal *Archives of Internal Medicine* answers: "We must truly understand that pockets of abject poverty, economic hopelessness, and their

### Some New Infectious Diseases Since 1976

Year Identified	Name of Disease	Where Cases First Appeared or Were Identified
1976	Legionnaires' disease	United States
1976	Cryptosporidiosis	United States
1976	Ebola hemorrhagic fever	Zaire
1977	Hantaan virus	Korea
1980	Hepatitis D (Delta)	Italy
1980	Human T-cell lymphotropic virus 1	Japan
1981	AIDS	United States
1982	<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	United States
1986	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy*	United Kingdom
1988	Salmonella enteritidis PT4	United Kingdom
1989	Hepatitis C	United States
1991	Venezuelan hemorrhagic fever	Venezuela
1992	Vibrio cholerae O139	India
1994	Brazilian hemorrhagic fever	Brazil
1994	Human and equine morbillivirus	Australia

\*Animal cases only.

Source: WHO

## Old Diseases Make a Comeback

**Tuberculosis:** Over 30 million people are expected to die of tuberculosis during this decade. Because of inefficient treatment of the disease in the past, drug-resistant tuberculosis is now a global threat. Some strains are presently immune to drugs that once destroyed the bacteria without fail.

**Malaria:** This disease afflicts up to 500 million people yearly, killing 2 million. Control has been hindered by lack of or misuse of drugs. As a result, malaria parasites have become resistant to the drugs that once killed them. Complicating the problem is mosquito resistance to insecticides.

**Cholera:** Cholera kills 120,000 people per year, mostly in Africa, where epidemics have become more widespread and more frequent. Unknown in South America for decades, cholera struck Peru in 1991 and has since spread throughout the continent.

**Dengue:** This mosquito-borne virus afflicts an estimated 20 million people each year. During 1995 the worst dengue epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean in 15 years struck at least 14 countries there. Dengue epidemics are increasing because of growing cities, the spread of dengue-carrying mosquitoes, and the mass movement of infected people.

**Diphtheria:** Mass immunization programs that began 50 years ago made this disease extremely rare in industrialized countries. Since 1990, however, diphtheria epidemics have raged in 15 countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Up to 1 in 4 people who contracted the disease died. During the first half of 1995, about 25,000 cases were reported.

**Bubonic plague:** During 1995, at least 1,400 cases of human plague were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). In the United States and elsewhere, the disease has spread to areas that had been plague free for decades.

Source: WHO

consequences provide the most fertile fields to sow infection and overwhelm the technology of the rest of humankind."

It is not easy to confine disease to one area. Huge numbers of people are on the move. Each day about one million people cross international borders. Each week one million travel between rich and poor countries. As people move, deadly microbes tag along with them.



**About 800 million people in the developing world have no access to health care**

*The Journal of the American Medical Association* observes: "An outbreak of disease anywhere must now be perceived as a threat to most countries, and especially those that serve as major hubs of international travel."

Thus, despite the medical advances of the 20th century, pestilences continue to reap a harvest of human lives, and many fear the worst is yet to come. But what does the Bible say about the future?

# PESTILENCE A Sign of the End?

**D**O THE pestilences of our day suggest that the end of the world is near? Before we answer that question, let us consider what is meant by the expression "the end of the world."

Many people believe that the end of the world means that God will destroy the earth and all life on it. However, God's Word says that he "formed [the earth] even to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) His purpose is to fill the planet with healthy, happy people anxious to conform to his righteous standards. So the end of the world does not mean the end of the earth and all its inhabitants. Rather, it means the end of the present system and of those in it who refuse to do God's will.

This was shown by the apostle Peter, who wrote: "The world [of Noah's day] suffered destruction when it was deluged with water." When the world was destroyed in Noah's time, it was the wicked who perished. The earth remained and so did righteous Noah and his family. As Peter next says, God will act again in the future to bring about the "destruction of the ungodly men."—2 Peter 3:6, 7.

Other Bible texts consistently support this



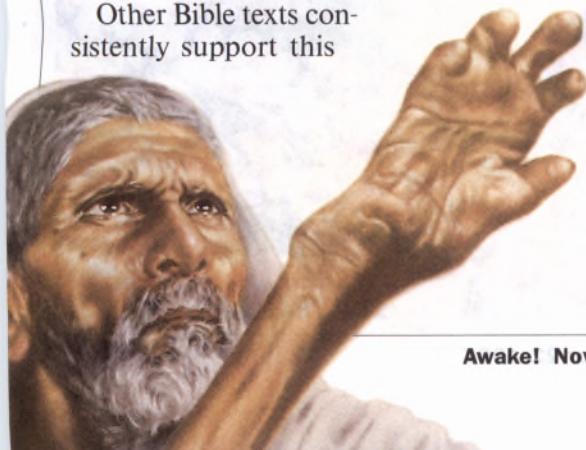
**Jesus was empowered by God to heal the sick**

view. For example, Proverbs 2:21, 22 states: "The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."—See also Psalm 37:9-11.

## Pestilences and the End of the World

But when will this happen? Four of Jesus' disciples put that question to him. They asked: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things [or, as some Bible translations say, "the end of the world"]?" Jesus answered: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes *in one place after another*." (Matthew 24:3, 7) In the parallel account at Luke 21:10, 11, Jesus added: "There will be . . . *in one place after another pestilences* . . . , and there will be fearful sights and from heaven great signs."

Notice that Jesus did not say that pestilences alone would show that the end was near. Rather, he also listed great wars, earthquakes, and food shortages. In his detailed prophecy found at Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus foretold many other things that were to occur. All of them would have to occur together before God



would take action to bring an end to wickedness on earth. The evidence is strong that we are now living in that period.

### The Paradise to Come

The future will not see the annihilation of humanity, either by pestilence or by the hand of God. Jehovah God promises to transform this earth into a paradise. (Luke 23:43) Among other things, he will eliminate the diseases that plague humankind.

We are assured of this when we consider the ministry of Jesus Christ, who reflected his Father's qualities perfectly. Empowered by his heavenly Father, Jesus healed those who were lame, maimed, blind, or dumb. (Matthew 15:30, 31) He also cured

those afflicted with leprosy. (Luke 17:12-14) He cured a woman who was hemorrhaging, a man with a withered hand, and a man with dropsy. (Mark 3:3-5; 5:25-29; Luke 14:2-4) He restored to health "epileptic and paralyzed persons." (Matthew 4:24) On three occasions he even raised the dead!—Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56; John 11:38-44.

These miraculous cures give substance to God's promise that in the future of his making, "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) Never again will pestilence rob people of health and life. How thankful we can be that our loving Creator has both the ability and the will to wipe out sickness and disease completely, forever!—Revelation 21:3, 4.

*In the coming earthly Paradise, Jehovah will wipe out sickness and disease*



# Six Ways to Protect Your Health

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN NIGERIA

**A**CCORDING to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 25 percent of the people who live in the developing world do not have access to safe water. Over 66 percent—at least 2.5 billion people—lack adequate sanitation. The consequences for many are disease and death.

In such circumstances, maintaining good hygiene is a challenge. Yet, if you make personal hygiene a way of life, you will protect yourself against many diseases. Here are six steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from germs that can enter your body and cause ill health.

## 1. Wash your hands with soap and water after contact with feces and before handling food.

An important way to prevent illness is to make sure that soap and water are always available so that everyone in your family can wash their hands. Soap and water remove germs from the hands—germs that might otherwise get into food or the mouth. Since young children frequently put their fingers into their mouths, it is important to wash their hands often, especially before giving them food.

It is particularly important to wash your hands with soap after using the toilet, before you handle food, and after cleaning the bottom of a baby or a child who has just defecated.

## 2. Use a latrine.

To prevent the spread of germs, it is vital to properly dispose of feces. Many illness-

es, especially diarrhea, come from germs in human feces. These germs can get into drinking water or food, onto the hands, or onto utensils and surfaces used in preparing or serving food. When that happens, people can swallow the germs and become sick.

To help prevent this, use a latrine. The feces of animals should be kept away from homes and water sources. You may be surprised to learn that the feces of babies and small children are more dangerous than those of adults. So even youngsters should be taught to use a latrine. When children defecate elsewhere, their feces should be immediately cleaned up and put down the latrine or buried.

Latrines should be kept clean and covered.

## 3. Use clean water.

Families who have a plentiful supply of clean, piped water get sick less often than those who do not. Those who do not have piped water can protect their health by keeping wells covered and by keeping wastewater away from water used for drinking, bathing, or washing. It is also important to keep animals out of the house and away from drinking water.

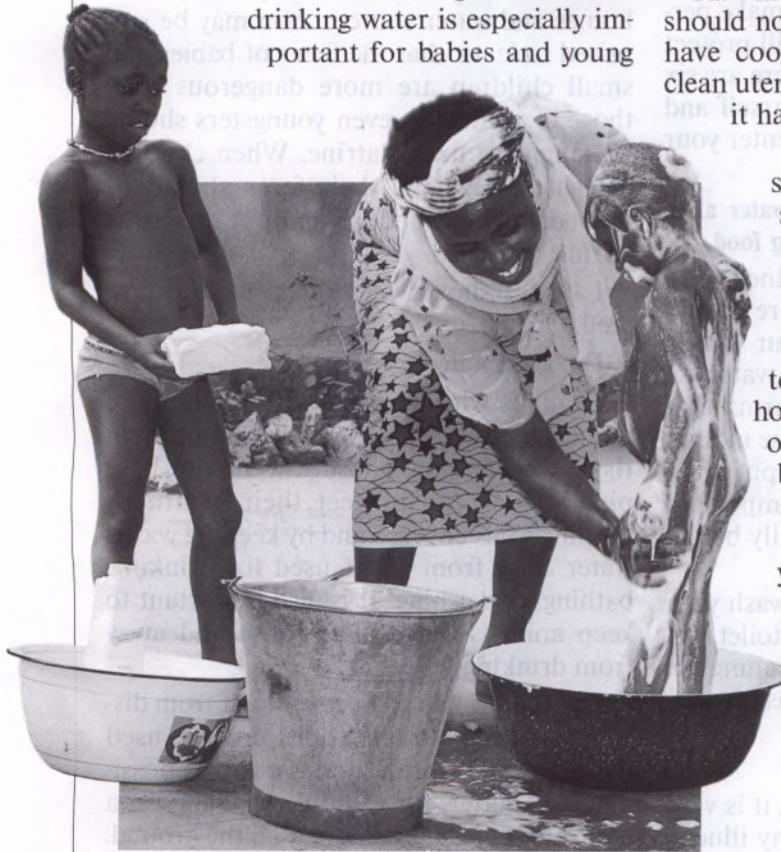
Another way to protect yourself from disease is to keep buckets, ropes, and jars used to collect and store water as clean as possible. It is better, for example, to hang up a bucket rather than to leave it on the ground.

Drinking water kept in the home should be kept in a clean, covered container. Removing water from that container should be done with a clean ladle or cup. Do not allow people to put their hands into the drinking water or to drink directly from the water storage container.

#### **4. Boil drinking water unless it comes from a safe piped supply.**

The safest drinking water usually comes from a piped supply. Water from other sources is more likely to contain germs, though it may look clean.

Boiling water kills germs. So when you draw water from ponds, streams, or tanks, it is wise to bring it to a boil and then let it cool before drinking it. Germ-free drinking water is especially important for babies and young



children, since they have less resistance to germs than adults do.

If it is not possible to boil drinking water, store it in a covered container made of clear plastic or glass. Then let the container stand exposed to sunlight for two days before using the water.

#### **5. Keep your food clean.**

Foods that are to be eaten raw should be cleaned well. Other foods should be cooked thoroughly, especially meat and poultry.

It is best to eat food soon after it has been cooked; that way it will not have time to go bad. If you have to keep cooked food for more than five hours, you should either keep it hot or refrigerated. Before eating it, you should thoroughly reheat it.

Raw meat usually contains germs, so you should not allow it to touch food that you have cooked. After preparing raw meat, clean utensils and any kitchen surfaces that it has touched.

Food preparation surfaces should always be kept clean. Food should be covered and kept out of reach of flies, rats, mice, and other animals.

#### **6. Burn or bury household refuse.**

Flies, which spread germs, like to breed in food garbage. So household refuse should not be thrown on the ground. Daily, it should be buried, burned, or disposed of in some other way.

By applying these guidelines, you can help protect yourself and your family from diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, worm infections, food poisoning, and many other illnesses.

Source: *Facts for Life*, jointly published by United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, and WHO.

# The Beauty of Alpine National Parks

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN FRANCE

**C**RYSSTAL-CLEAR water flowing in a torrent, the gentle rustling of leaves in the wind, a cloudless sky overhead, the sunlight filtering through the trees. These are the delightful sights and sounds that greet us, and we are sure they are only the prelude to a magnificent day. Where are we? In the Écrins National Park, in the Dauphiné Alps, France.

At one of the park's entrances at Ailefroide, at the edge of the forest, information panels indicate that certain activities are forbidden in the park, such as camping or lighting fires. We are invited to take any litter home with us, and we notice that dogs are forbidden, as they often frighten or disturb the indigenous fauna.

## Their Purpose

But what exactly is a national park, and what purpose does it serve? The first one, Yellowstone National Park, in the state of Wyoming, was created in 1872 in the United States. Since then, many have been opened on every continent. In France, there are seven national parks, three of which are in the alpine crescent, which stretches from France to Austria. The first national park in Europe was created in 1914 in the canton of Graubünden (Grisons), Switzerland. Then, in 1922, the Gran Paradiso National Park,

in Italy, was opened. Other national parks in the alpine crescent include Berchtesgaden, in Germany; Hohe Tauern, in Austria; Stelvio, in Italy; and Triglav, in Slovenia. The first national park in France was Vanoise, created in 1963.

The primary objective of national parks is to protect natural flora and fauna. It must also be noted that there are many other parks without national status that have exactly the same goal. Among these are the Vercors Regional Park, in France, and the Karwendel Reserve, in Austria. However, national parks have a special status that confers a certain authority upon their guards. They are authorized to fine those who do not follow park rules. For example, bringing a dog into a park in Switzerland can result in a fine of up to 500 Swiss francs (\$350, U.S.).

Perhaps some think of that as excessive. But there are reasons for certain prohibitions and fines. Consider. On one occasion while in the Mercantour National Park, in the Maritime Alps in southeast France, we came across a tiny young chamois. It appeared to be on its own and completely helpless. However, we did not touch it, as we thought our scent might prevent its mother from accepting it back. But imagine if we had had a dog with us! The poor chamois

*A chamois at home in the French Alps*





**A cautious marmot in Vanoise National Park, France**

would have been terrified, especially if the dog had started barking.

Does this mean that the guards are nothing more than park policemen? No, of course not. One guard we met in the Mercantour Park showed us where a herd of chamois had just passed by, leaving their tracks in the newly fallen snow. He pointed out the way the hooves left their imprint. This helped us to appreciate that in addition to preserving the natural balance in the park, the guards' role is to inform and teach.

#### **Nature's Rich Menagerie**

Farther along our path, on a distant hillside, we see chamois capering on the névés, fields of granular snow. We also catch sight

of two marmots frolicking on the scree slopes. Some of these marmots are remarkably tame, approaching hikers, in hopes of receiving a treat.

Herds of ibex live in some alpine parks. They

are most numerous in Gran Paradiso Park, in Italy. We were thrilled to see some at Mercantour. This southerly alpine park is rich in animal life. Mouflons, a type of wild sheep, roam freely, and wolves have reappeared in recent years. However, visitors need not worry, since the wolves rarely venture near the footpaths and they shy away from humans. In the past, bears also roamed the Swiss Alps, but the last one seen there was killed in 1904. In Western Europe brown bears can now be found in the Pyrenees, on the border of France and Spain; in the Cantabrian Mountains, in northern Spain; and in Abruzzi National Park, in central Italy. On the other hand, you can sometimes hear a stag bellowing in the Swiss National Park, where they are numerous.

Apart from the larger animals, however, there are plenty of smaller animals to delight the visitor, such as ermines and varying hares, which turn white in winter, as well as foxes, marmots, and squirrels. Additionally, myriads of insects, including magnificent butterflies and industrious ants, inhabit these regions. Bird lovers will certainly not be disappointed. You may catch sight



**An eagle at Mercantour National Park, France**



**Chamois climb in the French Alps**

of an eagle soaring high above your head or even, in the Swiss National Park and in Vanoise and Mercantour parks, a lammergeier, or bearded vulture. It is also quite common to hear the characteristic sound of a woodpecker's beak striking the trunk of a tree in search of insects. Many ask how these mountain dwellers survive the winter in the Alps. These animals are well adapted to this environment, although harsh conditions do eliminate the sick and the aged.

#### **Alpine Flora**

Even the plants are protected in the parks. Consequently, it is forbidden to pick the flowers, including the magnificent orange lilies, which border our path. Perhaps you wonder why. Some plants—such as the famous edelweiss, the alpine anemone, the alpine rose, the mountain bluet, and some varieties of gentian—are rare, and it is vital to protect them to ensure their survival. The variety of flowers is truly impressive.

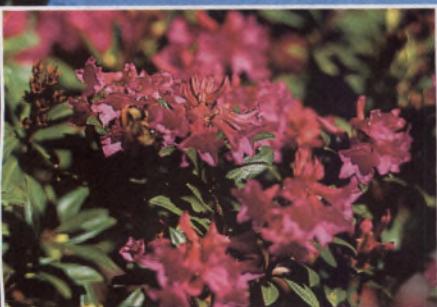
Nature's beauty is also apparent in the trees that grace the parks. In autumn the larches' golden hues adorn the forest. The arolla, or Swiss pine, on the other hand,

seems to defy the rigors of winter, supplying a constant source of food for the bird commonly known as the nutcracker. This bird transports its harvest of pine seeds in its crop and then buries them for future consumption. In doing so, it contributes to the spread of the pine tree to places where it would not otherwise have reached. Without a doubt, we could spend all day observing the beauty that surrounds us. But if we are to reach the mountain cabin, we must press on.

We continue our walk and soon reach a more difficult trail. The chamois seem to be



**A young chamois**



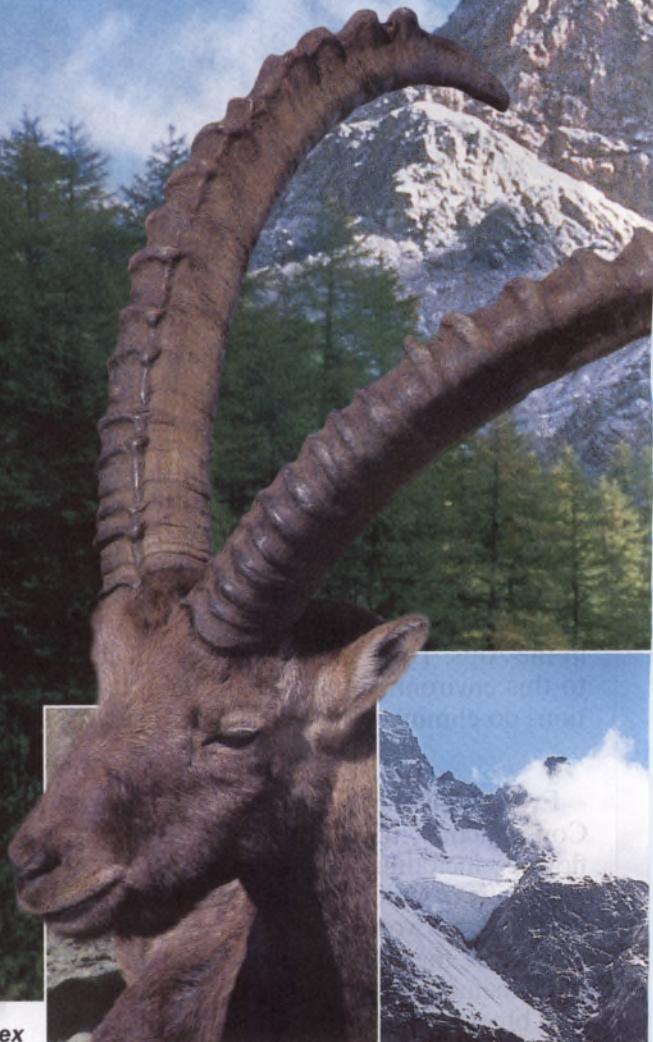
**Alpine rose**



**Wild artichoke**



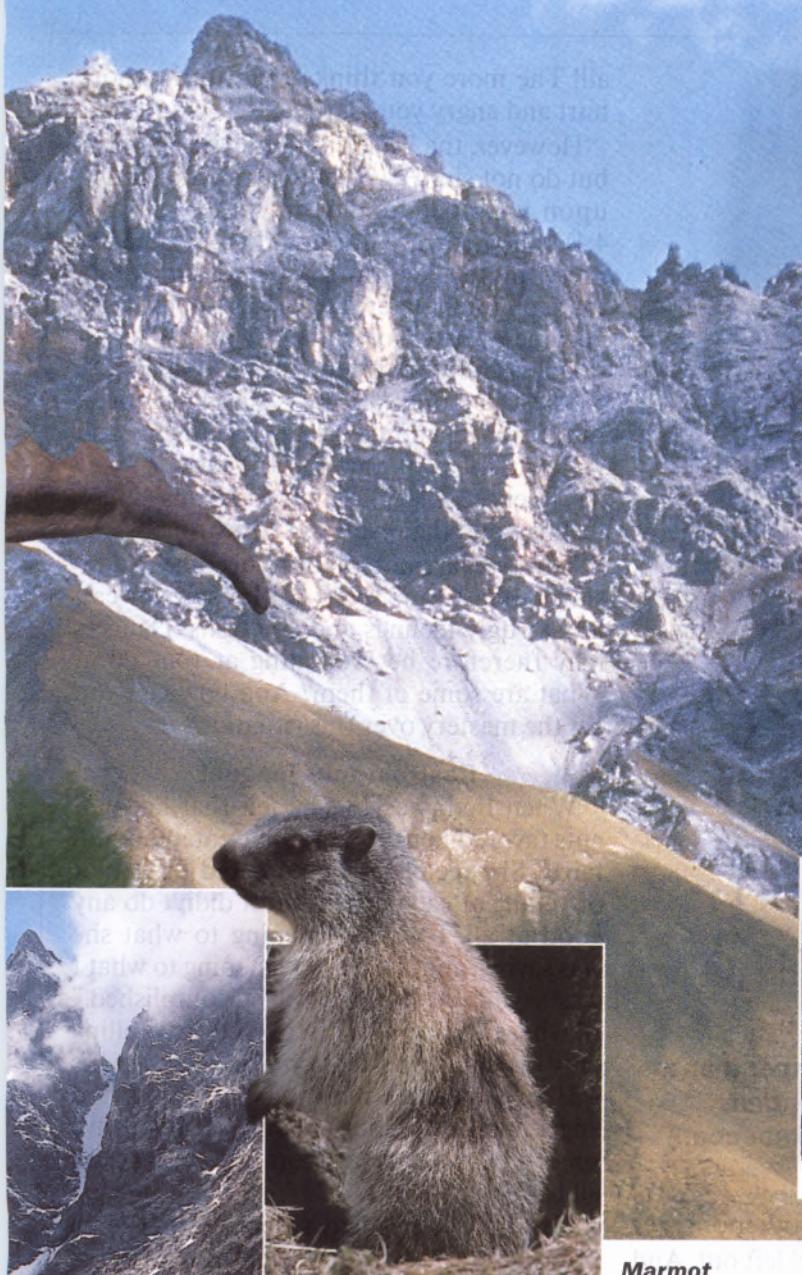
**Ancolie des Alpes**



**Ibex**

waiting for us in the forest, and we are able to take some photos. However, as we move closer, these beautiful creatures flee, apparently frightened by our approach. We reflect on the marvelous promise of God recorded at Isaiah 11:6-9: "The wolf will actually

reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-



*Orange lily*



*Turk's-cap lily*



*Panicaud des Alpes*

**Marmot**

fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones

will lie down.... They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain." We rejoice at the prospect that soon the whole earth will become an immense park-like paradise, where men and animals will live together without fear.



**Young  
People  
Ask...**

## How Can I Deal With Favoritism?

**"My sister is two years younger than me and she gets all the attention.... It doesn't seem fair."—Rebecca.\***

THE more attention your brother or sister gets, the more you may feel left out. And if you have a sibling who has outstanding abilities, is experiencing serious problems, or has interests or personality traits in common with your parents, you may have a real fight on your hands getting *any* attention at

\* Some of the names have been changed.

all! The more you think about it, the more hurt and angry you may feel.\*

However, the Bible cautions: "Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent." (Psalm 4:4) When you are upset and angry, you are much more likely to say or do something that you might later regret. Recall how Cain became agitated over the favored position that his brother, Abel, enjoyed with God. God warned him: "There is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving; and will you, for your part, get the mastery over it?" (Genesis 4:3-16) Cain failed to master his feelings, and the result was disastrous!

True, you are not about to become a man-slayer like Cain. Even so, favoritism can arouse ugly feelings and emotions. Dangers may therefore be crouching at *your* door! What are some of them? And how can you get the mastery over this situation?

### Retain Your Tongue!

When Beth was 13, she felt that her parents favored her brother and treated her unfairly. She recalls: "My mom and I did a lot of yelling at each other, but it didn't do any good at all. I wasn't listening to what she was saying, and she wasn't listening to what I was saying, so nothing was accomplished." Maybe you have also discovered that yelling only makes a bad situation worse. Ephesians 4:31 says: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness."

You do not need to scream to get your point across. A calm approach usually works better anyway. Proverbs 25:15 says: "By patience a commander is induced, and a mild tongue itself can break a bone." So if your parents seem to be guilty of favoritism, don't yell and make accusations. Wait for

\* See the article "Why Does My Brother Get All the Attention?" in the October 22, 1997, issue of *Awake!*

an appropriate time, and then talk to them in a calm, respectful way.

—Compare Proverbs 15:23.

If you focus on your parents' shortcomings or reproach them for how "unfair" they are, you will only alienate them or put them on the defensive. Focus instead on how their actions have affected you. ("It really hurts me when you ignore me.") They will more likely be moved to take you seriously. Also, "be swift about hearing." (James 1:19) It may very well be that your parents have legitimate reasons for giving your sibling extra attention. Perhaps he is having problems of which you are unaware.

But what if you are prone to fly off the handle and speak rashly when you're angry? Proverbs 25:28 compares a "man that has no restraint for his spirit" to a city "without a wall"; he is likely to be overrun by his own imperfect impulses. On the other hand, the ability to control your feelings is a mark of real strength! (Proverbs 16:32) Why not wait, then, until you've calmed down before voicing your feelings, perhaps even waiting until the next day? You may also find it helpful to get away from the situation, maybe taking a walk or doing some exercises. (Proverbs 17:14) By keeping your lips in check, you can avoid saying something hurtful or foolish.—Proverbs 10:19; 13:3; 17:27.

#### **Subtle Disobedience**

Another pitfall to avoid is disobedience. Sixteen-year-old Marie noticed that her little brother would never get punished when he disrupted the family Bible study. Frustrated at this seeming partiality, she went "on strike," refusing to participate in the study.



#### ***Explaining that you feel slighted may solve the problem***

Have you ever used the silent treatment or staged a campaign of noncooperation when you felt something was unfair?

If so, realize that such subtle tactics run contrary to the Bible command to honor and obey your parents. (Ephesians 6:1, 2) Furthermore, disobedience undermines your relationship with your parents. Better it is to talk out your problems with your parents. Proverbs 24:26 indicates that one "who is replying in a straightforward way" earns the respect of others. When Marie discussed the matter with her mother, they came to a mutual understanding, and things began to improve.

#### **The Danger of Isolation**

Another unhealthy way of dealing with favoritism is to withdraw from your family or look to unbelievers for attention. This is what happened to Cassandra: "I secluded myself from my family and turned to worldly friends I made at school. I even had

boyfriends, and my parents didn't know it. Then I got very depressed and had a guilty conscience because I knew I wasn't doing the right thing. I wanted to get out of the situation, but I just couldn't see a way to tell my parents."

It is dangerous to isolate yourself from your family and from fellow believers—especially when you are upset and not thinking clearly. Proverbs 18:1 warns: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." If you find it hard to approach your parents at this time, seek out a Christian friend like the one described at Proverbs 17:17: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." Usually such "a true companion" is most easily found among mature members of the congregation.

Cassandra found "a true companion" in her time of need: "When the circuit overseer [traveling minister] visited our congregation, my parents encouraged me to work with him. He and his wife were so down-to-earth, and they took a real interest in me. I could really talk to them. I didn't feel that they would condemn me. They realized that just because you're raised as a Christian doesn't mean you're perfect." Their encouragement and mature advice were just what Cassandra needed!—Proverbs 13:20.

### The Danger of Envy

Proverbs 27:4 warns: "There is the cruelty of rage, also the flood of anger, but who can stand before jealousy?" Envy and jealousy of a favored sibling has incited some youths to rash actions. One woman confessed: "When I was little, I had thin, wispy, brown hair and my sister had a gorgeous gold mane that grew down to her waist. My father was always making a fuss over her hair. He called her his 'Rapunzel.' One night while she was sleeping, I took my mother's sewing scissors,

tiptoed over to her bed and cut off as much hair as I could."—*Siblings Without Rivalry*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

Little wonder, then, that envy is described in the Bible as one of the wicked "works of the flesh." (Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:28-32) However, the "tendency to envy" exists in all of us. (James 4:5) So if you find yourself scheming to get your sibling in trouble, make him look bad, or in some other way cut him down to size, envy may very well be "crouching at the entrance," trying to get the mastery over you!

What should you do if you find yourself harboring such harmful feelings? First, try praying to God for his spirit. Says Galatians 5:16: "Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all." (Compare Titus 3:3-5.) It may also help to reflect on your true feelings for your sibling. Can you really say that you do not feel *some* love for that one—in spite of your resentment? Well, the Scriptures tell us that "love is not jealous." (1 Corinthians 13:4) So refuse to dwell on negative, envy-arousing thoughts. Try to rejoice with that one if he or she is getting special attention from your parents.—Compare Romans 12:15.

Your conversations with your parents may also prove helpful in this regard. If they become convinced of the need to give you more attention, this will go a long way in helping you get over feelings of envy toward your siblings. But what if things don't improve at home and the favoritism persists? Don't get angry, yell, or rebel against your parents. Try to maintain a helpful, obedient attitude. If necessary, seek support from mature ones within the Christian congregation. Above all, draw close to Jehovah God. Remember the psalmist's words: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." —Psalm 27:10.



# ROAD RAGE

## How Can You Cope?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRITAIN

**L**OSS of temper and resulting violence figure more and more prominently in world press reports. Amid references to trolley rage (in which customers using trolleys, or food carts, vent their anger on one another at the supermarket) and phone rage (prompted by technology that allows the person you call to interrupt you to take another's call), it is *road rage* that has caught people's attention in Britain.

Road rage is so widespread that a 1996 report on driving habits claimed that in Britain it has "reached epidemic proportions, with almost half of all drivers experiencing some form of attack or abuse over the past year"! An Automobile Association survey went even further and reported that "nine out of ten motorists claim to have been the victims of road rage." Interestingly, the same poll noted that "only six out of ten [motorists] admit to losing their own temper at the wheel."

What prompts road rage? If you are a victim, what can you do to protect yourself? If someone else's driving makes you angry, what should you do? Indeed, as road rage proliferates worldwide, how can you cope?

### Cause and Effect

Angry drivers are nothing new. One early offender was English poet Lord Byron. In

1817 he wrote a letter in which he related a dispute he had on the road. Reportedly, another road user was "impudent" to Byron's horse. As a result, the poet boxed the other man's ears.

In most countries, as the volume of traffic grows, drivers' frustration mounts. It was in the 1980's that U.S. newspapers described the trigger for violent driving incidents as "road rage." Although not a legal concept, road rage aptly describes the emotions at the root of many a violent act committed by motorists who are provoked by the other driver's manner of driving.

The me-first attitude now saturates our roads. Researchers into driving habits conclude that "the perpetrators of violence or aggression nearly always believe themselves to be the righteous victims of someone else's antisocial behaviour," notes *The Times* of London. No matter how wildly a driver manipulates his vehicle, he feels justified. But when *another* driver commits a minor infringement of road courtesy, road rage flares.

The growing drug culture, so widespread among young people, also contributes to road rage. Cocaine abuse is, according to one hospital consultant, "comparable with drinking and driving." Drivers who take

drugs often have an exaggerated view of their own abilities. As a result, some drive their vehicles at dangerous speeds. Others drive erratically, their judgment impaired.

Consider, too, the effect stress has on a driver. Professor Cary Cooper of Manchester University blames the stresses and uncertainties of daily life in the 1990's for much road rage. "Drivers are becoming more stressed and the number of violent assaults is increasing," says a Royal Automobile Club spokesman. One busy public relations executive who now spends long hours driving to and from work admits that she is not as tolerant as she used to be. "Now I am quick to snap and get cross over little things that would never bother me before," *The Sunday Times* reports her as saying. Perhaps you feel the same way. If so, what can you do?

#### Avoid Provoking Road Rage

Recognize that other drivers are not perfect. They will, on occasion, break the rules. Make allowance for this in your driving. Think ahead. For example, you may drive in the nearside, or slow lane, of a multi-lane highway. But then you approach a junction where a slip-road, or entrance ramp, filters traffic in to join the highway. Looking ahead, you see a car approaching the highway along the slip-road. Do you reason that you were there first, that you have a right to drive in your lane? Why should you give

way to the merging traffic? Why should you steer into another lane, if clear, to allow the other driver to get onto the highway? But think, what will happen if you insist on holding to your lane and maintaining your speed? Perhaps the driver joining the highway will think similarly. Inevitably, someone must give way; otherwise, disaster will strike.

Wisely, the driver who wishes to avoid provoking road rage looks ahead and drives considerately. He gives way when he can, and he does not become angry when the other driver fails to acknowledge the courtesy shown him. A representative of Britain's Institute of Advanced Motorists estimates that 1 out of every 3 drivers has a dangerous attitude problem. Though these drivers can handle their vehicles skillfully, they lack courtesy. He calls them "good drivers but bad motorists."

Most drivers at times ignore other road users. But that does not justify your acting that way. Consider possible consequences. Surely you do not want any stubbornness on your part to provoke a pileup. Do not let your emotions take over. A driving expert advises: "You must never react or respond to aggression on the road." Refuse to join the road-rage club!

#### Are You a Victim?

Virtually every driver has at some time been the victim of road rage. The raised fist, the shouted abuse, the aggressive maneuvers all can and do frighten. The best protection is surely to avoid conflict. One victim felt intimidated when a fellow driver wanted to get ahead of him. Finally, the angry driver overtook him, cut in, and slowed down so much that the victim feared that their cars would crash. This continued for some distance and ended only when the victim turned off onto another route.

If you see that other drivers want to get

#### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**Child Custody  
—What Is the Balanced View?**

**Should Christians  
Hate Homosexuals?**

**The Pygmies  
—People of the Deep Forest**

ahead of you, do your best to let them. Avoid insisting on your right to be where you are on the road. If you have knowingly irritated others, apologize. Gesture to indicate that you are sorry for even unwittingly causing offense. Remember that a mild word can defuse rage.

But if, for whatever reason, you are the victim of a road-rage attack, don't retaliate. "Don't give back in kind what you get," advises *Focus* magazine. "Don't carry things in your car that could be used as a dangerous weapon." Other tips: Keep your car doors

locked and windows shut. Avoid eye contact with an aggressor.

The above suggestions on how to cope with road rage are not new. They parallel advice offered long ago by King David of Israel: "Do not show yourself heated up because of the evildoers," he counseled. "Do not be envious of those doing unrighteousness. Let anger alone and leave rage."

—Psalm 37:1, 8.

Though road rage is growing, don't let it grow in you!

## Controlling Road Rage

The Automobile Association notes that when it comes to eliminating road rage, "changing attitudes is as important as engineering countermeasures." Taking a realistic view of both your own driving skills and those of other road users is vital to coping with road rage. Although others' mistakes stare you in the face, do not overlook your own driving faults. Accept the fact that there are drivers who flout the rules of the road. When you drive, make sure you are fully alert. Fatigue contributes to stress. A momentary lack of concentration can have fatal consequences.

Consider also the following advice, and notice how it relates to the proverbs of wise King Solomon.

- Do your passengers observe your anger? Perhaps they suggest that you calm down. Don't simply brush away their advice and retort that they are back-seat drivers. Remember, a calm attitude is more healthy and may literally help you live longer! "A calm heart is the life of the fleshy organism."

—Proverbs 14:30.

- Think of the other driver, and avoid problems. "The wise one fears and is turning away from badness, but the stupid is becoming furious and self-confident."—Proverbs 14:16.
- Defuse anger by an apologetic gesture or word. "An answer, when mild, turns away rage."—Proverbs 15:1.
- Others may be prone to road rage, but you do not need to imitate them. "Do not have companionship with anyone given to anger."—Proverbs 22:24.
- Avoid becoming involved in others' disputes. "Before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave."—Proverbs 17:14.



# Understanding the Fear of Stuttering

CAN you tell the difference between a speaker who is fluent and one who fears stuttering? ‘‘Why, of course,’’ you may answer. But consider what Peter Louw writes in his Afrikaans book *Hhhakkel* (*Ssstutter*): “For every ‘undisguised’ stutterer, there are possibly ten who want to remain as unnoticed as possible and who hide their speech impediment in various ways.” Hide their speech impediment? How is that possible?

Some stutterers manage to hide their impediment by anticipating words that have caused a problem for them in the past. Then, instead of saying that word, they rephrase the sentence or use a different word with a similar meaning. One husband concealed his stuttering for 19 years of marriage. When the truth dawned on his wife, she asked a speech therapist: “Do you think that’s why he has me make the phone calls, and why I always wind up ordering in restaurants, and why he never speaks up at . . . meetings?”

Consider, too, Gerard and Maria, a happily married couple from South Africa.\* On a number of occasions, Maria tried to explain to her husband that she held back from commenting at Bible study meetings because of her fear of stuttering. “Nonsense,” he would dogmatically say, “you are not a stutterer.” Gerard based his judgment on his

wife’s normally talkative nature. Only certain speaking situations cause her to fear stuttering. For the first time, after five years of marriage, Gerard became aware of this and confessed: “I was ignorant and inconsiderate.” Now, instead of criticizing her, he commends her for the times that she does muster up courage to speak in front of a large audience.

Understandably, many stutterers are plagued by “fear . . . sometimes nagging, often acute,” explains stutterer David Compton in his book *Stammering*. “At his most vulnerable moment, his most necessary point of contact with his fellow human beings, at his reaching out towards them in speech, be it mundane or intimate, at such times the stammerer may expect to be wounded, made ridiculous . . . Even those who cope most successfully still admit that they have been shaped by their fear, and that it never entirely leaves them.”

## Situations That May Arouse Fear

When a stutterer is called upon to answer a question in front of an audience, such as in a school classroom, at a business meeting, or at a religious gathering, it may cause anxiety that results in a severe bout of stuttering. “Are there times when you think it’s just much easier to keep quiet?” a 15-year-old South African stutterer named Rosanne was asked in a radio interview. She replied, “Often, for example, in the classroom situation when I have a nice answer that I know will really earn me marks but I know it’s too much of an effort to actually talk.”

A businessman named Simon was also interviewed on the radio program mentioned above. Like Rosanne, Simon has made improvement with the help of speech therapy. But sometimes he still has a bad episode of stuttering. This can be aggravated by the attitude of his audience. “If you’re in a

\* Some of the names in this article have been changed.

board meeting where you have to do a fair amount of speaking and you are having a bad time, the people around that table get very, very impatient," he explains.

The fear that a stutterer has should not be confused with the fear that a shy person might have of speaking to strangers. Consider Lisa, who has been attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses for the past two years. In light conversation with friends, she often manages to speak quite fluently. She also shares zealously in evangelizing work that requires approaching strangers uninvited. But she has a fear common to many stutterers—speaking before a large audience. "At our meetings," explains Lisa, "I seldom manage to put up my hand and answer a question. If I answer at all, it is at most one word or a short sentence. Although it may be little, it is my best. Often, the answers are in my head and on my lips because I always prepare in advance. But my tongue just refuses to cooperate."

A worse experience for some stutterers is having to read aloud. This forces them to use words they would normally avoid. "At one of our meetings," Lisa continues, "we are sometimes asked to take turns reading the Scripture texts under discussion. On such occasions I sit in fear, fidgeting, waiting for my turn, not knowing if I will manage to read the text or not. Sometimes I read but cannot pronounce a certain word. Then I just skip it and continue reading."

Obviously, careful thought needs to be

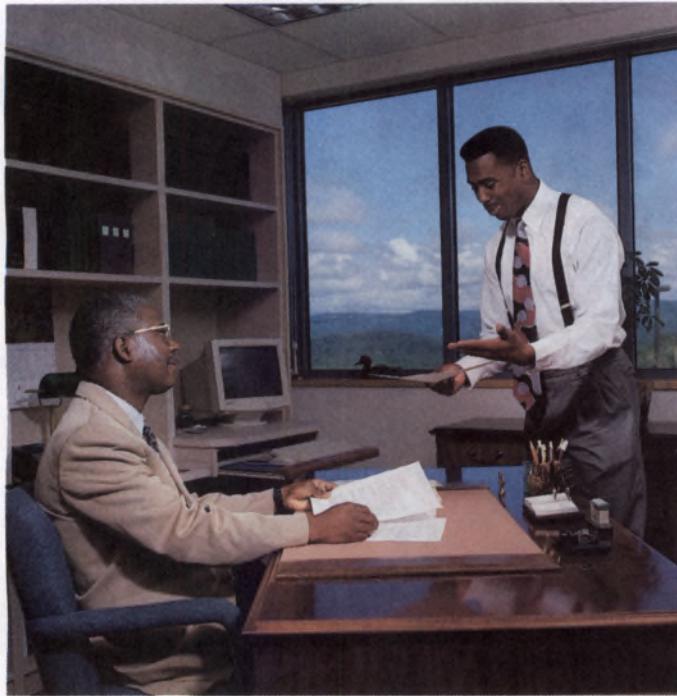


**A stutterer may be afraid to speak up in public**

given before encouraging a stutterer to read aloud. Such "encouragement" could make the stutterer feel worse. Instead, such a person deserves to be warmly commended for doing his or her best.

#### **When Trying to Help**

Stuttering is a very complex disorder. What works for one may not work for another. In fact, many stutterers who experience a period of being "cured" suffer a relapse later. More research has been done on stuttering than on just about any other speech disorder. Yet, experts have not found a specific cause. In fact, most agree that many factors may contribute to stuttering. One theory, according to recent studies, is that it has to do with the irregular organization of brain cells early in the life of the stutterer. According to Drs. Theodore J. Peters and Barry Guitar, in their textbook *Stuttering—An Integrated Approach to Its Nature and*



#### **Be patient if a stutterer is having difficulty talking to you**

*Treatment*, current views about the causes "will be outdated as more studies fill in the huge gaps in our knowledge about stuttering."

Since man knows so little about stuttering, there is a need for caution when suggesting one of the numerous therapies for those plagued with this disorder. "Most severe stutterers," the above textbook adds, "will make only a partial recovery. They will learn to speak more slowly or to stutter more easily, and to be less bothered by it. . . . For reasons we don't understand, a few stutterers just don't change significantly in treatment."\*

When treatment fails to work, some ther-

\* The prognosis for children is better than for adults. Experienced speech therapist Ann Irwin explains in her book *Stammering in Young Children*: "Three out of four children outgrow their stammers spontaneously. If your child is one of the twenty-five per cent who does not outgrow it spontaneously, the chances are extremely high that he will outgrow it with Preventive Therapy."

apists have blamed the stutterer for not trying hard enough. One asserted: "The only likelihood of failure lies in a half-hearted attitude on the part of the stammerer." Regarding such claims, author David Compton said: "I have no words to express the anger this kind of comment can make stammerers feel. First, because it's manifestly untrue. No one therapy will ever be right for all stammerers, and even the right one for a particular stammerer will be far from infallible. Second, because stammerers live with failure . . . Anything that increases [their failure] needlessly, unjustly, is a crime."

#### **Easing Their Burden**

Stutterers usually do not want to be pitied. However, there is much that can be done to ease their burden. When they stutter, do not look away in embarrassment. Rather than looking at their mouth, look them in the eye. They are usually sensitive to the body language of their listeners. If you appear to be relaxed, it will help to lessen their fears. "Show the person that you are prepared to hear him out as you would be prepared to hear anyone out," said a speech therapist.

Teachers who have a stutterer among their students can do much to ease that one's fears. In the South African educational journal *Die Unie*, the following advice was given to teachers: "Most stutterers stutter much less when they know that the one listening does not expect fluency."

According to the above journal, it is also important for a teacher to get to know the student's feelings. Instead of avoiding such students out of embarrassment, teachers are

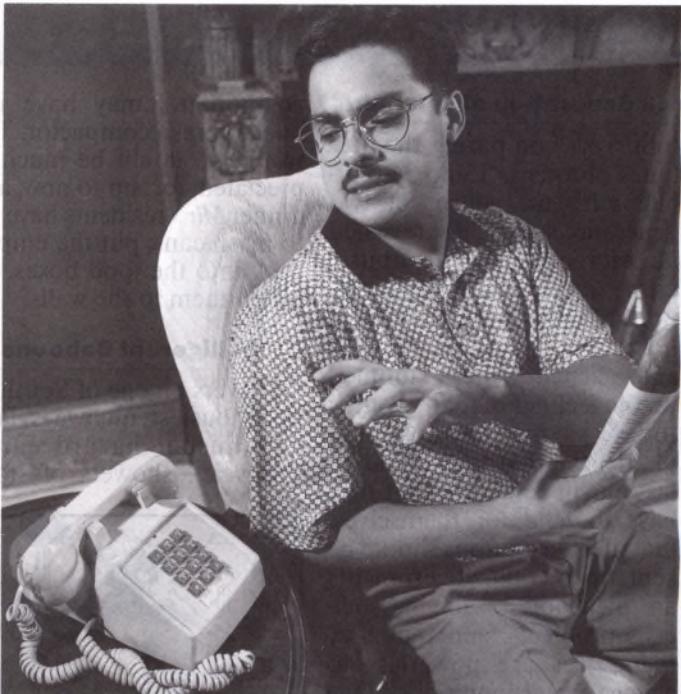
advised to talk to them and to encourage them to express their feelings about the problem. In this way the teacher can find out what speaking situations the student fears most. "His speech fluency depends 80 percent on you," the journal reports. His fluency will improve if he knows that he is accepted in spite of the problem. The journal further explains: "A relaxed, learning-oriented atmosphere in the classroom will benefit not only the stutterer but also the rest of the class."

Surely, these suggestions can be adapted successfully in teaching situations involving adults.

#### **Our Creator Understands**

Our Creator, Jehovah God, fully understands human imperfection. He commissioned Moses to be his spokesman in leading the Israelites out of Egypt. He did this in the full knowledge that Moses had a speech defect that made it difficult for him to communicate. God also knew that Moses' brother, Aaron, was, by contrast, a fluent speaker. "I do know that he can really speak," God said. (Exodus 4:14) However, Moses had other far more important qualities, such as loyalty, kindness, faith, and mildness of temper. (Numbers 12:3; Hebrews 11:24, 25) In spite of Moses' objections, God stuck to his choice of Moses as leader of His people. At the same time, God made allowance for Moses' fears by appointing Aaron as Moses' spokesman. —Exodus 4:10-17.

We can imitate God by showing understanding. Treat stutterers with dignity, and do not allow a speech defect to blind you to



**Stutterers generally fear the telephone**

the person's true worth. Illustrating this is the experience of a little girl and her stuttering father. The father learned a method of reading more fluently. One night he tried it out on his six-year-old daughter by reading her a story, and he felt so proud of his fluency.

"Speak properly, Daddy," she said when her father had finished.

"I am speaking very properly," he replied with indignation.

"No," she insisted, "speak like you always do."

Yes, this little girl loved her father for who he was, even with his speech defect. So next time you have dealings with someone who stutters, remember that the person may have precious thoughts and desirable qualities. He certainly has feelings. Be patient and show him understanding.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### A Generation of Despair

Surveys comparing the attitudes of today's 15- to 24-year-olds with the youths of two generations ago have revealed an increase in drug abuse, crime rates, and suicide, reports *The Australian*. Richard Eckersley, a strategic analyst and science writer, summed up the feelings of many youths today, saying: "Young people believe that life should be fast-moving and fun, that they have to fend for themselves, that lifestyle options should be kept open, that governments are incapable of solving society's problems, and that they themselves are powerless to change social conditions." One 15-year-old girl, named Shanu, said: "The population is increasing and we have to compete for fewer jobs, less housing, less everything."

### Space-Station Clutter

After 11 years, those using the Russian space station *Mir* are learning to cope with a problem familiar to many earthbound residents—what to do with all the accumulated stuff. In the weightlessness of space, necessary items such as space suits, computer cables, food packages, tools, and spare parts have to be attached to floors, ceilings, and walls. But with clutter stacked nearly a foot deep on every surface, *Mir*'s walls are closing in. When the new International Space Station is launched, one item that astronauts and

cosmonauts may have is a built-in trash compactor. That would no doubt be much appreciated, for, up to now, after dinner *Mir*'s residents have had to mash cans, put the empties back into the food boxes, and fasten them to the walls.

### Belligerent Baboons

Drivers on one of South Africa's busiest highways faced an unusual hazard earlier this year—showers of stones



hurled by a troop of baboons. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, the baboons ambushed motorists along a mountain pass on the road between Cape Town and Johannesburg. Though no injuries or auto crashes had been reported, traffic police fought stones with stones in an effort to drive the animals away from the highway. No clear-cut victors were reported in this stone-throwing battle between police and baboons.

### Smokers in Asia

It is estimated that in Vietnam nearly 73 percent of all men smoke. This is "the highest smoking prevalence rate for men in the world," reports a study published in *The Journal of the American Medical As-*

sociation

By comparison, it seems that just over 4 percent of Vietnamese women smoke. Other Asian countries of the Pacific rim follow a similar pattern. In Indonesia, for example, 53 percent of the men and 4 percent of the women smoke; while in China, 61 percent of the men and 7 percent of the women smoke.

### Seminary Relaxes Policy on Sex

An Episcopal Church seminary in Virginia "has relaxed its 25-year-old policy barring students and faculty from non-marital sex and homosexual behavior," reports *The Christian Century* magazine. The chairman of the board, Peter J. Lee, said: "Let's face it, most seminarians are in their 30s or their 40s. There are no house mothers and no bed checks." Over the past 11 years, enrollment at the seminary has dropped 33 percent. Additionally, over the past 25 years, the average age of students entering the seminary has risen from 27 to 40. "What I'm trying to do as chairman of the board is to prevent some 28-year-old from being denied admission because we discovered he was having sex with his fiancée," said Lee.

### Snacking and Tooth Decay

It has long been known that cutting back on sugary snacks can help fight tooth decay. What is particularly important, though, is to watch when and how often you snack, re-

ports the family dental guide *How to Keep Your Family Smiling*. When sweets or refined carbohydrates come in contact with dental plaque on your teeth, acid is formed. This acid, in turn, attacks the enamel of your teeth for approximately 20 minutes, says the brochure. During this time cavities can start. Moreover, "this can happen *every time* you eat a sweet or starchy snack." So if you are going to snack, "it's better to eat the whole thing at once," thus exposing your teeth to acid just one time. Otherwise, nibbling on the same snack over a longer period of time results in a prolonged attack of acid. To help prevent tooth decay, dentists recommend, you should brush your teeth at least twice a day. Also, don't forget to clean between your teeth daily with dental floss.

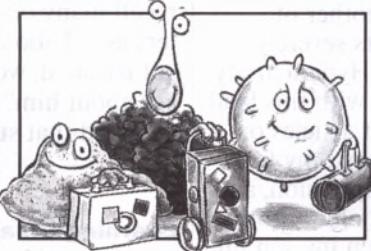
#### **Scientists' Belief in God**

In 1916, American psychologist James Leuba asked 1,000 randomly selected scientists if they believed in God. Their answer? Of the scientists who replied, 42 percent expressed a belief in God, reports *The New York Times*. Leuba predicted that belief in God would decline as education spread. Now, over 80 years later, Edward Larson, of the University of Georgia, has repeated Leuba's famous survey. Using the same questions and methods, Larson asked biologists, physicists, and mathematicians if they believed in a God who actively communicates with humankind. The results indicate

that approximately the same number of scientists today, some 40 percent, express belief in God. According to Dr. Larson, "Leuba misjudged either the human mind or the ability of science to satisfy all human needs."

#### **World-Traveling Viruses**

Aircraft sewage tanks contain chemicals that are supposed to kill viruses, but some viruses survive exposure to the disinfectant, reports *New Scientist* magazine. Mark Sobsey, an environmental scientist at the University of North Carolina, found that almost half the sewage he tested from international flights landing in the United States contained live viruses. In the United States, waste discharged from aircraft is usually treated in public sewage stations and



later dumped into the environment. Thus, the danger exists that some of these viruses could spread diseases such as hepatitis A and E, meningitis, and polio. Sobsey adds: "The range of illnesses that can be transmitted by the world's airlines is quite worrisome."

#### **The Disappearing Ganges**

The river Ganges, known in India as the Ganga, is considered holy by hundreds of mil-

lions of Hindus. The Ganges is also the lifeline for agriculture all along its path. But now its waters are rapidly dwindling, leaving wide stretches of dry ground between the river and its former banks, reports *India Today*. The drastically decreased flow is seen as the result of insufficient rains as well as increased use of river water upstream for irrigation. Besides threatening agriculture in the region, silting resulting from lack of water could make Calcutta's port un-navigable, states the report.

#### **Piracy Proliferates**

Reports of pirate attacks are on the increase, says the International Maritime Bureau—from 90 incidents in 1994 to 226 just two years later. This growth worries both merchant navy officers and tourists. The actual figure, however, may be over two times higher, as "many shipowners do not bother to report incidents because the investigations that follow can cause costly delays," says *The Sunday Telegraph* of London. Areas that have been particularly dangerous of late are the Mediterranean Sea off Albania and Libya and the South China Sea. A British Merchant Navy representative urged Britain to take the lead in a UN international task force to combat the pirates. But a spokesman for the shipowners said that "he did not believe that a UN task force could do anything about the problem because most attacks take place within territorial waters," the paper reported.

## FROM OUR READERS

**Caregiving—Meeting the Challenge** This excellent series of articles (February 8, 1997) encouraged me greatly. I am 17 years old, and I am caring for my grandfather who had a stroke and for my mother who had a nervous breakdown. It soothed me to read that it is normal to be annoyed with patients at times and to ask, ‘Why did this happen to me?’ I also appreciated the article about the practical assistance that can be given to the caregiver.

P. T., Italy

Your description of the feelings of the people who take care of ill loved ones was exact and full of understanding. I thank Jehovah that he incited you to write these beautiful articles. I am sure they will help all of us who are in this situation to reconcile ourselves to it and to continue serving Jehovah with rejoicing and zeal.

B. V., Czech Republic

Recently divorced, I am the mother of two teenagers, and my son suffers severely from ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). The stress associated with this load is enormous. Through the recent articles on caregiving, I was able to understand my feelings of embarrassment, anger, depression, and helplessness. On a positive note, older brothers in the congregation have taken my son under their wings. What a joy to see love put into action!

C. C., United States

My husband suffers from dementia and depends on my care. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to manage. Jeanny, mentioned in the articles, gave me courage when she advised: “Fear of what *might* happen is often worse than the reality.”

A. P., Slovakia

I was at one time a caregiver and felt many of the feelings described in the articles. Many

times I couldn't tell others about my frustration and guilt. These articles have enabled me to discuss my feelings.

F. F., Nigeria

I never thought such special articles would be published. My mother has been bedridden since 1989. As the only son, and having neither siblings nor a father, I had to assume the responsibility of caring for her. I agree with the last paragraph of the series—that Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ, are the most compassionate caregivers of all. On many occasions when the situation became desperate and I thought I could not cope, I would turn to Jehovah in prayer and beg him to help me. Simply by knowing that he was listening, I could feel the strength coming back to me.

M. A. M., Peru

My husband is sick, and I have experienced almost everything the magazine mentioned. I recall many occasions when brothers and sisters asked about my husband. Sometimes I got irritated, wondering, ‘Why do they always ask about him? What about me?’ Now I understand that such feelings are only natural.

M. A. I. I., Spain

**Learning Disabilities** I am the parent of a ten-year-old son with severe ADHD. I am very happy to tell you that since the series “Help for Children With Learning Disabilities” (February 22, 1997) was published, several friends have told me that even though they had tried to understand the disorder and to help me, they had never fully understood how my son and I felt. Most commented that they would now be even more willing to assist. One sister in the congregation took the time to go over the article with my son and encourage him. My son later came to me and asked to read the magazine again.

L. A. D., United States



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## Where Did All the Codfish Go?

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THE codfish were so thick in the water that "a boat could hardly be rowed through them." So said explorer John Cabot in 1497 as he described one of the world's richest fishing grounds—the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. By the late 1600's, the annual catch of cod at Newfoundland had reached almost 100,000 metric tons. During the next century, the yield doubled.

Today, however, the situation has changed dramatically. The codfish stock is now so depleted that in 1992 the Canadian government imposed its own ban on Atlantic cod fishing, leaving an estimated 35,000 people looking for work in other sectors. In 1997 the moratorium is still in effect. But where did all the codfish go?

During the 1960's, international fishing fleets converged on Newfoundland's offshore banks to harvest huge quantities of cod. By 1968, trawlers from more than a dozen countries were taking 800,000 tons of fish a year from Newfoundland's banks. This was three times the annual average catch for the previous century.

While colder waters, the proliferation of seals, and the migration of codfish may also have played a part in the depletion of the codfish population, a large portion of blame for the cod disaster must be placed on human greed. "It was overfishing—pure and simple," says one marine biologist.

What future is there for the Atlantic codfish? Some doubt that there are enough young fish to mature, spawn, and replenish the species. *The Evening Telegram* of St. John's commented: "Canada's oldest industry, the Atlantic cod fishery, will thrive only in history books." However, there is hope!

The Bible assures us that soon, in God's promised new world of righteousness, there will be no place for greed. (2 Peter 3:13) Jehovah will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth" and make the land and the sea abound with life to the blessing of those who want to serve and please him.—Revelation 11:18.

# DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO GOD?

Millions of people believe that all religions are different paths leading to the same place. The fact is, the teachings, rituals, and deities of religions are similar. Look, for instance, at this eighth-century C.E. statue of a Hindu mythological character, from Kerala, India.

What is remarkable is that bulls were worshiped in many ancient religions. For example, according to first-century B.C.E. Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, the Ammonite god Molech also had the form of a man but the head of a bull.

Why have there been remarkable similarities in many diverse religions throughout the world? Do these religions have a common origin? Are they really only different roads leading to the same place? Does God approve of all of them?

The fascinating account of the origin and development of the world's major religions in the book *Mankind's Search for God* answers such questions.



MANKIND'S  
SEARCH FOR GOD