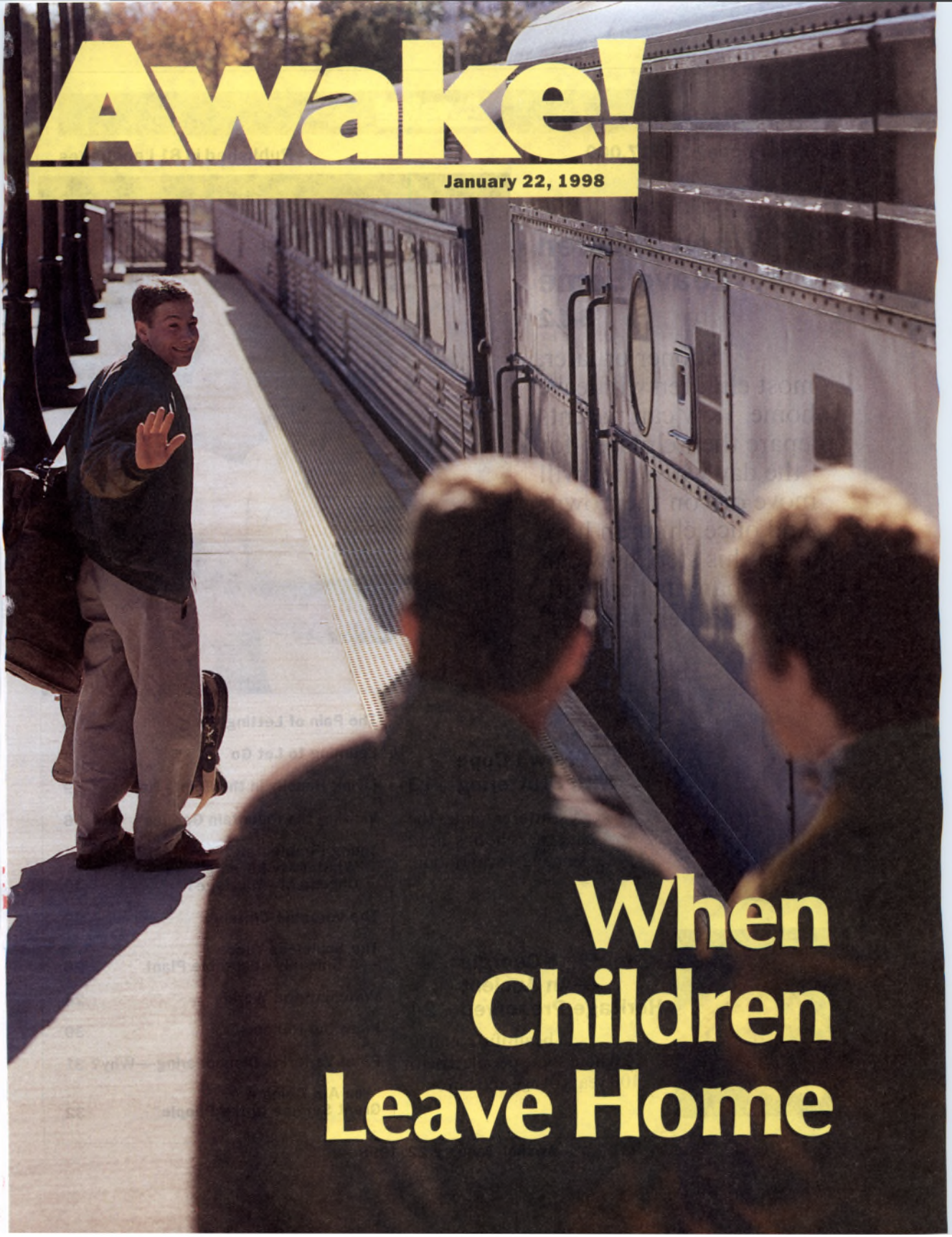
Awake!

January 22, 1998



When Children Leave Home

Awake!

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Sooner or later, most children will leave home. How can parents prepare their children for the day when they will move out on their own? And once children have taken this step, how can parents deal with their absence?

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A stutterer relates the challenges he has faced since early childhood.

Pat O'Hara/Corbis

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The Pain of Letting Go

"My husband had warned me on the day the first baby was born—'Raising kids, hon, is one long letting go.'"

—Ourselves and Our Children—A Book by and for Parents.

MOST parents are happy—even exhilarated—when their first child is born. Despite all the inconveniences, hassles, pains, frustrations, and anxieties parenthood brings, children can be a source of great joy. Some three thousand years ago, the Bible declared: "Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a real blessing." —Psalm 127:3, *Today's English Version.*

Nevertheless, the Bible also makes this sobering prediction: "A man will leave his father and his mother." (Genesis 2:24) For a variety of reasons, grown-up children usually leave home—to pursue an education or a career, to expand their Christian ministry, to get married. But for some parents, this reality is simply too painful. They allow their children's natural struggle for independence to cause them—as one writer put it—to "feel insulted, outraged, embarrassed, threatened or rejected." This often translates into unending family strife and tension. Refusing to face the day their children will leave the nest, some parents fail to prepare them for adulthood. The harvest reaped from such neglect can be dreadful: adults who are ill-prepared to manage a home, care for a family, or even hold a job.

The pain of separation may be particularly acute in single-parent families. A single parent named Karen says: "My daughter and I are close; we developed a real bond of friendship. Everywhere I went, I took her." Close parent-child relationships are common in single-parent households. Understandably, the thought of losing such closeness may be devastating.

However, the book *Traits of a Healthy Family* reminds parents: "That's what family life is all about: the nurturing of a dependent infant into an adult who is his or her own person." It then warns: "Many problems in families arise out of the parents' inability to let go."

What about you? Are you a parent? If so, are you prepared for the day when you will have to let *your* children go? And what about your children? Are you preparing them to make it on their own?

Learning to Let Go

"LIKE arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the sons of youth," wrote the Bible psalmist. (Psalm 127:4) An arrow does not reach its target by accident. It must be carefully aimed. In a similar way, children may not reach the goal of being responsible adults without parental direction. "Train up a boy according to the way for him," exhorts the Bible, and "even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it."—Proverbs 22:6.

The shift from dependence in childhood to independence in adulthood cannot be made overnight. So when should parents begin to train their children to be independent? The apostle Paul reminded a young man named Timothy: "From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15) Imagine, Timothy's mother began giving him spiritual training when he was still an infant!

Now, if small infants can benefit from spiritual training, is it not reasonable that children should be given training for adulthood as soon as possible? One way to do this is to teach them to be responsible, to make their own decisions.

Teaching Children to Be Responsible

How can you encourage your children to be responsible? A married couple named Jack and Nora recalled regarding their daughter: "When she could barely walk, she learned to carry socks or small things to her bedroom and put them in the proper drawer. She also learned to put toys and books away in their places." These are small beginnings, but already the child was learning to make responsible decisions.

As a child grows older, perhaps he or she can be entrusted with somewhat weightier responsibilities. Abra and Anita thus allowed their daughter to have a pet dog. The youngster was responsible for the dog's care

Awake!®

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

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and even gave money from her own allowance for its upkeep. Training children to live up to their responsibilities requires patience. But it is worthwhile and contributes to their emotional growth.

Household chores provide another opportunity to teach children responsibility. Some parents virtually exempt their children from family duties, considering their involvement more of a nuisance than a help. Others figure that their children should 'have it better than they had it as children.' This is faulty reasoning. The Scriptures say: "If one is pampering one's servant from youth on, in his later life he will even become a thankless one." (Proverbs 29:21) The principle of this text certainly applies to children. It is sad when a youth enters adulthood not only "thankless" but also unable to handle even the simplest of domestic tasks.

Youths in Bible times were commonly assigned household chores. For example, at the tender age of 17, young Joseph shared in the responsibility of caring for the family flocks. (Genesis 37:2) This was no small assignment, since his father's flocks were vast. (Genesis 32:13-15) In view of the fact that Joseph grew up to be a powerful leader, it is not hard to believe that this early training did much to mold his character in a positive way. The future king of Israel David was likewise entrusted with his family's flocks as a youth.—1 Samuel 16:11.

The lesson for parents today? Assign your children meaningful household chores. With time, effort, and patience, you can teach young ones to share in cleaning, cooking, yard maintenance, and home and vehicle repair. True, much depends upon the age and ability of the child. But even small children can usually have some share in 'helping Daddy fix the car' or in 'helping Mommy cook a meal.'

Teaching household chores also requires that parents give their children a most precious gift—their time. One married couple, parents of two, were asked the secret of successful child training. They replied: "Time, time, time!"

Loving Correction

When children perform their tasks well, or at least put forth effort to do so, cheer them on with generous and sincere praise! (Compare Matthew 25:21.) Of course, children rarely perform tasks with an adult's competence. And when children are allowed to make their own decisions, they will often make mistakes. But beware of overreacting! Have you not made your own share of mistakes as an adult? So why not show patience when your child errs? (Compare Psalm 103:13.) Allow for mistakes. View them as part of the learning process.

Authors Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler observe: "Children who are treated in a friendly manner aren't afraid that they will

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"Children of cold or harsh parents are afraid to take virtually any kind of spontaneous action, including helpful ones, because they are afraid that their parents will find some fault in what they have done and criticize or punish them."

—*Bringing Up a Moral Child,* by Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler

be punished for taking an independent action." However, "children of cold or harsh parents are afraid to take virtually any kind of spontaneous action, including helpful ones, because they are afraid that their parents will find some fault in what they have done and criticize or punish them." This comment harmonizes with the Bible's caution to parents: "Do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) So when a child's efforts fall short of expectations, why not praise him for at least having *tried?* Encourage him to do better next time. Let him know that his progress is a source of joy to you. Assure him of your love.

Of course, at times correction is necessary. This may be especially evident during the adolescent years, when young people are caught in a struggle to establish their

Single Parents—The Challenge of Letting Go

A single parent named Rebecca observes: "It is very hard for single parents to let their children go. If we do not watch ourselves, we tend to overprotect and smother them." The book *The Secret of Family Happiness,** pages 106-7, offers these helpful observations:

"It is natural for single parents to be especially close to their children, yet care must be taken that the God-assigned boundaries between parents and children do not break down. For example, serious difficulties can arise if a single mother expects her son to take on the responsibilities of the man of the house or treats her daughter as a confidant, burdening the girl with intimate problems. Doing so is inappropriate, stressful, and perhaps confusing to a child.

"Assure your children that you, as the parent, will care for them—not vice versa. (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:14.) At times, you may need some advice or support. Seek it from Christian elders or perhaps from mature Christian women, not from your minor children.—Titus 2:3."

When single parents establish proper boundaries and maintain a healthy relationship with their children, it is usually easier for them to let go.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Practical training can help children to become more responsible adults

own identity, to be accepted as individuals in their own right. Parents are therefore wise to view such attempts at achieving independence with understanding instead of always interpreting them as rebellion.

True, young ones are prone to act on impulse or to give in to "the desires incidental to youth." (2 Timothy 2:22) So a failure to set limits on youthful behavior can damage a child emotionally; he will fail to learn self-control and self-discipline. The Bible warns: "A boy let on the loose will be causing his mother shame." (Proverbs 29:15) But appropriate discipline, lovingly rendered, is beneficial and prepares a youth for the demands and pressures of adulthood. The Bible exhorts: "The one holding back his rod is hating his son, but the one loving him is he that does look for him with discipline." (Proverbs 13:24) Remember, though, that the essence of discipline is teaching and training —not punishing. The "rod" here likely refers to the staff used by shepherds to direct their flocks. (Psalm 23:4) It is a symbol of loving guidance—not harsh brutality.

Education for Life

Parental guidance is particularly needed when it comes to a child's education. Take an interest in your child's education. Help him to choose appropriate school courses and to make a responsible decision about

A family study of the Bible can give children the wisdom needed to cope with adult life

whether any supplementary education will be needed.*

Of course, the most important education of all is a spiritual education. (Isaiah 54:13) Children will need godly values to survive in the adult world. Their "perceptive powers" must be trained. (Hebrews 5:14) Parents can do much to help them in this regard. Families among Jehovah's Witnesses are encouraged to have a regular study of the Bible with their children. Following the example of Timothy's mother, who taught him the Scriptures from infancy, Witness parents likewise teach their small children.

A single parent named Barbara makes the family study of the Bible a most pleasant experience for her children. "That evening I make sure I give the children a nice meal, complete with a dessert they enjoy. I play the *Kingdom Melodies* tapes to set the right mood. Then, after opening with prayer, we usually study the *Watchtower* magazine. But if there is some special need, I can use such publications as *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*."* According to Barbara, studying the Bible helps her children to "get Jehovah's view of matters."

Yes, no greater gift can be given a child than a knowledge and understanding of God's Word, the Bible. It can "give to the inexperienced ones shrewdness, to a young man knowledge and thinking ability." (Proverbs 1:4) Thus armed, a young person enters adulthood capable of meeting new pressures and situations.

Even so, the departure of children signals a big change in the life-style of most parents. How they can successfully cope with the empty nest is discussed in our next article.

* See the series "Parents—You Have Homework Too!" in the September 8, 1988, issue of *Awake!*

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Living Happily in the Empty Nest

"FOR many of us," admitted one parent, "the final separation is a shock no matter how well prepared we are." Yes, as inevitable as a child's departure may be, when it actually does occur, dealing with it may not be so easy. One father tells of his own reaction after saying good-bye to his son: "For the first time in my life . . . , I just cried, and cried and cried."

For many parents the departure of their children leaves a huge void in their life—a gaping wound. Deprived of day-to-day contact with their children, some experience intense feelings of loneliness, pain, and loss. And parents may not be the only ones who are having a tough time adjusting. A couple named Edward and Avril remind us: "If there are still other children at home, they will also be feeling the loss." This couple's advice? "Give them your time and understanding. This will help them adjust."

Yes, life goes on. If you are to care for your remaining children—not to mention your job or domestic duties—you cannot allow yourself to get bogged down in grief. Let us look, therefore, at some ways to find happiness as your children leave home.

Focus on the Positive

Of course, if you feel sad or lonely and need to cry or to talk out your feelings with a sympathetic friend, by all means do so. The Bible says: "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down, but the good word is what makes it rejoice." (Proverbs 12:25) Sometimes others can give a fresh perspective on things. For example, a couple named Waldemar and Marianne advise: "View the matter, not as a loss, but as the successful achievement of a goal." What a positive way to look at things! "We are happy that we were able to rear our boys to be responsible adults," say a couple named Rudolf and Hilde.

Have you endeavored to raise your child "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah"? (Ephesians 6:4) Even if you have, you may

still have anxiety about his or her leaving. But to those who thus train their child, the Bible's assurance is that "even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Is it not immensely satisfying to see that your child has responded to your training? The apostle John said regarding his spiritual family: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth." (3 John 4) Perhaps you can have similar sentiments regarding your own child.

True, not all children respond to Christian training. If this turns out to be true of your grown-up child, it does not mean that you are a failure as a parent. Do not needlessly berate yourself if you have done your very best to raise him in a godly way. Realize that as an adult your child bears his own burden of responsibility before God. (Galatians 6:5) Maintain the hope that perhaps in time he will reconsider his choices and that the "arrow" will finally go where it was aimed. —Psalm 127:4.

Still a Parent!

While your child's departure heralds a significant change, it does not mean that your job as a parent is finished. Mental-health specialist Howard Halpern says: "You are the parent until the day you die, but giving and nurturing has to be redefined."

The Bible long ago acknowledged that parenting does not stop just because a child has grown up. Proverbs 23:22 says: "Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old." Yes, even when parents have "grown old" and their children are adults, parents can still be a significant influence in their children's lives. Of course, some adjustments need to be

A Word to Grown Children —Help Parents to Let Go

Leaving is normally easier to deal with than *being left behind*. So while you rejoice in your independence and adulthood, show kindness and understanding toward your parents if they are having difficulty adjusting. Assure them of your continued love and affection. A brief note, an unexpected gift, or a friendly telephone call can do much to cheer up a gloomy parent! Keep them apprised of significant events in your life. This lets them know that the family bonds are still strong.

As you face the pressures of adult life, likely you'll appreciate more than ever what your parents went through in caring for you. Perhaps this will move you to tell your parents: "Thank you for all that you've done for me!"

made. But all relationships need readjusting from time to time to keep them fresh and satisfying. So now that your children are grown, work at putting your relationship with them on a more adult footing. Interestingly, studies indicate that the parent-child relationship often *improves* once the children have left home! As children are brought face-to-face with the pressures of the real world, they often begin to see their parents in a new light. A German man named Hartmut says: "Now I understand my parents better and realize why they did things the way they did."

Avoid Meddling

Much damage can be done, however, if you become a meddler in your adult child's personal life. (Compare 1 Timothy 5:13.) One married woman who is experiencing great tensions with her in-laws laments: "We love them, but we just want to live our own lives and make our own decisions." Of course, no loving parent will stand by idly while an adult child plummets into disaster. But usually it is best to avoid giving unrequested parental advice, no matter how wise or well-meaning it is. This is especially true after a child marries.

Awake! gave this advice back in 1983: "Accept your *changed role.* You abandon your job as nursemaid when baby turns into toddler. Similarly, you must now trade the cherished role of caretaker for the role of *adviser.* Making decisions for your child at this stage of life would be as inappropriate as burping or breast-feeding him. As adviser, you have definite limitations. No longer can you effectively appeal to your authority as parent. ('Do it because I say so.') There must be respect for your child's adult status."*

You may not agree with all the decisions your child and his or her mate make. But respect for the sanctity of marriage can help you to temper your concern and avoid intruding unnecessarily. The truth is, it is usually best to let young couples work out their problems between themselves. Otherwise, you risk needless confrontation when giving unwanted advice to a son- or daughter-in-law who, at a fragile point in marriage, may be very sensitive to criticism. The above-mentioned *Awake!* article further advised: "Squash the temptation to make endless, unrequested suggestions, which can turn a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law into an enemy." Be supportive—not manipulative. By maintaining a good relationship, you make it easier for your child to approach you if advice is really needed.

Renew Marital Bonds

For many couples, the empty nest may also open up the possibility of increased marital happiness. The time and effort involved in successful parenting can be so consuming that couples neglect their own relationship. One wife says: "Now that the children are gone, Konrad and I are trying to get acquainted with each other all over again."

Freed from the day-to-day responsibilities of parenting, you may now have more time for each other. Observed one parent: "This new-found free time . . . allows us to focus more attention on who we are, to center on learning more about our relationships, and to begin to engage in activities which fill our needs." She adds: "It is a time of new learning and incredible growth, and though such times can be unsettling, they are also exhilarating."

Some couples also have greater financial freedom. Hobbies and careers that have been put on hold can now be pursued. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, many couples use their newfound freedom to pursue

* See the article "You Never Stop Being a Parent," in the February 8, 1983, issue of *Awake!*

"For the first time in my life . . . , I just cried, and cried and cried"

spiritual interests. A father named Hermann explains that after his children left home, he and his wife immediately turned their attention to resuming the full-time ministry.

Single Parents Letting Go

Adjusting to the empty nest can be especially difficult for single parents. Rebecca, a single mother of two, explains: "When our children go, we do not have a husband to give us company and love." A single parent may have found her children to be a source of emotional support. And if they were contributing to the household funds, their departure may also be a financial hardship.

Some manage to improve their lot economically by enrolling in job-training programs or short-term school courses. But how does one fill the void of loneliness? A single parent says: "What works for me is keeping myself occupied. It could be reading the Bible, cleaning my home, or just going for a good walk or run. But the most rewarding way for me to overcome loneliness is to talk to a spiritual friend." Yes, "widen out," and cultivate new and satisfying friendships. (2 Corinthians 6:13) 'Persist in supplications and prayers' when you feel overwhelmed. (1 Timothy 5:5) Be assured that Jehovah will strengthen and support you through this difficult period of adjustment.

Happily Letting Go

Whatever your situation, realize that life does not end when the children leave home. Nor do family ties dissolve. The healthy love described in the Bible is strong enough to hold people together, even when they are far apart. The apostle Paul reminds us that love "endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8) The unselfish love you have cultivated in your family will not fail simply because your children leave home.

Interestingly, when children begin facing the pangs of separation and homesickness or when they start feeling the pinch of economic pressures, they are often the first to reestablish contact. Hans and Ingrid advise: "Let the children know that the door to your home is always open." Regular visits, letters, or occasional telephone calls will help you keep in touch. "Be interested in what they are doing without prying into their affairs" is how Jack and Nora expressed it.

When children leave home, your life changes. But life in the empty nest can be busy, active, and fulfilling. Also, your relationship with your children changes. Yet, it can still be a happy and gratifying relationship. "The establishment of independence from parents," say Professors Geoffrey Leigh and Gary Peterson, "does not imply the loss of love, loyalty, or respect for parents. . . . Indeed, strong family ties often remain throughout the life cycle." Yes, you will never stop loving your children, and you will never stop being their parent. And because you have loved your children enough to let them go, you really have not lost them.

How I Cope With Stuttering

As told by Sven Sievers

I HAVE stuttered ever since I was a child. Looking back, I appreciate my parents' approach to the problem. When I stuttered, they always tried to concentrate on listening to what I wanted to say instead of correcting my way of speaking. According to speech therapists, parents who draw constant attention to their child's stutter may aggravate the disorder.*

My mother became one of Jehovah's Witnesses when I was three years old. In my teens I decided to follow her example and was helped to make a thorough study of the Bible. On July 24, 1982, I was baptized as a dedicated servant of God at a convention in Neumünster, Germany. Later, I moved to South Africa, where I continued to participate in the public preaching work, in which all true Christians are commanded to share. (Matthew 28:19, 20) How, you may wonder, do I manage as a stutterer?

Rewards for Being Positive

I must admit that sometimes it is hard for me to keep a positive attitude, but I have found that being positive really does make a big difference. The fact is that somehow I can always communicate. If not by speaking, I communicate by writing messages down or just by showing others Bible literature. A positive approach helps me overcome the difficulty of starting a conversation. I try to keep my introduction very simple. In the beginning of a conversation, I let the householder talk as much as possible. People like to talk, and this gives me the opportunity to get to know their way of thinking. Then, I continue the conversation with things that interest them, highlighting the Bible's message. Concentrating on what they are saying helps me forget about my speech problem, and I stutter less.

A positive approach also helps me speak up at Christian meetings. I have found that the more I participate in Bible discussions, the more the audience and the conductor get used to me and listen to what I say instead of how I am saying it.

To experience the joy of success, I have to keep on trying. This prevents me from succumbing to self-pity and becoming an introvert. Fighting self-pity is an ongoing battle. It has been said that if a person gets thrown from a horse, it is important for him to get back onto the horse so that he does not lose self-confidence. So if I have to stop speaking during a comment because I am completely

* See the article "Understanding the Fear of Stuttering," in our November 22, 1997, issue.

stuck, I try to get back onto the horse, as it were, by speaking up at the very next opportunity.

How Others Can Help

When I have to make phone calls or ask strangers for information, I do appreciate tactful help. But some individuals go overboard in their desire to be helpful, and they treat me like a child who is incapable of making decisions.

I also appreciate the help of my loving wife, Tracy. Before she acts as my "mouth," we discuss the situation in detail and she knows what I would like accomplished. (Compare Exodus 4:10, 14, 15.) In that way, she shows me respect as her husband, and she leaves me feeling that I am still in control of my own life.

Another great help has been the Theocratic Ministry School. At this weekly meeting, students share in public Bible reading and in giving short talks on Bible topics. I was surprised to find that I can often read and speak quite well in front of an audience. If I had not enrolled in the school, I would probably never have become aware of this ability.

When I have had assignments on the Theocratic Ministry School, it has been particularly encouraging when the instructor has concentrated on what I said and not on how I said it. I have greatly benefited from the *Theocratic Ministry School Guidebook,** even though certain aspects of this book present a much bigger challenge to those who stutter than to those with normal speech. For example, at times, because of the amount of stuttering, I am not able to finish my talk in the allotted time. It is very encouraging to me, though, when the instructor highlights points that I am capable of working on.

Greater Privileges of Service

In the past, I had the privilege of doing public reading from a Christian publication that we study at our meetings. I also had the privilege of conducting the study when no other qualified minister was present, and today I do so on a regular basis. Although initially nervous, I have experienced God's help in carrying out such assignments.

For many years, however, opportunities for me to read or teach from the congregation platform were limited. This was understandable, since there were times when I took too long to make myself understood. So I used my energies to the full in handling other assignments. At first, I served as an assistant in caring for the congregation's supply of *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. Then, after being appointed a ministerial servant, I took care of the supplies of Bibles, books, and other literature. Later, I was assigned to check on the territory cards that are used in our public witnessing work. Concentrating on these assignments, trying to do good work, brought me much joy.

For the past eight years, I have also served as a full-time evangelizer with Tracy. Jehovah has certainly blessed me in this aspect too. In fact, sometimes I wonder if Jehovah uses my weakness of stuttering. Of the five persons that I have had the privilege of helping to become dedicated Christians, two are stutterers.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Coping With Stroke

Does Christian Unity Allow for Variety?

The Troubadours —More Than Singers of Love Songs

I still remember with joy the day I was appointed to serve as a congregation elder. Although my teaching ability from the platform is limited, I try to concentrate on helping others on a personal basis. Stuttering does not limit my ability to do Scriptural research to help members of the congregation who are facing serious problems.

Over the past five years, I have been invited to handle more and more speaking assignments. Besides giving talks on the Theocratic Ministry School, I have been able to handle brief announcements at other meetings. Slowly my fluency improved. But then I had a bad relapse. Anxiously, I thought, 'I will not be given any more assignments,' but to my surprise, my name was on the next schedule! The presiding overseer of our congregation said that if I get so stuck that I can't continue, I can just look at him and he will come up to the platform and take over. I made use of this loving offer once or twice, but I have not had to do so in recent months.

As my speech improved, I was assigned longer parts, including public talks. I only fully realized the progress I had made when recently I was asked to take part in two demonstrations at a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Frankly, I do not fully understand why my speech has improved. Also, it might deteriorate again tomorrow. In fact, while I seem to have made definite progress in speaking from the platform, I have had bad relapses when speaking to people on a personal basis. So this is not a success story in the sense that I have conquered stuttering. When I suffer a relapse, I try to remind myself that I need to accept my limitations and 'be modest in walking with God.'—Micah 6:8.

Whatever the future might bring, I will keep on trying, knowing that in God's approaching new world, stuttering will be completely overcome. "The tongue of stammerers," the Bible says, "will be quick in speaking clear things." I am confident that this will be true in a literal as well as a spiritual sense and that even "the speechless one will cry out in gladness."—Isaiah 32:4; 35:6.

With my wife, Tracy

Visiting the Mountain Gorillas

By *Awake!* correspondent in Tanzania

ONLY about 320 of them live in the volcano area on the border of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another 300 dwell in the impenetrable forest in Uganda. They are the *mountain gorillas*—among the most critically endangered mammals in the world!

American zoologist Dian Fossey did much to arouse public concern over the fate of these creatures. Fossey came to Africa in the late 1960's to study mountain gorillas. At that time they were rapidly disappearing as a result of poaching. The plucky scientist took up a hermitlike existence in the Virunga Mountains, quickly befriending the gorillas who lived there. Fossey published her findings in magazine articles and in the book *Gorillas in the Mist*. As time passed, she became increasingly determined to protect her furry friends, waging a virtual war against poachers. However, she became a casualty of her own crusade and was murdered by an unknown assailant in 1985.

Spurred on by the hope of seeing these peaceable creatures ourselves, in 1993 my wife and I decided to venture into the gorilla habitat. Allow us, please, to relive our adventure.

It begins as our guides take us on a one-hour climb from the foot of the 12,000-foot-high Visoke volcano to the edge of Volcanoes National Park, in Rwanda. While we take a welcome break, our guides explain how we are to conduct ourselves around the

gorillas. We are told that only eight visitors per day are allowed to visit this particular group of animals. This minimizes the risk of their exposure to diseases and also prevents behavioral disturbances.

"Once we enter the forest," one guide reminds us, "we must keep our voices low. This will help us to observe the other animals and birds in the forest, for in addition to the mountain gorillas, there are golden monkeys, duikers, bushbuck, elephants, and even buffalo."

We are also made aware that there are stinging nettles and ants in the park and that we may have to walk in the misty and muddy bush. My wife and I look at each other. We are not equipped for that! But the friendly guides help out by lending us rain gear and boots.

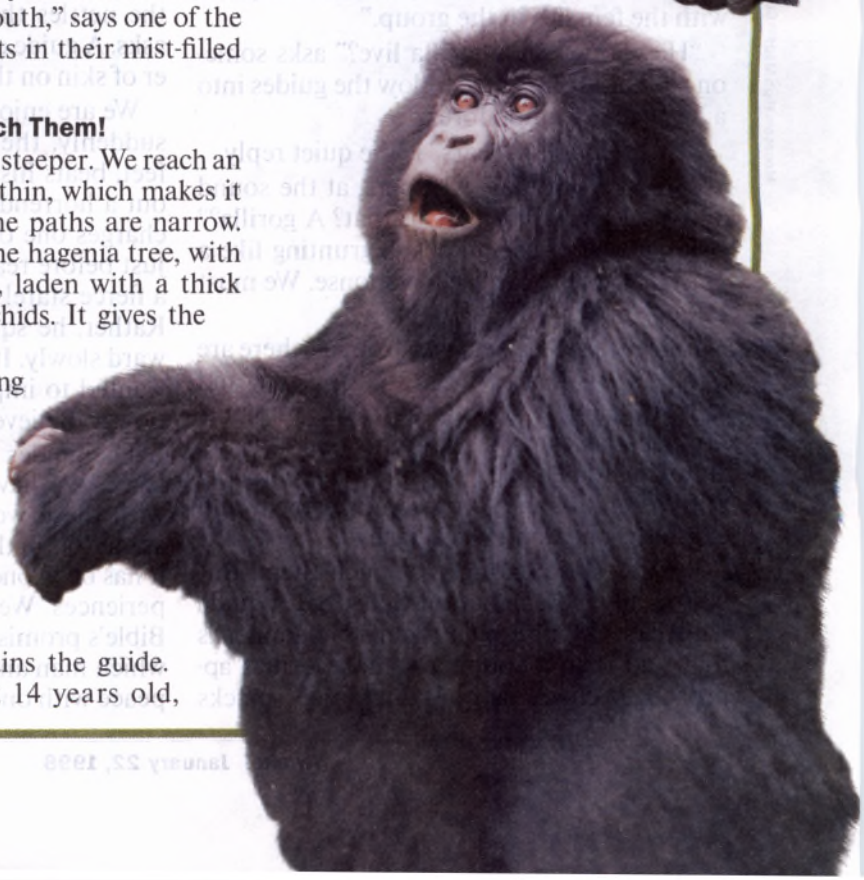
Our guide then explains that the gorillas are extremely susceptible to human diseases and that in order to protect them, anyone who is ill or knows that he may be carrying an infectious disease must stay behind. "If you feel the urge to cough or sneeze while with the gorillas, please turn away from the animals and try to cover your nose and mouth," says one of the guides. "Remember! We are guests in their mist-filled home."

Close Enough to Touch Them!

The climb becomes steeper and steeper. We reach an altitude of 10,000 feet. The air is thin, which makes it rather difficult to breathe, and the paths are narrow. But we can enjoy the beauty of the hagenia tree, with its horizontally spread branches, laden with a thick growth of mosses, ferns, and orchids. It gives the forest a paradiselike beauty.

The guides now begin searching for the spot where the gorillas were seen the day before, although the gorillas are constantly on the move looking for fresh food. "Look over there!" someone exclaims. Matted down in the soft vegetation is the bed, or nest, of the silverback gorilla.

"He is called *Umugome,*" explains the guide. "When a male gorilla is about 14 years old,



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the back turns white like silver. He is then considered the leader of the group. It is only the silverback that mates with all the female gorillas. Younger ones who try are immediately dismissed! However, if a rival manages to kill the silverback, he also kills all the offspring. Then, the new leader takes over and produces offspring with the females in the group."

"How long can a gorilla live?" asks someone in our group as we follow the guides into a beautiful bamboo forest.

"Up to about 40 years" is the quiet reply.

"Sh! Sh!" someone whispers, at the sound of a deep grunt. "What was that? A gorilla?" No, but one of the guides is grunting like a gorilla, trying to arouse a response. We must be very close!

Indeed, only 15 feet away from us, there are about 30 of them! We are told to squat and to be quiet. "Don't point at them," implores a guide, "as they might think that you are throwing something at them. Please don't cry out. When taking pictures, move slowly and carefully, and don't use a flash."

We are close enough to touch them! But before anyone can act on that urge, a guide whispers: "Don't touch them!" No sooner is that said than a couple of small gorillas approach to check us out. The guide smacks them gently with a small branch, and the curious youngsters roll down the slope, wrestling like small children. "Mom" intervenes when the play gets too rough.

The silverback is watching us from a distance. Suddenly, he moves toward us and sits down, just a few yards from where we sit. He is huge and must weigh about 450 pounds! He is too busy eating to pay us much attention, although he keeps an eye on us. Actually, eating is a gorilla's main activity! A silverback may eat up to 65 pounds of food a day. And every animal in the group is busy looking for food from morning till evening. Sometimes one can see them fighting over "goodies" they have found.

Their favorite food is the marrow of the giant senecio plant. They also enjoy wild celery, the roots of certain plants, and bamboo shoots. Sometimes they even make a "salad," mixing bamboo shoots with green leaves of thistles, nettles, galium, and various roots and vines. "Why aren't the gorillas stung by the nettles they grab and clean?" someone asks. A guide explains: "They have a thick layer of skin on the insides of their palms."

We are enjoying this peaceful scene when, suddenly, the huge male stands up on his feet, beats his chest with his fists, and gives out a horrendous, nerve-racking scream! He charges one of the guides, braking to a halt just before reaching him. He gives the guide a fierce stare! But our guide does not panic. Rather, he squats, grunts, and moves backward slowly. It seems that the silverback just wanted to impress us with his strength and power. Believe me, he succeeded!

The guides now signal us to get ready to leave. We have spent a little over an hour with these wonderful, peaceable creatures, as guests "in the mist." Though brief, our visit has been one of our most unforgettable experiences. We cannot help but think of the Bible's promise of the coming new world, in which man and beast will permanently be at peace with one another!—Isaiah 11:6-9.

Young People Ask...

What if My Parents Oppose My Marriage?

Lakesha and her boyfriend are thinking of getting married, but her mother doesn't approve. "I will turn 19 this year," says Lakesha, "but my mom insists that we wait until I'm 21."

IF YOU are planning to get married, it is only natural to want your parents to be happy for you. It can really hurt when your parents do not approve of your choice of a mate. What should you do? Ignore their wishes, and forge ahead with your marriage plans?*

This may be tempting if you are of age and legally able to marry without parental consent. Nevertheless, the Bible sets no age limit on showing honor and respect to one's parents. (Proverbs 1:8) And if you ignore their feelings, you could do lasting damage to your relationship with them. Furthermore, there is also the possibility—perhaps even a likelihood—that your parents have sound reasons for opposing your marriage.

How Young Is Too Young?

For example, are your parents telling you that you are too young to marry? Well, the Bible sets no minimum age for marriage. But it does recommend that before marrying, one should be "past the bloom of youth"—the years following puberty when sexual desires are at their peak. (1 Corinthians 7:36) Why? Because such young people are just in the early stages of developing the emotional maturity, self-control, and spiritual qualities necessary to handle married life.—Compare 1 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:22, 23.

When 20-year-old Dale decided to marry, he was dismayed at his parents' opposition. "They said I was too young and lacking in experience," he states. "I felt we were ready and could learn as we went along, but my parents wanted to be sure that I wasn't acting solely on emotion. They asked many questions. Was I ready to handle the day-to-day decisions, the finances, the reality of providing for a family in a material, emotional, and spiritual way? Was I ready to become a parent? Had I really learned how to communicate? Did I really understand the needs of a mate? They felt I should get to know myself better as an adult before I could start caring for another adult.

"Though we did not want to wait, we postponed our marriage in order to give ourselves the time to mature. When we finally did

* The information in this article is directed to youths in lands where it is traditional for one to pick one's own marriage mate.

marry, we entered the relationship with a better foundation and more to offer each other."

When Religious Differences Are the Concern

When Terri developed romantic feelings for a man who did not share her chosen religious faith, she dated him secretly. After announcing their plans to marry, Terri was distraught to find that her mother was opposed to the marriage. "I don't want my mother to feel this way about me," lamented Terri. "I want us still to have that mother-and-daughter relationship."

But who was really hindering that relationship? Was Terri's mother being mean or unreasonable? No, she was merely upholding the Bible's counsel to Christians to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) In fact, the Bible commands: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14, 15) Why so?

For one thing, religious harmony is a very important factor in a happy and successful marriage. Experts say that the stresses and strains common to interfaith marriages often lead to divorce. A greater concern, though, is the possibility of being pressured to compromise one's religious beliefs—or to abandon them altogether. Even if an unbelieving mate did not interfere with your worship, you would still have to live with the heartache of being unable to share your deepest convictions with him or her. Does this sound like the formula for marital bliss?

Terri therefore had a tough decision to make. "I love Jehovah God," Terri said, "but I don't want to lose my boyfriend." You simply cannot have it both ways. You cannot compromise God's standards and still enjoy his favor and blessing.

Perhaps, though, your parents are opposed to your marrying a certain fellow Christian. Is it possible to be unevenly yoked to a *believer?* Yes, if that person does not share your spiritual goals or devotion to God. If that is the case or if that person is not "well reported on" by the brothers in his or her congregation, your parents may rightly have concerns about your marrying that person. —Acts 16:2.

What About Racial or Cultural Differences?

Lynn's parents raised objections for a different reason: She wanted to marry a man of a different race. What does the Bible teach in this regard? It tells us that "God is not partial" and that "he made out of one man every nation of men." (Acts 10:34, 35; 17:26) Humans have a common origin and are of equal value in God's sight.

Even so, while all married couples suffer "tribulation in their flesh," interracial couples may experience additional challenges. (1 Corinthians 7:28) Why? Because many people in today's hate-filled world do not accept God's viewpoint on race. While interracial marriages have become increasingly commonplace in some Western lands, there are still areas where mixed couples encounter strong prejudice. Your parents may therefore fear that you are not equipped to deal with such pressures.

"My folks thought it would be very hard on us," admits Lynn. Wisely, Lynn showed respect for their feelings and did not rush into marriage. As her parents observed Lynn's maturity and became better acquainted with the man she loved, they gradually began to feel reasonably confident that she could handle the pressures of this marriage. Says Lynn: "Once they felt we could be truly happy together, they also were happy for us."

Sometimes, though, the issue is not race but culture. Your parents may be concerned that, in the long run, you would find it difficult to enjoy living with someone whose life-style, expectations, and tastes in food,

Your parents may feel that you are too young to get married

music, and entertainment are so different from yours. In any event, marrying someone of a different race or of a different culture can present big challenges. Are you really up to meeting them?

When a Parent's Opposition Seems Unreasonable

But what if you feel that your parents are being totally unreasonable in their opposition? A young woman named Faith says of her mother: "Mom has been divorced several times. She says you can never really know the person you marry until it's too late. She is convinced I won't be happy in marriage." Oftentimes, parents who have had poor marriages themselves are not able to view their child's marriage objectively. In some instances, parents have questionable motives for opposing their child's marriage, such as a desire to maintain control of the child's life.

If your parents are unwilling to listen to reason, what can you do? Among Jehovah's Witnesses, congregation elders can be called upon for assistance in settling family problems. Without taking sides, they can help family members talk matters out in a calm, peaceful, and productive way.—James 3:18.

Seeking Peace

Of course, many other factors could ignite your parents' opposition to your marrying, such as financial concerns or a prospective mate's personality. And in the age of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, your parents may rightfully be concerned for your health if your intended led a promiscuous life before becoming a Christian.*

As long as you live in your parents' home, you are obligated to recognize their authority over you. (Colossians 3:20) But even if you are on your own and old enough to make your own decisions, do not be quick to dismiss your parents' concerns. Be willing to listen. (Proverbs 23:22) Carefully weigh the possible consequences of getting married. —Compare Luke 14:28.

After doing so, you may well decide that you still want to get married. Naturally, you will have to bear the full responsibility for such a decision. (Galatians 6:5) If you have made every effort to consider your parents' point of view, perhaps they will be moved to support your decision, albeit reluctantly. But if they continue to voice objections, try not to become bitter or angry. Remember: Your parents love you and care about your future happiness. Keep trying to make peace with them. As you make a success of your marriage, perhaps their attitude will soften.

On the other hand, if you truly consider everything your parents have to say and take a hard look at yourself and the person you are so eager to wed, don't be surprised if you come to the startling conclusion that your parents may be right after all.

* See the article "Helping Those With AIDS," in the March 22, 1994, issue of *Awake!*

The Versatile *Chitenge*

THE *chitenge*—do you know what it is? If you can spare some time, come on a short trip to an African village and see the versatile *chitenge* at work and at play.

The village we are visiting is Rundu, Namibia. Our first stop is the bustling marketplace. Women with shining faces bargain, buy, sell, or just stop to chat. But look a little closer, and you will notice that almost all of them are wearing a distinctive item of clothing, a wraparound skirt known as a *chitenge*.

The cotton *chitenge* is six and a half feet long and five feet wide and sports a limitless variety of color and design. Some are decorated with pictures of animals, and others, with people or landscapes.

Next, we visit some of the villagers at their neatly made mud and thatch homes. The women are busy with their chores—raking the sand in front of their home or preparing the fire for the family meal. Some are wearing only a *chitenge*, this time pulled up high and wrapped over the chest as a sort of dressing gown. When the women get dressed—perhaps putting on a blouse and a skirt—they will wrap a *chitenge* around their hips to keep their skirt from getting dirty when they are walking the dusty village roads.

Did you notice that attractive young woman? She has woven a *chitenge*—all six and a half feet of it—into an intricate and pretty turban. And notice how she is carrying her baby. She has tied another *chitenge* as a sling and wears it over one shoulder. Her baby is quite happy to be carried this way on Mother's back. If he starts to cry, she simply pulls the sling in front of her and breast-feeds or

BY *AWAKE!* CORRESPONDENT IN NAMIBIA

comforts him while she continues walking.

You may also have seen her knot her money into a corner of her wraparound skirt —a convenient purse. After making her purchases, she unties a spare *chitenge,* puts the vegetables in it, expertly ties them in the material, and places the grocery bag on her head to carry it home.

When she enters her home, you will observe other ingenious uses for this versatile cloth. In front of each doorway hangs a brightly colored *chitenge.* As you can see, there are no interior walls. A length of string is tied from one end of the dwelling to the other, and four *chitenges* are hung from it, dividing the living area from the bedroom.

Our hostess puts down her vegetables and realizes that she is out of firewood. Before she goes into the bush to collect a bundle of wood, she makes sure she has an extra *chitenge* with her. After collecting the firewood, she uses one *chitenge* to tie all the pieces together. Then she takes another *chitenge* and weaves it tightly into a thick, doughnut-shaped ring, which she places on her head. This serves as an excellent cushion when she puts the large bundle of wood on her head and carries it home.

Once our friend has her food simmering, she decides she has time to pay her next-door neighbors a short visit. While she is talking and gesturing, she lays her *chitenge* on the ground like a blanket and places her baby on it. He rewards his mother with a bright smile as she gives him a stick to play with.

All too soon our friend has to leave to check on the food. But the sky has darkened, and suddenly it starts to rain. Unconcerned, she takes her baby in one arm and resourcefully drapes the *chitenge* over her head. With her instant umbrella over them, she heads home to check on the food.

Skirt, dressing gown, purse, grocery bag, cushion, blanket, umbrella, child-carrier, turban—the uses for the *chitenge* seem limitless and are a testimony to the ingenuity of these African people.

The "chitenge" has many uses: as a wrapping for firewood, a sling to hold the baby, a pretty turban, a colorful blanket

Georgia

An Ancient Heritage Preserved

BY *AWAKE!* CORRESPONDENT

HOW would you like to live in a country of productive valleys nestled among 15,000-foot-high snow-capped mountains, where some people live to the age of 100 and beyond? For the inhabitants of Georgia, this is not just a dream. It is a reality.

Georgia lies along the geographic and cultural border between Europe and Asia. In ancient times, Georgia was an important stage on the famous Silk Road, the same one that Marco Polo took to China. Georgia benefited financially and culturally from this connection between East and West, but sometimes invaders also found it worth their while to pass this way. By one count, Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, has been destroyed 29 times! Today, Tbilisi is a bustling and cheerful city, boasting a subway and modern buildings mingled with long-standing architectural monuments.

Some 87 percent of the Georgian terrain is mountainous. Down from the icy and desolate high country and through the lowlands

Pat O'Hara/Corbis

flow 25,000 rivers, many full of trout. More than a third of the country is forested or covered with brush. The Caucasus mountain range on Georgia's northern border shields the interior of the country from frigid weather coming from the north. This situation allows western Georgia to be warmed by the moist air from the Black Sea—one reason why Georgia has been a favorite destination for vacationers. The mild climate has also contributed to one of the world's oldest and finest wine-making traditions. In fact, Georgia produces over 500 different varieties of grapes and wine!

Georgia's greatest asset, however, is its people. They have been known through the ages for their valor, intelligence, and open-handed hospitality, as well as for their humor and love of life. Their culture is rich in song and dance, and folk songs are still frequently sung around the table in Georgian homes.

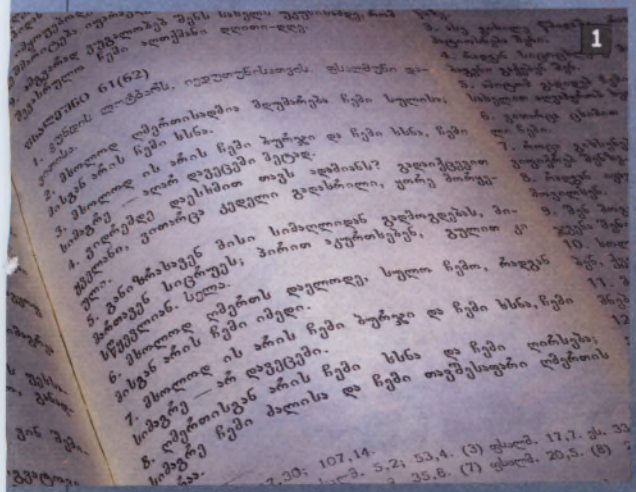
Georgia also has a long literary history, dating from the fifth century. Georgian was one of the earliest languages into which the Bible was translated, using the unique and beautiful Georgian alphabet. All this culture forges a living link with Georgia's past—an ancient heritage preserved in a modern country.

Dean Conger/Corbis

1. Georgian Bible

2. Some residents live to the age of 100 and beyond!

3. A busy street in Tbilisi



The Spineless Yucca

A Uniquely Adaptable Plant

BY *AWAKE!* CORRESPONDENT IN COSTA RICA

HERBACEOUS, soapy, delicious, and nutritious. This exotic plant is all of these and much more! It is well-known by Central Americans but not as spineless yucca. If you were to use that term in Central America, most people would likely respond with a polite and inquisitive stare. However, a broad smile of recognition would appear immediately if you mentioned *itabo, izote,* or *daguillo,* as the plant is commonly known in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Costa Ricans and other Central Americans savor its flowers in a variety of dishes.

Member of a Distinguished Family

In what seems to be a tug-of-war, the spineless yucca has been classified by taxonomists as a member of the Liliaceae family and more recently as a member of the Agavaceae family. The latter category of rugged plants comprises some 550 species from the Liliales (lily) order. Botanists have identified its scientific name as *Yucca elephantipes.*

There are an estimated 40 species of the *Yucca* genus, which for the most part may be found in North America, Mexico, and Central and South America. Well-known relatives include the giant Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) and the smaller Spanish bayonet (*Yucca aloifolia*). Quite a large family indeed!

What are some distinguishing features of this versatile plant? Rustic yet exotic in appearance, its rigid, elongated leaves

Yucca flowers cooked with eggs and potatoes, a favorite dish in Central America

Yuccas growing in the countryside resemble trees

thrust some three feet outward from the trunk. The stocky, woody trunk, with its fibrous texture and grayish-brown color, resembles an elephant's foreleg—thus, the scientific name *elephantipes.*

At first glance, the spineless yucca, reaching heights of from 15 to 25 feet, can easily be mistaken for a tree. During Costa Rica's dry season, particularly the months of February and March, hundreds of bell-shaped, creamy-ivory flowers crown the *itabo* plant. Sold in marketplaces and by street vendors, they seem to be just about everywhere at the same time! In stark contrast to the plant's stiff, bayonet-like leaves, these soft and delicate flowers blossom in panicles, boldly stationing themselves right in the center of the plant, erect and at attention.

The *itabo* is one of the favorite species of yucca among gardeners and landscapers alike, for it adapts to various climatic and soil conditions and provides an exotic, tropical appearance. Once used as natural fencing for land demarcation in Costa Rica, it is no wonder that the prolific *itabo* plant abounds in practically every region of the country.

The local people have certainly taken advantage of this plant's versatility. For instance, the fibers extracted from the leaves are used to make mats, belts, and knapsacks. Also, if the leaves are heated to a pliable consistency, gardeners can use them as handy ties for produce. It seems that there is no end to what this plant can do!

Deliciously Edible!

Frances Perry, author of *Flowers of the World,* writes: "The flower buds of *Yucca* species are eaten by the Indians, and the fruits and the roots have saponifying [soapy] properties so may be used for washing clothes." Central Americans have made good use of the yucca's culinary and cleansing attributes. They delight in its somewhat sour yet tangy taste. The flowers are prepared in cold salads or cooked with eggs and potatoes, a favorite among Costa Ricans and other Central Americans. Yuccas have nutritional value because they are rich in vitamins and minerals, such as calcium, iron, thiamine, phosphorus, and riboflavin.

Noteworthy too are the yucca's medicinal properties; a tonic made by boiling and steeping the flowers is soothing to the stomach. The leaves can be used to treat albuminuria and colitis and can also be used as a diuretic. And this herbaceous, soapy, delicious, and nutritious plant is only one of earth's creations that our taste buds can enjoy!

Marriage on the Decline

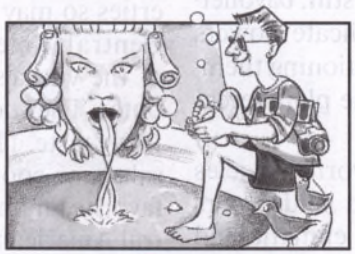
In Canada, marriage as an institution is rapidly declining. According to a Statistics Canada report, in the last 15 years, "the number of Canadians simply living together has almost tripled from 700,000 to 2 million—an annual growth rate six times that of marriage," says *The Toronto Star*. Additionally, "half of all first unions in Canada are now common-law and the number soars to four out of every five in Quebec." Why the change? Common-law unions are "evidently part of a social revolution, one of a series of rejections of institutions founded on a social order that is falling out of fashion," says the report. The newspaper article noted that "living together was once viewed as a trial marriage, but is now seen as an alternative to it."

"The Moses Effect"

Two physicists from Japan have successfully parted water in a laboratory, reports *New Scientist*. Masakazu Iwasaka and Shogo Ueno, of the University of Tokyo, used powerful electric coils to create a strong magnetic field around a horizontal tube partially filled with water. The magnetic field, some 500,000 times stronger than that of the earth, forced the water to rush to the ends of the cylinder, leaving a dry section in the middle. The phenomenon, which the scientists first discovered in 1994, has been duplicated by physicists in Europe and the United States. How does it work? According to Koichi Kitazawa, a colleague at the University of Tokyo, water "has a mild distaste for being magnetised. So a powerful magnet repels water, and drives it from places where the magnetic field is high to others where it is low." Kitazawa has dubbed the phenomenon "The Moses Effect."

Ill-Mannered Tourists

Italy's rich cultural heritage makes it a popular tourist destination. Unfortunately, vacationers there often let their guard down when it comes to good manners. According to Mario Lolli Ghetti, Florence's commissioner for environmental and architectural heritage, "many feel authorized to do things they would never dream of doing at home." Therefore, the city of Florence has produced a "Charter of Tourists' Rights and Duties," which reminds visitors of



what they can and cannot do, reports *La Repubblica*. Here are some reminders: Do not bathe or put your feet in the fountains; do not picnic in front of monuments and museums; do not throw cans or chewing gum on the ground; do not wear sleeveless T-shirts when visiting museums; and do not sunbathe in swimwear in historical gardens and squares. Of course, well-mannered tourists are still appreciated and welcome.

Baby-Feeding Dilemma

"For two decades, doctors and public health agencies have offered uniform advice to new mothers in poorer countries: Breast-feed your babies to protect their health," says *The New York Times*. "But now, the AIDS pandemic is upsetting that simple equation. Studies are showing that mothers infected with the AIDS virus can transmit it through breast milk at significant rates. . . . The United Nations recently estimated that one-third of all infants with H.I.V. got the virus through their mothers' milk." The alternative is an infant formula, but that has its own problems. In many nations mothers have lacked the means to afford the formula or to sterilize bottles and do not have access to clean water. As a result, babies suffer from diarrhea and dehydration as well as from respiratory and gastrointestinal disease. Poor families water down the product, resulting in malnutrition of babies. Health officials are now struggling to balance both issues. Worldwide, there are over 1,000 new cases of HIV infection among infants and children each day.

World's Sanitation Level Worsens

"Nearly three billion people, more than half the world's population, do not have access to even a minimally sanitary toilet," reports *The New York Times*. These findings, part of the *Progress of Nations* annual survey conducted by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), also reveal that "sanitation statistics are among those getting

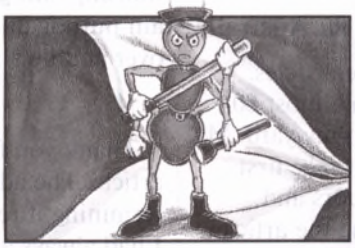
worse worldwide, not better." For example, some countries that have made progress in providing clean water for the poor fall short when it comes to sewage disposal. This lack of basic hygiene adds significantly to the spread of new plagues and to the renewal of old diseases, says the report. It is estimated that over two million children die every year from illnesses related to unsanitary conditions. Akhtar Hameed Khan, author of the study, says: "When you have a medieval level of sanitation, you have a medieval level of disease."

Home Is Most Important

Is day care—supervision of children by others while the parents work—good for children? That is what a U.S. study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development wanted to find out. Prominent child-care researchers at 14 universities kept track of 1,364 children from birth to age three. More than 20 percent of the children were cared for by their mothers at home; the rest were sent to day-care centers or to the homes of paid baby-sitters. The results? "The researchers found that children in high-quality day care—the kind in which adults talk to them a lot in a responsive way—have a slight advantage over kids in less attentive settings when it comes to language and learning abilities," notes *Time* magazine. "But the chief conclusion was that the impact of day care was far less important to the mental and emotional development of the children than was the character of their family life. . . . Researchers calculated that just 1% of the differences among children could be traced to day-care factors but 32% could be explained by the differing quality of their experiences within their families. What's the message? Home is the learning center that counts."

Unusual Friendship

Scientists have long marveled at the relationship between ants and African acacia trees. The trees provide the ants with food and shelter. The ants, in turn, attack insects that cause damage to the trees and sting animals that browse on the leaves. The trees appear to depend on this protection for their survival. But the trees also need flying



insects to pollinate their flowers. In view of this, how do pollinating insects get the chance to perform their task? According to the science journal *Nature,* when the trees are in "peak flower fertility," they give off a chemical that seems to deter the ants. This allows insects to visit the flowers "at the crucial moment." Then, after the flowers have been pollinated, the ants return to their guard duty.

Gutenberg Bible Discovered

A section of a Bible printed in the 15th century by Johannes Gutenberg has been discovered in a church archive at Rendsburg, Germany. Following its discovery early in 1996, the 150-page section of the Bible was closely examined before being pronounced a genuine Gutenberg, reports the *Wiesbadener Kurier.* Worldwide, 48 Gutenberg Bibles are known to exist, of which 20 are complete. "The famous two-volume Bibles printed by Johannes Gutenberg are regarded as the first major work in book printing," the newspaper says. The latest discovery "still has its original book chain intact, with which the Bible was fastened to the pulpit to prevent it being stolen."

Living Longer

What does it take to stay healthy and live longer? "A personality tendency to preserve a consistent mood that is largely free of psychological distress promotes physical health much more than exercise or eating habits do," says Dr. George Vaillant of Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston. Vaillant's contention is based on an ongoing study of over 230 men who were originally recruited in 1942. At age 52, the men who were in good health were divided into three groups: those considered to be "distressed" (they had abused alcohol, regularly used tranquilizers, or consulted a psychiatrist), "undistressed" (they had never abused alcohol, ingested mood-altering drugs, or consulted a psychiatrist), and "intermediate" (they were between the other two groups). At 75 years of age, "only 5 percent of the [undistressed] had died, compared to 25 percent of the intermediate group, and 38 percent of the distressed men," reports *Science News.* Certainly, maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly help to promote good health. But "longevity, at least for men, seems to depend on a penchant for emotional stability that wards off extreme pangs of depression," says *Science News.*

FROM OUR READERS

Global Garden I must say thank you for the beautiful series "A Global Garden —Dream or Future Reality?" (April 8, 1997) Yes, gardens and colors can affect our health and make us feel joyful. I loved the part entitled "The Way Home to Paradise." Those few words were so encouraging—like an invitation saying, "This is the way." What a pleasure it will be someday to work from sunup to sundown helping to transform earth into paradise! As I enjoy painting, drawing, and crafts, I also take delight in all the artwork in the magazines.

V. R., Australia

I wish to commend you for the articles. I thoroughly enjoyed them. I am almost 80 years old and still like to work in my yard. My flowers and vegetables would not take first prize, but I do enjoy being outdoors and working with them. Since reading the articles, I understand better why humans like to work in gardens.

R. R., United States

Save a Marriage? When I read the article "Can a Marriage Be Saved After Infidelity?" (April 8, 1997), I had the impression that Jehovah was sending me a letter. It expressed exactly what I went through and what I felt. My husband was unfaithful, but he sincerely repented. As the article mentioned, I felt as if I were in a hurricane. I chose to forgive him, but I was sometimes ashamed of my thoughts. The article helped me understand that my reactions were totally normal and legitimate. Jehovah has greatly blessed our efforts, and our marriage has been saved.

L. P., France

While my marriage could not be saved, this article was a real blessing because it described exactly how I felt. I really could identify with everything in the article. I also know others who have likewise benefited from it. Many find it hard to understand how it feels, so this article will be of great help, offering them insight.

M. C., Ireland

I have been married for nine years to an unbeliever who has been an unfaithful mate. But when I read the paragraphs under the subheading "Is the Marriage Salvageable?" I felt much better. My husband would like to keep our marriage but with the other relationship still going on. So, I am happy that I am putting an end to it. Now I have to start over and be a single mom.

M. S. B., Trinidad

Thank you for the beautiful and sensitive article. The advice was excellent to use in determining if reconciliation will be successful. I had always assumed that if my husband was unfaithful, I could never forgive him. I realize now that that's not always the right answer. It's a shame that this obviously is an ever-growing problem, but thank you for Scriptural insight into how we can help ourselves. My reliance on Jehovah helped me through deep depression and helped me find strength to forgive, since my husband was (and still is) deeply repentant.

S. N., United States

Deaf Praise Jehovah While reading the article "The Deaf Praise Jehovah" (April 8, 1997), I stopped to look at the picture of all in attendance. How faith-strengthening it was just to see so many brothers and sisters using sign language to praise Jehovah! I was moved to tears several times, as I greatly appreciate their zeal, determination, and dedication. Thank you for such articles.

R. H., United States

PLANT VARIETIES DISAPPEARING Why?

IN China, nearly 10,000 varieties of wheat were cultivated in 1949. By the 1970's, however, only 1,000 were still in use. In the United States, of the 7,098 apple varieties reportedly used between 1804 and 1904, about 86 percent have been lost. Additionally, according to the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,* "95 percent of the cabbage, 91 percent of the field maize, 94 percent of the pea, and 81 percent of the tomato varieties apparently no longer exist." Similar statistics are reported in countries the world over. Why the sudden drop? Some say that a chief cause is the spread of modern commercial agriculture and the subsequent demise of the small family farm, which has resulted in the loss of traditional, highly variable varieties of crops.

The loss of plant varieties can make crops increasingly vulnerable to failure. For example, consider Ireland's great potato famine of 1845-49, during which some 750,000 people died of starvation when a plant disease wiped out most of the potato crop. The biological trigger for this tragedy? "Genetic uniformity," says a United Nations report.

Over 1,000 gene banks were built worldwide during the 1970's and 1980's to amass and preserve plant genetic resources. But a number of these gene banks are deteriorating rapidly, and some of them have already closed. Reportedly, only about 30 countries now have facilities suitable for secure long-term storage and conservation of plant seeds.

The Bible promises that under Christ's Kingdom rule, Jehovah "will certainly make for all the peoples . . . a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow." (Isaiah 25:6) How thankful we can be that Jehovah God, "the One giving food to all flesh" and the Creator of genetic diversity, will satisfy man's every food requirement!—Psalm 136:25; Genesis 1:29.

"You Are Doing a Great Service to the People"

A man from Goa, India, obtained two copies of *Awake!* from two of Jehovah's Witnesses who called at his home. After reading them, he wrote the following letter to the publishers of the magazine:

"I must thank the two ladies who called at my residence the other day and left copies of *Awake!* magazine. Thinking they were propaganda, I did not pay attention to them for some time. But one day I glanced at one of the magazines, on 'The Amazon Rain Forest' (March 22, 1997). I started to read it and could not put the magazine aside until I had read it completely and carefully.

"I found the material in *Awake!* to be very interesting and informative. The variety of subjects also fascinated me. What I appreciated the most was the very rational and balanced approach of the various articles."

This first-time reader of *Awake!* added: "You are doing a great service to the people by bringing such valuable information to their doorstep."