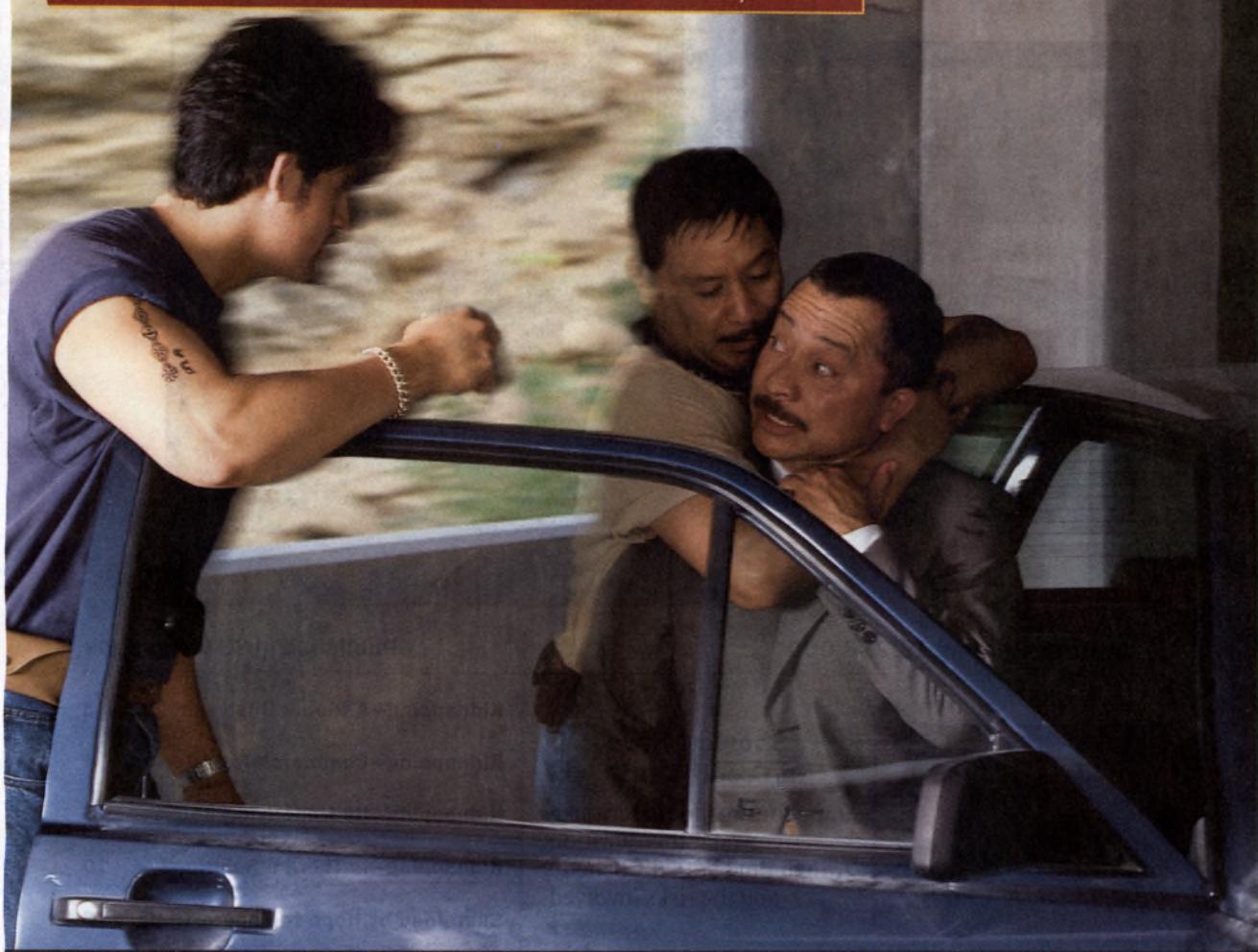


Awake!

December 22, 1999



KIDNAPPING

WHY A GLOBAL THREAT

KIDNAPPING

Why a Global Threat 3-12

What should you do if you or a loved one is kidnapped? What are underlying causes for the upsurge in kidnappings? Is there a solution?



Average Printing 19,288,000

Published in 83 Languages



Photo: David Johnson



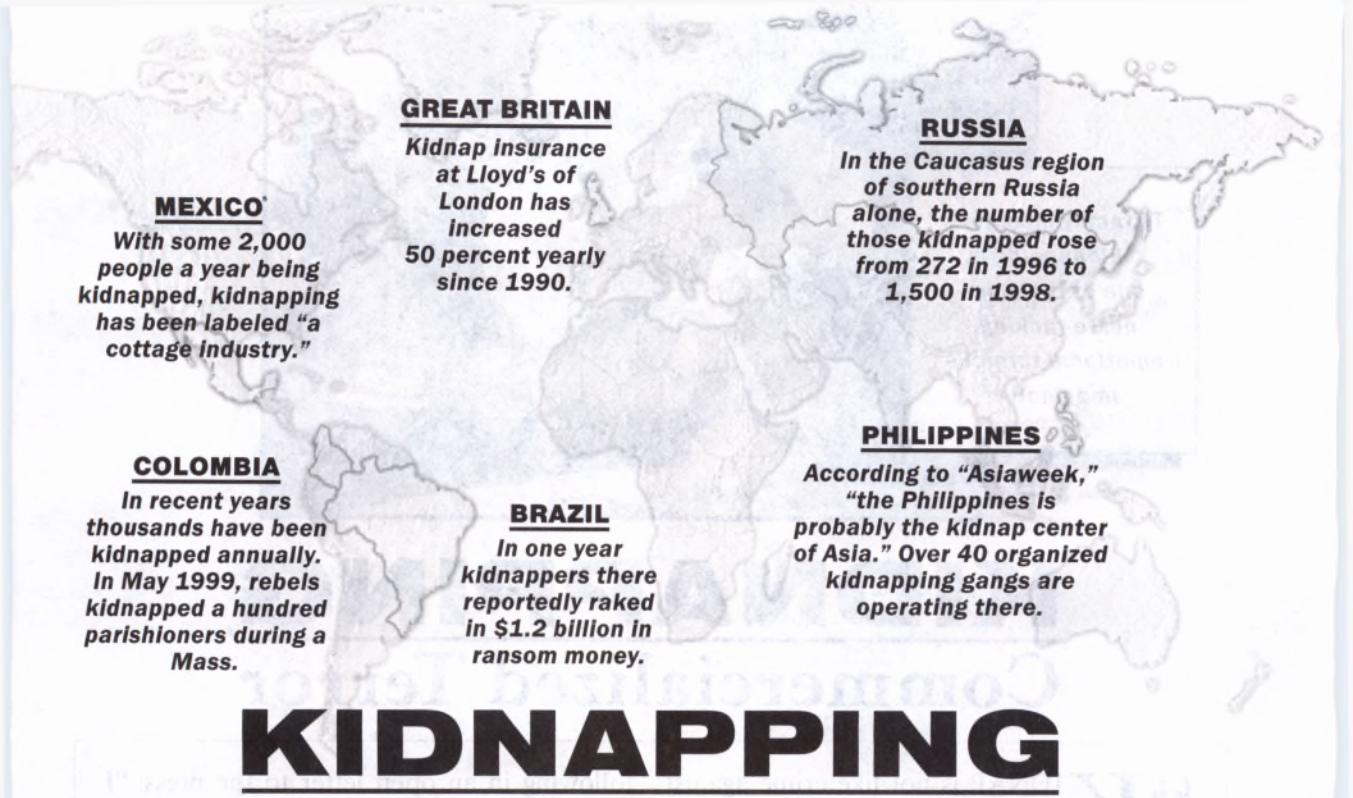
Should I Have a Credit Card? 17

Youths should seriously consider this question, including both the benefits and the risks involved.

Labyrinths and Mazes—Why So Intriguing? 20

You will be fascinated by their size and complexity, their significance to the ancients, and their use by churches of Christendom.

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MEXICO

With some 2,000 people a year being kidnapped, kidnapping has been labeled "a cottage industry."

GREAT BRITAIN

Kidnap insurance at Lloyd's of London has increased 50 percent yearly since 1990.

RUSSIA

In the Caucasus region of southern Russia alone, the number of those kidnapped rose from 272 in 1996 to 1,500 in 1998.

COLOMBIA

In recent years thousands have been kidnapped annually. In May 1999, rebels kidnapped a hundred parishioners during a Mass.

BRAZIL

In one year kidnappers there reportedly raked in \$1.2 billion in ransom money.

PHILIPPINES

According to "Asiaweek," "the Philippines is probably the kidnap center of Asia." Over 40 organized kidnapping gangs are operating there.

KIDNAPPING

A Global Business

DURING the past decade, a remarkable surge in kidnappings has taken place worldwide. One report says that between 1968 and 1982, nearly a thousand hostages were taken in 73 countries. But in the late 1990's, an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 people were kidnapped each year.

Kidnapping is a crime that seems to be in fashion among criminals from Russia to the Philippines, with kidnappers ready to grab at anything that moves. On one occasion a baby barely one day old was kidnapped. In Guatemala an 84-year-old woman in a wheelchair was abducted and held captive for two months. In Rio de Janeiro, street thugs are snatching people right off the street, sometimes demanding as little as \$100 in ransom.

Not even animals seem to be safe. Years ago some brazen criminals in Thailand kidnapped a six-ton working elephant and de-

manded a \$1,500 ransom. Criminal gangs in Mexico are said to encourage their young members to practice on pets and domestic animals to get adequate experience before they go for the real thing.

In the past, kidnappers targeted principally the rich, but times have changed. A report from Reuters states: "Kidnapping has become a daily occurrence in Guatemala, where people fondly remember the good old days when leftist rebels targeted only a handful of wealthy businessmen. Now rich and poor, young and old, are fair game for kidnap bands."

High-profile cases are generally given extensive media attention, but by far the majority of kidnappings are settled without publicity. In fact, for a number of reasons, countries "have little incentive to broadcast a kidnapping problem." The next article will consider a number of such reasons.

To family members
a kidnapping is
one of the most
nerve-racking,
emotional turmoils
imaginable



KIDNAPPING

Commercialized Terror

“KIDNAP is not like crime against property. It is devious, cruel and indifferent treatment of the most fundamental human group, the family,” says Mark Bles, in his book *The Kidnap Business*. A kidnapping causes emotional turmoil to family members. Minute by minute and hour by hour, they are tossed between hope and despair as they struggle with sentiments of guilt, hate, and helplessness. The nightmare may go on for days, weeks, months or, sometimes, even years.

In their relentless quest for money, kidnappers capitalize on family feelings. A kidnapping band forced their victim to write the

following in an open letter to the press: “I ask the Press to publish this everywhere so that if I do not come back the fault will be with my kidnappers but also with my family who prove they prefer money to me.” Italian kidnappers have applied pressure for ransom money by cutting off body parts and sending them to relatives or TV stations. A Mexican kidnapper even tortured his victims while negotiating over the phone with their family.

Some kidnappers, on the other hand, attempt to curry favor with their victims. For example, in the Philippines a kidnapped businessman was kept in a luxurious hotel in Manila, where his captors gave him liquor

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.

Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

Unless otherwise indicated, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References is used.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, **Wallkill, NY 12589**. Printed in U.S.A.

If You Are Kidnapped

Those who have studied the subject offer the following suggestions to people who may be kidnapped.

- Be cooperative; avoid obstinate behavior. Antagonistic hostages are more often subjected to harsh treatment, and they run a greater risk of being killed or singled out for punishment.
- Do not panic. Keep in mind that most victims survive the kidnapping.
- Devise a system to keep track of time.
- Try to establish some sort of daily routine.

and entertained him with prostitutes until the ransom was paid. Most victims, however, are locked up with little concern shown for their physical or hygienic needs. Many are brutally mistreated. In any case, the victim must always suffer the horror of wondering what is going to happen to him.

Coping With the Trauma

Even after victims are released, they may have lingering emotional scars. A Swedish nurse who was kidnapped in Somalia expressed this opinion: "One thing is more important than anything else. You have to talk to friends and relatives and get professional help if you need it."

Therapists have developed a method to help such victims. In several short sessions, the victims analyze their experiences with professional assistance before meeting with their families and getting back to a normal life. "Therapy given shortly after the event re-

- Exercise, even though your opportunities to move may be limited.
- Be observant; try to memorize details, sounds, and smells. Learn details about your kidnappers.
- Engage in small talk if possible and try to establish contact. If the kidnappers see you as an individual, they will be less likely to harm or kill you.
- Make them aware of your needs in a polite manner.
- Never try to negotiate your own ransom.
- If you find yourself in the middle of a rescue attempt, drop to the floor and wait passively as events unfold.



duces the risk of permanent damage," says Rigmor Gillberg, a Red Cross crisis therapy expert.

Additional Consequences

Victims and their families are not the only ones touched by kidnappings. Fear of kidnapping can halt tourism and slow down investments; it also creates a sense of insecurity in

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Kidnap Insurance—A Controversial Issue

A boom industry connected with the increase in kidnappings is insurance. Lloyd's of London has had a 50 percent yearly increase in kidnap insurance during the 1990's. More and more companies are offering such insurance. The insurance covers the assistance of a kidnap negotiator, payment of a ransom, and sometimes professional efforts to get the ransom back. However, the insurance issue is very controversial.

Opposers to kidnap insurance claim that it commercializes the crime and that it is immoral to make money off kidnapping. They also say that an insured person might be careless about his own security and that

the insurance will facilitate the kidnappers' task of extorting money, thus encouraging this criminal activity. Some even fear that the availability of insurance will encourage people to arrange their own kidnapping to get the insurance money. Kidnap insurance is outlawed in Colombia and Italy.

Supporters of kidnap insurance point out that like any other insurance, it makes many pay for the losses of a few. They reason that insurance creates a measure of security, since it enables insured families and companies to afford the help of qualified professionals, who can ease tension, negotiate lower ransoms, and make it easier to catch the kidnappers.

society. In just a few months in 1997, six international companies moved out of the Philippines because of the kidnapping threat. A Filipino woman working for a group called Citizens Against Crime exclaimed: "We are living a nightmare."

An article in *The Arizona Republic* says: "Among Mexican executives, the fear of kidnap is verging on hysteria, and justifiably so." The Brazilian magazine *Veja* reports that kidnappers and robbers have replaced monsters in the nightmares of Brazilian children. In Taiwan, kidnap prevention is taught at school, and in the United States, security cameras have been installed in preschools to prevent kidnapping.

A Boom for Security Consultants

The increase in kidnappings and the delicate issues surrounding them have created a boom for private security firms. In the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro, there are more than 500 such firms, accounting for \$1.8 billion in revenue.

A growing number of international security firms teach kidnap prevention, publish reports on hazardous areas, and negotiate ransoms. They counsel families and companies, teaching them the strategies of kidnappers and helping them to cope psychologically. Some firms even try to catch kidnappers and

get the ransom money back after the hostage is released. Their services are not free, though.

In spite of such efforts, kidnappings are on the rise in many lands. Commenting on the situation in Latin America, Richard Johnson, vice president of Seitlin & Company, says: "All expectations are that the level of kidnappings will increase."

Reasons for the Surge

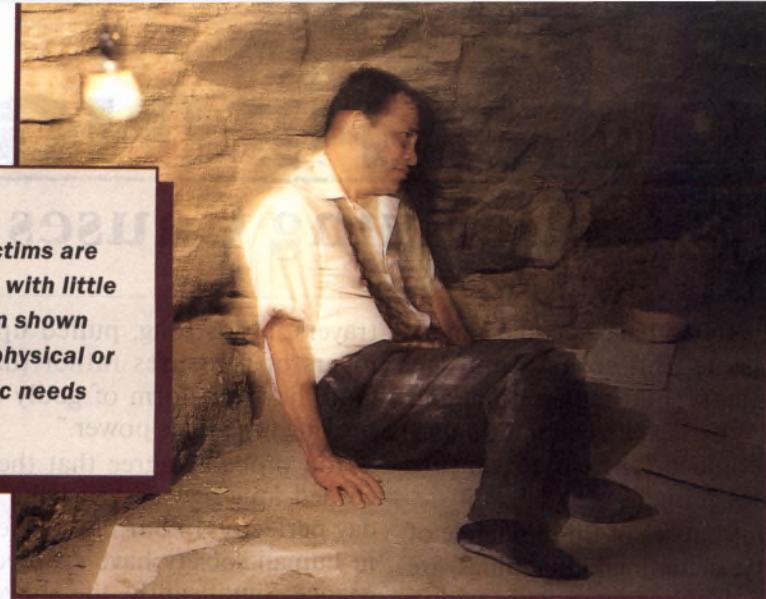
Experts suggest a host of reasons for the recent surge. The desperate economic situation in some areas is one. A relief worker in the town of Nal'chik, Russia, said: "The best way to get money is this famous tool, kidnapping." In some former Soviet republics, kidnappings are said to be used to finance the private armies of local warlords.

More people are traveling for business or as tourists than ever before, thus opening up new fields for kidnappers in search of prey. The number of foreigners kidnapped has doubled in five years. Between 1991 and 1997, tourists were abducted in some 26 lands.

Where do all these kidnappers come from? Some military conflicts are cooling off, leaving former soldiers unemployed, with empty pockets. These people have all the necessary skills to take up this lucrative business.

Similarly, the use of more efficient mea-

Most victims are locked up with little concern shown for their physical or hygienic needs



sures against bank robbery and crackdowns on drug dealing have caused criminals to take up kidnapping as a substitute source of income. Mike Ackerman, an expert on kidnappings, explained: "As we make crimes against property more difficult in all societies, it forces crimes against people." Publicizing high ransom payments could also induce potential kidnappers.

Motives Not Always the Same

Most kidnappers want money and nothing but money. Ransom demands vary from just a handful of dollars to the record \$60 million ransom paid for a Hong Kong property tycoon who was never released in spite of the payment.

On the other hand, some kidnappers have used their victims to bargain for publicity, food, medicine, radios, and cars as well as new schools, roads, and hospitals. One executive kidnapped in Asia was released after the kidnappers were given basketball uniforms and basketballs. Certain groups also use kidnappings to scare and intimidate foreign investors and tourists, with the aim of halting the exploitation of land and natural resources.

So there is no shortage of motives, no

shortage of means, no shortage of potential kidnappers or victims. Are solutions equally plentiful? What are some of them, and can they really solve the problem? Before answering such questions, let us examine some deeper, underlying causes of the boom in the kidnapping business.

The Stockholm Syndrome

In 1974 the kidnapping of Patty Hearst, daughter of the newspaper billionaire Randolph A. Hearst, took a surprising turn when she sided with her kidnappers and took part in armed robbery with the group. In another case a kidnapped Spanish football player forgave his kidnappers and wished them well.

In the early 1970's, this phenomenon was named the Stockholm Syndrome, after a 1973 hostage drama at a bank in Stockholm, Sweden. On that occasion some of the hostages developed a particular friendship with their captors. Such interaction has served as a protection to the kidnapped, as the book *Criminal Behavior* explains: "The more the victim and the captor get to know one another, the more they tend to like one another. This phenomenon indicates that after a period of time the offender is less likely to harm the hostage."

An English victim in Chechnya who was raped said: "I believe that when the guard came to know us as individuals he realized it was wrong to rape me. The raping stopped and he apologized."

KIDNAPPING

Its Underlying Causes

KIDNAPPINGS have become a modern plague. But so have murder, rape, theft, child molestation, and even genocide. Why has life become so dangerous that people often fear to venture from their homes at night?

The underlying causes of this epidemic of criminal activity, including kidnappings, are connected with deeply rooted flaws within human society. Did you realize that nearly 2,000 years ago, the Bible foretold these dangerous times? Please consider what was foretold at 2 Timothy 3:2-5.

"Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, be-

trayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."

You probably agree that these words recorded long ago describe the situation today perfectly. In our lifetime festering flaws in human society have erupted with a vengeance. Significantly, the above description of lamentable human conduct is introduced in the Bible with the words: "*In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.*" (2 Timothy 3:1) Let us consider just three of society's major flaws that have contributed to the epidemic of kidnappings.

Problems With Law Enforcement

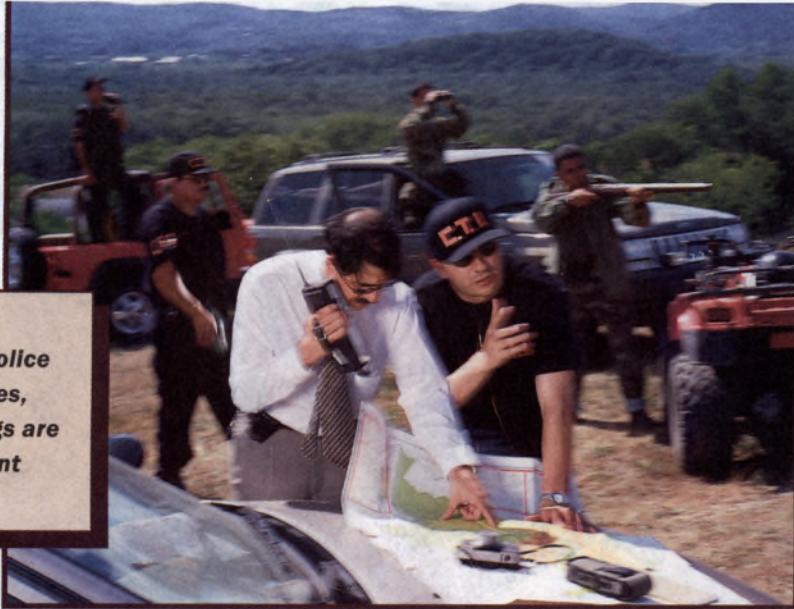
"Because sentence against a bad work has not been executed speedily, that is why the heart of the sons of men has become fully set in them to do bad."—Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Many police forces lack resources to cope with the epidemic of criminal activity. So in many countries, kidnapping is a crime that pays. In 1996, as few as 2 percent of all Colombian kidnappers were prosecuted. In Mexico, at least \$200 million was paid in ransom money in 1997. Some kidnappers in the Philippines have even accepted checks for ransom payment.

In addition, corruption within law enforcement agencies sometimes thwarts efficient crime fighting. Heads of elite antikidnapping squads in Mexico, Colombia, and former Soviet republics have them-

Nothing New

The Mosaic Law meted out capital punishment for kidnappers as far back as the 15th century B.C.E. (Deuteronomy 24:7) Julius Caesar was kidnapped for ransom in the first century B.C.E., as was Richard I, the Lion-hearted, king of England, in the 12th century C.E. The highest ransom ever paid was the 24 tons of gold and silver that the Incas gave to the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro to obtain the release of their captured chief Atahuallpa in 1533. The conquistadores nevertheless strangled him to death.



Despite police resources, kidnappings are prevalent

selves been accused of kidnapping. In the magazine *Asiaweek*, the president of the Philippine Senate, Blas Ople, says that official figures show that 52 percent of the kidnappings in the Philippines involve active or retired police or military men. A notorious Mexican kidnapper was said to have been shielded by "a wall of official protection cemented together with bribes to municipal, state and federal police officers and prosecutors."

Poverty and Social Injustice

"I myself returned that I might see all the acts of oppression that are being done under the sun, and, look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power."
—Ecclesiastes 4:1.

Many people today are in desperate economic and social situations, and they are often the ones who commit kidnappings. So in a world where the gap between rich and poor is constantly widening and where the possibilities to earn money in an honest way are often scarce, kidnapping will continue to be a temptation. As long as there is oppression, kidnapping will be a means to strike

back and to draw attention to what is considered an intolerable situation.

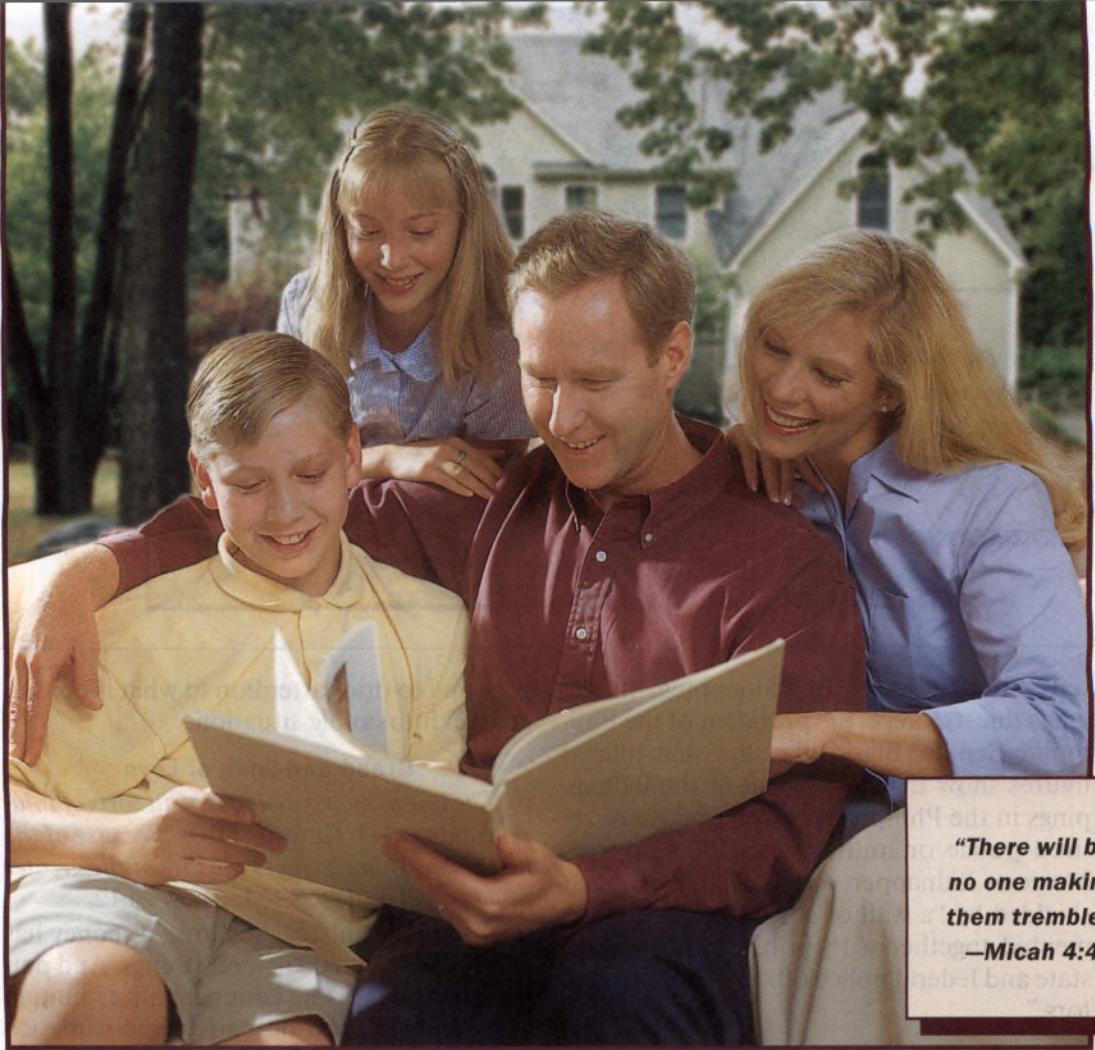
Greed and Lack of Love

"The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things." (1 Timothy 6:10) "Because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off."—Matthew 24:12.

Throughout history the love of money has caused people to do heinous things. And perhaps no other crime commercializes human anguish, grief, and despair to the same extent as kidnapping. For many it is greed—the love of money—that pushes them to brutalize and torture a stranger and put his family through a cruel ordeal for weeks, months, and sometimes years.

Clearly, something is terribly wrong with a society that stresses money and tramples human values underfoot. Without a doubt, this situation provides a breeding ground for all kinds of criminal activity, including kidnapping.

Does this mean that we are in what the Bible calls "the last days"? If so, what will this mean for the earth and for us? Is there a solution to the terrible problems facing humankind, including kidnapping?



*"There will be
no one making
them tremble."
—Micah 4:4*

KIDNAPPING

Is There a Solution?

THE abductions have reached a point intolerable to the whole nation, and the entire society must fight this evil," exclaimed the prime minister of Chechnya when promising to eradicate the scourge from his kidnap-plagued republic in Russia.

Eradicate kidnappings? The goal is laudable, but the question is, How?

Efforts Being Made

Colombian authorities have appointed 2,000 secret agents, 24 public prosecutors, and even a special antikidnap coordinator just to fight kidnappings. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a public march protesting the city's numerous kidnappings drew about 100,000 marchers. In Brazil and Colombia, paramilitary groups have counterattacked by kidnap-

ping relatives of kidnappers. And some Filipinos have resorted to vigilante justice—they have lynched kidnappers!

Guatemalan authorities introduced the death penalty for kidnappers, and the president mobilized the army to halt the kidnapping epidemic. In Italy the government adopted strong measures to prevent kidnappings, by making ransom payments illegal and seizing money and property to stop relatives from paying. Italian officials boast that these measures have contributed to a decrease in kidnappings. Critics, however, suggest that as a result, families try to resolve cases in secrecy and that this reduces the official number of kidnappings. Private security consultants estimate that the number of kidnappings in Italy has actually doubled since the 1980's.

Many Suggestions—Few Solutions

For many families of kidnap victims, only one solution seems viable—to bail out their loved ones as quickly as possible. But experts warn that if the ransom is high and is paid too quickly, kidnappers might consider the family an easy target and come back a second time. Or they might ask for a second ransom before releasing the victim.

Some families have paid high ransoms only to find that the victim was already dead. So experts say that one should never pay a ransom or engage in negotiations before proof is obtained that the victim is alive. Such proof could be in the form of the answer to a question that only the victim would be able to provide. Some families ask for a photo of the victim holding a recent newspaper.

What about rescue actions? They are often associated with great risk. "Seventy-nine percent of all hostages are killed during rescue attempts in Latin America," says Brian Jenkins, an expert on kidnappings. Sometimes, however, rescue attempts are successful.

Not surprisingly, many solutions focus on kidnap prevention. It is not only government

authorities that are engaged in attempts to prevent kidnappings. Newspapers teach people how to avoid being kidnapped, how to throw themselves from a moving car, and how to outwit kidnappers psychologically. Martial arts centers give courses in defense against kidnapping. Companies sell \$15,000 ultra microtransmitters, which can be planted in children's teeth to help police track the children down if they are kidnapped. For those who can afford them, car manufacturers produce "kidnap-proof" cars with tear-gas dispensers, gun ports, bulletproof windows, slash-proof tires, and oil slick dispensers.

Some of the wealthy see bodyguards as a solution. However, concerning the situation in Mexico, security expert Francisco Gomez Lerma says: 'Bodyguards are no help because they attract attention and may be in cahoots with kidnappers.'

The kidnapping problem is so complex and its roots are so deep that nothing mankind can do seems adequate to eliminate it. Is there, then, no real solution?

A Solution Available

This magazine has repeatedly pointed to the only real solution to all such problems facing humans. That solution is the one to which God's Son, Jesus Christ, pointed when he taught his followers to pray: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:10.

Clearly, we need a righteous world government to manage the affairs of earth's vast diversity of people—yes, the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about. Since humans have been unable to establish such a government, we are wise to look to our Creator, Jehovah God. His Word, the Bible, says that he purposed to do this very thing.—Psalm 83:18.

The prophet Daniel recorded Jehovah's purpose, writing: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that

will never be brought to ruin.... It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." (Daniel 2:44) The Bible describes how this government of God would take progressive steps to eradicate all criminal activity, including kidnapping.

Proper Education Essential

No doubt you will agree that instilling a sound set of values in people is essential to solving the problem of kidnapping. Consider, for example, the effect it would have on human society if all heeded the following admonition in the Bible: "*Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things.*" (Hebrews 13:5) "*Do not you people be owing anybody a single thing, except to love one another.*"—Romans 13:8.

You can get a glimpse of what life could be like by considering the educational program being conducted by Jehovah's Witnesses in over 230 lands throughout the earth. This program has had a wholesome effect on many people who were formerly greedy or were dangerous criminals. One former kidnapper said: "In time, I realized that to please God I needed to strip off my old personality and put on a new one—one that was meek and similar to that of Christ Jesus."

Yet, even a fine educational program will not reform all criminals, perhaps not even the majority. What will happen to those refusing to change?

Removal of Wrongdoers

Willful wrongdoers will not be permitted to be subjects of God's Kingdom. The Bible says: "*Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, . . . nor greedy persons, . . . nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom.*" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) "*The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth . . . As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth.*"—Proverbs 2:21, 22.

According to God's Law in ancient times, an unrepentant kidnapper was to be put to death. (Deuteronomy 24:7) Greedy persons, such as kidnappers, will not have any place in the Kingdom of God. Today's criminals might elude human justice, but they will not be able to elude God's justice. Any wrongdoers will have to change their ways if they are to live under Jehovah's righteous Kingdom rule.

Obviously, if conditions that breed criminal activity remain, so will the crime. Yet, God's Kingdom will not allow that, for the Bible promises: "The kingdom itself . . . will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms," including all people who practice wrongdoing. This Bible prophecy continues by saying that God's Kingdom will stand to times indefinite. (Daniel 2:44) Just imagine the changes that will occur!

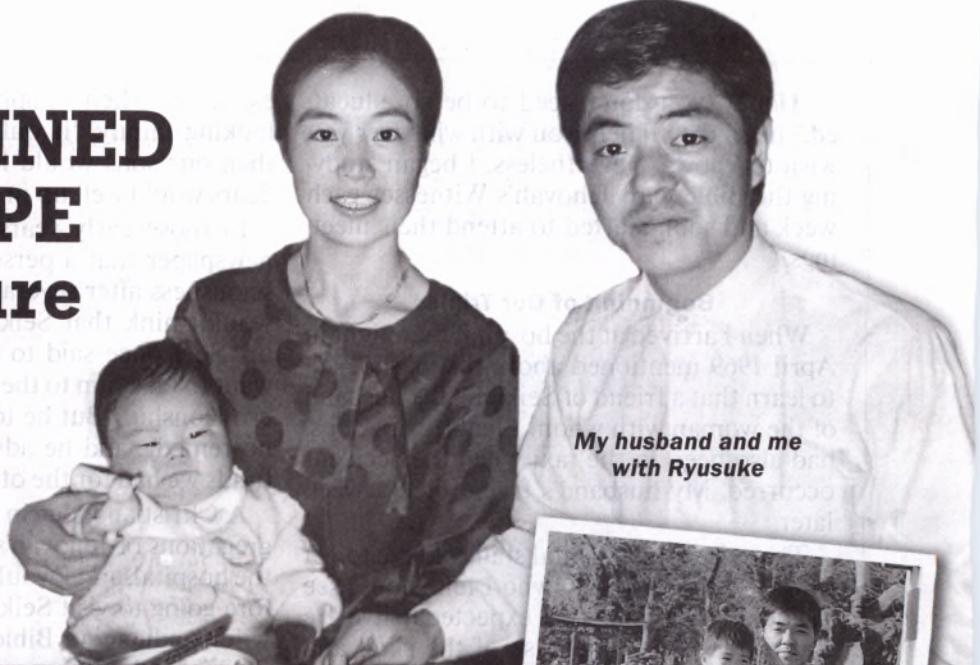
A New World of Righteousness

Consider another Bible prophecy. It is one that beautifully describes the future in these words: "*They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full.*"—Isaiah 65:21, 22.

The Kingdom of God will transform the entire planet. All alive will be able to enjoy life to the full, developing their natural abilities by engaging in satisfying work and wholesome recreation. Conditions worldwide will be such that no one will ever even think of kidnapping his neighbor. The sense of security will be total. (Micah 4:4) Thus, God's Kingdom will have reduced kidnapping from a present-day global threat to a chapter of history that no one will even think of anymore.—Isaiah 65:17.

SUSTAINED BY HOPE to Endure Trials

AS TOLD BY
MICHIKO OGAWA



*My husband and me
with Ryusuke*

On April 29, 1969, I received a call from the police. My husband, Seikichi, had been injured in a traffic accident and was in the hospital. I left my two young sons with a friend and rushed over there. Seikichi has been paralyzed ever since and has never regained consciousness. Let me tell you about our family and how we have managed.



*Seikichi with our two sons,
six months before the accident*

I WAS born in February 1940 in Sanda, near Kobe, Japan. Seikichi and I have known each other ever since we went to kindergarten together. We were married on February 16, 1964. My husband was a man of few words, but he loved children. In time, we had two boys, Ryusuke and Kohei.

Seikichi was employed at a construction company in Tokyo, so after we married we lived in one of its suburbs. In October of 1967, I was visited by a young woman who introduced herself as a Bible teacher. "No thanks. I have my own Bible," I said.

"May I see the Bible?" she asked.

I took the Bible from our bookshelf—it belonged to Seikichi—and let her see it. She showed me the name Jehovah in it. I never

knew that this was God's name. The woman, observing my two small children, read to me from the Bible: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Proverbs 22:6) I had actually been wondering how I could bring up my children successfully. So right away I wanted to study the Bible.

I invited the woman into the room, and we began a discussion from the booklet *"Look! I Am Making All Things New."* I thought, 'How wonderful it would be if we as a family could enjoy a happy life!' When Seikichi came home, I said: "I want to study the Bible."

"Honey, you don't need to be so educated," he said. "I'll help you with whatever you wish to know." Nevertheless, I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses each week and soon started to attend their meetings.

Beginning of Our Trials

When I arrived at the hospital that night in April 1969 mentioned above, I was shocked to learn that a friend of Seikichi, the husband of the woman with whom I had left my sons, had also been in the taxi when the accident occurred. My husband's friend died a week later.

That night the hospital staff told me to get in touch with anybody who I felt should see Seikichi, since he was not expected to live. He had a fracture of the base of the skull and a cerebral contusion. The next day relatives hurried to the hospital from the Kobe area.

A voice announced urgently over the hospital loudspeaker: "All relatives of Seikichi Ogawa, please visit him immediately." We hurried to the intensive care unit and took turns bidding him farewell. However, his critical condition lasted a whole month. A final diagnosis indicated that this condition would last for a long time.

So Seikichi was transferred from Tokyo to Kobe by ambulance, a distance of some 400 miles. I saw him off and headed home by bullet train, praying for his survival. Later in the evening, on seeing him alive at a hospital in Kobe, I was overjoyed. Under my breath I said to him, 'Honey, you did hang in there!'

Living With My Parents

I returned with my sons to my parents' home in Sanda, where the children started kindergarten. I purchased a season train ticket to Kobe, which was some 25 miles away, and my mother-in-law and I took turns commuting to the hospital daily for the next year. I would wonder, 'Will Seikichi regain consciousness today? What will he tell me first? How should I respond?' I would also think,

especially when I happened to see a happy-looking family, 'If only Seikichi were well, then our sons would have a pleasant time.' Tears would well up in my eyes.

In those early years, when I read in the newspaper that a person had regained consciousness after several months in a coma, I would think that Seikichi might also wake up. So I once said to my brother-in-law: "I want to take him to the hospital in northeastern Honshu." But he told me that there was no remedy, and he advised me to use what funds we had for the other family members.

A Christian elder in one of the Kobe congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses lived near the hospital, and I would stop at his house before going to visit Seikichi. Once a week his wife conducted a Bible study with me. And their two children would come to our room in the hospital to deliver an audiocassette of their congregation meetings. I was greatly encouraged and comforted by this family.

Sustained by Hope

One day, a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses visited us at the hospital and read Romans 8:18-25 to me. In part, it says: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present season do not amount to anything in comparison with the glory that is going to be revealed in us.... For we know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now.... When a man sees a thing, does he hope for it? But if we hope for what we do not see, we keep on waiting for it with endurance."

The discussion of our Christian hope reminded me that the present sufferings are small when compared with the joy that Jesus promises—life in the coming Paradise earth. (Luke 23:43) The discussion helped me to face present realities with hope and to focus on the future realities of new world blessings.—2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; Revelation 21:3, 4.

In June 1970, Seikichi was transferred to a hospital in Sanda, where my parents and

I lived. The following January, when I received the document filed by our lawyer that declared my husband incompetent as a result of the accident, I was extremely sad and couldn't hold back my tears. My mother-in-law often told me: "I am sorry, Michiko, for the hard time you are having because of my son." She would also say: "I wish I could substitute myself for Seikichi." We would weep together.

My father would urge me to find full-time employment, but I was determined to care for Seikichi. Though seemingly unconscious, he responded to heat and cold and was affected by the ways nursing care was given. Father wanted me to remarry, but I realized that doing so would be inappropriate, since my husband was still living. (Romans 7:2) Thereafter, when Father drank he would say: "When I die I will take Seikichi along with me."

To my great joy, a congregation was formed in Sanda in 1971. Then, on July 28, 1973, I was able to symbolize my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. This was during the international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses at the Osaka Expo Grounds.



We were blessed with two sons, Ryusuke and Kohei (top), who 'have remembered our Grand Creator'

Later in 1973, my son Kohei contracted acute nephritis and was hospitalized for five months. My father was also in the hospital because of tuberculosis. So on January 1, 1974, I visited my father, my husband, and my son at three different hospitals. On Sundays when I went to see Kohei with my older son, Ryusuke, I studied the book *Listening to the Great Teacher* with them. After that, Ryusuke and I would attend a meeting in Kobe and return home with joyful hearts.

I have always been thankful for those who helped to care for Seikichi. I made a point of sharing Bible knowledge with them. After one caregiver lost her sister in a fire, she responded when I showed her the grand hope of the resurrection promised in the Bible. (Job 14:13-15; John 5:28, 29) A Bible study was started with her in the hospital, and she eventually was baptized, at a convention in 1978.

My Children, a Source of Joy

Rearing my children without the help of my husband has been a challenge, but how rewarding it has been! I taught them proper manners and concern for the feelings of others. When Ryusuke was only three, he would apologize when he did not behave himself, saying: "Mama, I'm sorry." Kohei was a little rebellious, at times showing resentment when I tried to correct him. Once he even lay down crying in front of a store when he wanted something. But I would reason with him, showing affection and patience. In time, he became an obedient, good boy. This helped to convince me that the Bible truly is God's Word.—2 Timothy 3:15-17.

When Ryusuke entered junior high school, he explained to the teachers why he could not accept training in the martial arts. (Isaiah 2:4) One day, he came home from school bubbling with joy because at a meeting with a number of teachers, he was able to answer their questions.

Wholesome association in the congregation was very helpful for my sons. Christian elders often invited them for dinner and included them in their family Bible study as well as recreational activities. There were also opportunities for pleasant association, including participation in various sports. Ryusuke symbolized his dedication to Jehovah by water immersion in 1979, and Kohei was baptized the following year.

Our Full-Time Ministry

Once during the visit of a traveling overseer, I told him that I wanted to be a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. Because at that time my circumstances would have made such a step unwise, he kindly reminded me of the need to bring up my sons firmly in Bible truth. "The important thing," he said, "is to have a pioneer spirit." So I auxiliary pioneered, sharing in this activity with my sons during their school vacations. This activity helped me greatly to maintain joy and peace of mind while caring for Seikichi.

Finally, in September 1979, I was able to join the regular pioneer ranks. In May 1984, about a year after graduating from high school, Ryusuke also enrolled as a pioneer. Kohei joined him in the pioneer work in September 1984. Thus, all three of us have enjoyed this form of the full-time ministry. As I look back over 20 years of pioneering, during which time I have had the privilege of helping a number of people to serve Jehovah, I feel that this activity has helped sustain me through my trials.

Ryusuke volunteered for construction work on a building for use by Jehovah's Wit-

nesses adjacent to the Kansai Assembly Hall. Later he served for seven years as a caretaker at the Hyogo Assembly Hall. Now, as a Christian elder in a nearby congregation in Kobe, he looks after me. Since 1985, Kohei has served as a volunteer worker at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ebina.

Sustained by Many Blessings

For many years I went to the hospital several times a week to visit Seikichi and to give him a bath. My care was provided in addition to that given by a regular caregiver. In September 1996, after 27 years in hospitals, Seikichi returned to live in our home, with the assistance of a caregiver. He is able to take liquid food through a nasal tube. Although his eyes have remained closed, he responds slightly when we say something to him. It pains me to see Seikichi in this condition, but I am sustained by a grand hope for the future.

Just prior to Seikichi's return, I had offered accommodations to a traveling overseer and his wife, and so for a year five of us lived together in our rather small house. I never imagined that I would be able to live with Seikichi again, and I thank Jehovah for this. For many years I had a strong desire for Seikichi to open his eyes, but now I simply desire that Jehovah's will take place.

I can truthfully say: "The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it." (Proverbs 10:22) While a happy life with a healthy Seikichi was short-lived, I have been blessed with two sons who 'have remembered our Grand Creator.' For this I am so grateful!—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

In the meantime, I would love both to continue to pioneer—thus helping others find "the real life"—and, at the same time, to give Seikichi loving care. (1 Timothy 6:19) My experience has taught me the truthfulness of the words of the psalmist: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter."—Psalm 55:22.

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"I got my first credit card offer in the mail when I was 16 years old. . . . When I turned 18, my debt was up to about \$60,000."

—Kristin.

AT FIRST, Kristin planned to use her credit card just for emergencies—and perhaps for that occasional item she wanted to buy but could not pay for with cash. Then things got out of hand. "I started shopping up a storm and went nuts ordering from catalogs," Kristin confesses. "I bought things I didn't even care about."

Now Kristin has a different view of credit cards. "I had no idea how much that little plastic card would mess up my life," she says. —*Teen magazine*.

Kristin's story is not an isolated one. A growing number of young people are paving the path to financial peril using that little piece of plastic, the credit card. In some cases, companies aggressively target the young. Likely they know that for many eager spenders, credit cards can become, as financial adviser Jane Bryant Quinn calls it, "a financial drug." "The more they're used," she says, "the harder it becomes to stop."

Granted, having a credit card can be advantageous—for example, when an emergency arises or when it is not wise to carry cash. That is one reason why credit cards have become so popular in the United States and in other countries as well. If it is not used responsibly, however, a credit card can hurl its user into a financial bottomless pit. Thus,



Should I Have a Credit Card?

a report published in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* noted a threefold increase "in the number of debt-ridden 20- to 23-year-olds who have turned to the Credit Counselling Service of Toronto for help." The report noted that many owed up to \$25,000, and credit card bills were one of the main causes of debt.

Should you have a credit card? That is something for your parents to decide. If they think you should wait, be patient. If you prove yourself wise in your spending habits, perhaps it will not be long before your parents grant you greater financial responsibilities. (Compare Luke 16:10.) In the meantime, you should know that using a credit card—much like driving a vehicle—has both rewards and risks.

Counting the Cost

Buying with a credit card is essentially the same as borrowing money. As in all borrowing situations, you must pay back what is lent to you. (Proverbs 22:7) But how do you



Frivolous use of a credit card can lead to financial disaster

pay for items that you purchase with a credit card?

Typically, a printed statement is sent to you near the end of each month, showing the purchases that were made with the card as well as the total amount that you owe. The statement also indicates how much you are expected to pay right away. Usually, this amount is quite low. As a result, you might reason, 'This isn't too bad. If I just pay the minimum required amount each month, in time my debt will be paid.' However, the problem is that after a grace period, you will be subject to a finance charge—interest—on the amount that you still owe. And interest rates on a credit card can be quite high.*

Consider Joseph, whose balance on one month's statement was about \$1,000. Of course, Joseph had to pay only the minimum amount due, which was \$20. But when he took a closer look at his statement, Joseph found that included in the balance for that month was a finance charge of almost \$17! This meant that even if Joseph paid the \$20

minimum, he would be just \$3 closer to eliminating his \$1,000 debt!

How long does it take to eliminate a credit card bill if you pay only the minimum amount due? Citing a hypothetical example, a booklet published by the Federal Trade Commission and American Express notes: "If you have an outstanding balance of \$2,000, with 18.5% interest and a low minimum monthly payment, it would take over 11 years to pay off the debt and cost you an additional \$1,934 just for interest, which almost doubles the total cost of your original purchase."

As you can see, if you are not careful, you can dig yourself into a very deep financial hole with a credit card. "I was actually paying almost double for everything," says Kristin. "When I started having trouble making payments, the creditors added late fees. I had no idea what to do."

Responsible Use of a Credit Card

Kristin learned the hard way that a "buy now, pay later" approach to shopping can be dangerous. Debts can snowball, and before you know it, your minimum monthly pay-

* You can find out the interest charged by a particular credit card company by looking at the annual percentage rate (APR) noted on the application or the monthly statement.

ment may be paying for little more than your finance charges. How do responsible card users avoid falling into such a financial trap?

- They keep track of their purchases and carefully examine their monthly statements to make sure that they are being charged only for purchases they have made.

- They pay their bills promptly, realizing that a good credit history will likely be helpful later—perhaps when applying for a job or for insurance or when financing a car or a home.

- If possible, they pay the full amount owed so that they can avoid being charged a high interest rate on the balance.

- They do not give out their credit card number and expiration date over the phone unless they know the person or the company they are dealing with.

- They never lend their credit card to anyone, not even to a friend. After all, it is the credit record of the card *owner* that will be affected if the card is misused.

- They avoid using their credit card as a means to get quick cash, as if it were a bank card. Remember, cash advances usually carry a higher interest rate than purchases.

- They do not fill out and send in every credit card application they receive. For most youths, one card is enough.

- They use their credit card with respect, fully realizing that when they make a purchase with it, *they are still spending real money*, even though they are not using bills or coins.

Enjoying the Benefits

Whether you have a credit card right now or are contemplating getting one in the near future, become thoroughly acquainted with both the benefits and the risks. Ask yourself the following questions: Why do I feel that I need a credit card? Is it simply to acquire material things, to have the latest in fashion, to impress my friends? Should I learn to be more content with the basics, with what the Christian apostle Paul called “sustenance and covering”? (1 Timothy 6:8) Will credit card debts lead to crushing financial burdens that will cause me to lose sight of the more important things in life?—Matthew 6:33; Philippians 1:8-11.

Ponder these questions, and discuss them with your parents. If you do, then whether you have a credit card or not, you will avoid the financial heartache that many have brought upon themselves.—Proverbs 22:3.

The Value of Parental Consent

Many youths are first given a chance to get their own credit card when they get an application in the mail. In fact, over a period of time, some receive several applications. “There’s intense competition among issuers to get credit cards into young people’s hands,” explains Jane Bryant Quinn, “because studies show we tend to keep the card we start with.”

Usually a parent or another adult with an established credit history must sign the credit card application so that the issuer of the card has some assurance that purchases charged will be paid for. Sadly, many youngsters resort to deceit to bypass this step. One youth put down her grandmother’s name as the primary applicant

and her own name as the joint applicant without her grandmother’s knowledge. Imagine her grandmother’s surprise when she learned that she owed tens of thousands of dollars!

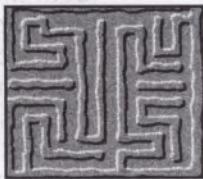
Forging the signature of a parent or another adult on a credit card application is dishonest, and dishonesty is condemned by God. (Proverbs 11:1; Hebrews 13:18) So if you want a credit card, talk to your parents about it. Having their consent is far better for you in the long run. Remember, your parents likely have experience in paying off debts, and they can give you sound advice. So talk to them, and never resort to dishonest means to acquire a credit card.

LABYRINTHS AND MAZES

Why So Intriguing?

By Awake! correspondent in Britain

Although the words "labyrinth" and "maze" can be used interchangeably, their structures do differ. The pathway of a labyrinth takes a meandering course to its center. On the other hand, a maze can have blind passageways, and the correct path, when discovered, usually leads through the maze, exiting another way.



Both labyrinths and mazes can frighten, puzzle, or frustrate those who enter. But ancient labyrinths are also bound up in superstitious folklore. Why, then, did Christendom's church builders incorporate labyrinths into their buildings? The answer is intriguing.

WHAT was the greatest building feat of the ancient Egyptians? According to some writers, it was not the pyramids, as is generally believed, but, rather, their mighty Labyrinth. It was built near Lake Moeris, known today as Lake Qarun, located west of the Nile River and 50 miles south of the modern city of Cairo.

In the fifth century B.C.E., the Greek historian Herodotus wrote: "I visited this place [the Labyrinth] and found it to surpass description; for if all the walls and other great works of the Greeks could be put together in one, they would not equal, either for labour or expense, this Labyrinth." He added: "The Labyrinth surpasses the pyramids." Four centuries later Strabo, another Greek historian, declared the Labyrinth to be "a work equal to the Pyramids," even though by that time it had greatly decayed.

The area was visited by historian F. Barham Zincke in 1871, and the site was finally identified by archaeologist Flinders Petrie in 1888. Only fragments of the Labyrinth remained then, and today guidebooks barely mention it. At one time, however, the Laby-

rinth was famous. What was it like, and why was it built?

Description and Purpose

The Labyrinth was constructed very early in Egypt's history, possibly even before the Hebrews resided in Egypt. (Genesis 46:1-27) It was said to have had 3,000 rooms equally divided between two stories—one story being below ground level. It covered a total area of some 800,000 square feet.

So complicated and bewildering was the Labyrinth's intricate system of passages, courts, rooms, and colonnades, that a stranger could never find his way in—or out—without a guide. Much of it was in total darkness, and when some of the doors were opened, they were said to have made a terrifying sound, like thunder. Following the decline of the Egyptian World Power, the Labyrinth's impressive red granite pillars, enormous stone slabs, and finely polished limestone were plundered and reused.

Although the Labyrinth reportedly served as a center from which kings of Egypt administered the country, its real function was

religious. It was a temple complex where sacrifices were made to all the gods of Egypt. No visitors were permitted to see the lower rooms of the Labyrinth, which contained tombs both for kings and sacred crocodiles.

The mythical significance of the Labyrinth is best understood in connection with the religious rituals that surrounded the Egyptian god Osiris, who the Egyptians believed was at one time king of Egypt. Osiris was the god of the dead, or the god of the underworld.

Mythology and Immortality

The death of Osiris was reenacted in the Egyptian annual Mystery Drama. Apis, a sacred bull, was ceremonially slain in the place of Osiris amid great wailing and weeping. This weeping turned to joy when the officiating priest announced to the people the glad tidings of Osiris' resurrection. To the Egyptians, these mysterious events were the focal point of their hope of life. They believed that every man, not just the king, became identified with Osiris at death.

The book *The Labyrinth*, edited by Professor S. H. Hooke, observed: "In Egypt the early myth of Osiris suggests the existence of forces which menaced the life of the king-god, both on earth and in the after-world." The Labyrinth, with its bewildering system of passages, was thus believed to provide protection for the god-king from his enemies in this life and the next—even from death itself.

In time, the belief in human immortality became firmly established in ancient Egypt and throughout the ancient world. Indeed, the teaching of the immortality of the hu-

Coins of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. found at Knossos, Crete. Note the labyrinth pattern and the bull's head, representing the Minotaur



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British Museum

man soul that developed over the ensuing centuries was soon embraced not just by kings but by the whole of mankind.

The Cretan Labyrinth

The labyrinth at Knossos, on the island of Crete, was apparently built some years after the Egyptian one. Although its site has not yet been positively identified, records say that it was sim-

ilar to, but very much smaller than, the Egyptian pattern.* Our word "labyrinth" may be related to *la'brys*, a double-headed ax representing the two horns of the sacred bull. This bull was featured in Minoan (Cretan) worship, which was deeply influenced by mythology.

The Cretan labyrinth was famous in mythology for its resident Minotaur—a mythological man with a bull's head. Pasiphaë, the wife of Minos, king of Crete, is said to have given birth to this creature—hence its name, Minotaur, meaning "Bull of Minos." According to the myth, the city of Athens lost a war with Crete, and its people were compelled every nine years to send 14 youths—7 boys and 7 girls—as sacrifices to the Minotaur. These youths were released into the labyrinth, where they got lost and were then supposedly devoured by the Minotaur.

In time, however, one youth, Theseus, took up the challenge and entered the labyrinth to kill this mythical monster. Upon encountering it, Theseus is said to have killed the Minotaur with his sword. To escape, he retraced his steps by following a golden thread, which he had laid down from the

* In the first century C.E., Pliny, the Roman naturalist, noted that the Cretans built their labyrinth one hundredth the size of the Egyptian one.

Mazes for Amusement

Six hundred years ago, a new type of maze was created. It had no religious significance but was designed for ornamentation. Throughout England simple garden mazes soon became a common feature. Eventually the mazes were created with more intricate designs, and their

paths came to be lined with boxwood, which could be neatly trimmed.

In recent years many modern, intricate maze designs have appeared throughout the world. Children and adults alike love them. They can be fun!



entrance of the labyrinth. The thread had been given to him by Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos.

Michael Ayrton, who constructed a conjectural model of the Cretan labyrinth, explained: "Each man's life is a labyrinth at the centre of which lies his death, and even after death it may be that he passes through a final maze before it is all ended for him." In this sense, the mythological Theseus' escape from the labyrinth symbolized his rebirth, his escape from death. Again, the teaching of human immortality becomes apparent.

Greece and Rome

The pattern of the classical Cretan labyrinth appears on coins found at Knossos. Soon this pattern was imitated by the Greeks and the Romans. Pliny mentions a labyrinth on the Mediterranean island of Samos and another, which was renowned for the beauty of its 150 columns, on the island of Lemnos. He also refers to an elaborate Etruscan tomb written about by an earlier

writer, Varro, which allegedly contained a subterranean labyrinth.

The city of Pompeii, destroyed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E., featured at least two decorative labyrinths. One of these, the House of the Labyrinth, is famous for its extraordinary mosaic pavement depicting the struggle between Theseus and the Minotaur. The writer Marcel Brion contends that this is "an allegory of human life and of the difficult journeys which the soul must make in this world and in the next before attaining the blessed condition of immortality."

Children in the ancient Roman world played games in labyrinth patterns set out in fields and on pavements. Today throughout Europe there are numerous remains of mosaic labyrinth floor patterns in excavated Roman villas and other Roman civic buildings. But the mythological ideas soon spread even farther afield.

Into Many Countries

The temple of Halebid, in Mysore, India, has a section of frieze that includes a labyrinth. Built about the 13th century C.E., it illustrates an episode from the *Mahabharata*.

The Chinese believed that evil spirits could fly only in a straight line, so they built entrances of a simple labyrinth type to keep evil spirits out of their homes and cities.

In Scandinavia, there are over 600 stone labyrinths on the shores of the Baltic Sea. It is said that many of them were built by local fishermen who superstitiously walked

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**Bloodless Medicine and Surgery
—The Growing Demand**

The Amazing World of Insects

Mothers With AIDS Face a Dilemma



The world's largest turf maze, in Saffron Walden, England

through them to ensure a good catch and a safe return.

On St. Agnes, a small island off the southwest coast of Cornwall, England, there is a maze that was renewed in 1726 by a lighthouse keeper on the site of an earlier pattern.

What is of particular interest to many is that the labyrinth has been incorporated into churches of Christendom. Consider a few examples.

Christendom's Labyrinths and Mazes

Of the many remarkable labyrinths in Christendom's religious buildings, one of the smallest must be the 15th-century circular carved wooden ornamentation high in the roof of St. Mary Redcliffe, a church in Bristol, England. Painted in gold and black, it has a diameter of only eight inches. The most famous labyrinth is in France's Chartres Cathedral. Constructed in the year 1235, of blue and white stone, it is 40 feet in diameter.

Large floor mazes were laid in other medieval French and Italian cathedrals and churches, including those at Amiens, Bayeux, Orléans, Ravenna, and Toulouse. The

one at Reims was destroyed 200 years ago, and the Mirepoix Cathedral's maze features a central Minotaur.

Regarding the incorporation of labyrinths into prominent religious buildings, one authority writes: "The pagan labyrinth was adopted by the medieval Christian church and adapted for its own use by including Christian symbolism in the design." Thus, labyrinths were apparently used in Christendom's churches to represent a Christian's life, in keeping with the mythology established by the ancient Egyptians.

Church mazes were also used to enact journeys made by the crusaders to Jerusalem. Reaching the center symbolized reaching Jerusalem and attaining salvation. For some worshipers a maze was a penitential circuit either to be completed upon the knees to gain forgiveness of sins or to be ritually walked as a substitute for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Turf Mazes

Labyrinths that were cut into the soil, known as turf mazes, were constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries, especially in England. Later many were undoubtedly

Christendom's Use of the Labyrinth

London's Westminster Abbey has recently introduced this newly embroidered altar cloth. Note the labyrinth in the center flanked by "A" (alpha, "THE BEGINNING") and "Ω" (omega, "THE END"). At the center of this labyrinth

design, note the "I AM," which represents Jehovah, the great "I AM" referred to at Exodus 3:14, King James Version. This is an intriguing modern example of the close ties of the labyrinth with religion today.

Photo: David Johnson



used for recreational purposes, but since they resembled the labyrinths in church buildings, some people also attached a religious significance to them. The largest turf maze in the world, thought by some authorities to be over 800 years old, is on the common in Saffron Walden, in the county of Essex. It is unusual in that it has four large, raised corner bastions. The length of its pathway is almost a mile.

W. H. Matthews ties in the historical/mythical aspect, noting that religious mazes or labyrinths "may be taken as emblematical of the temptation-labyrinth of this worldly life, which can only be safely traversed by means of the Ariadne thread of divine grace."—*Mazes and Labyrinths—Their History and Development*.

Are you surprised that mazes and labyrinths, although of pagan origin, are fixtures in Christendom? Can true Christianity be compatible with pagan superstition?

Compatible With Christian Faith?

Fascinating as the history of the labyrinth is, beliefs in connection with it are not compatible with Christian faith. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the human soul is separate and distinct from the body and that it lives on when a person dies. Rather, the Bible teaches that the human soul is mortal. It says: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die."—Ezekiel 18:4.

God's Word, the Bible, is powerful and has been likened to a sword, "the sword of the spirit." Christians skillfully use this weapon to overcome a real, superhuman, invisible spirit creature and his demons, not a mythical Minotaur. (Ephesians 6:12, 17) As a result, they have a faith that is invincible and a sure hope of salvation. This will carry them through the end of this present system of things into a new world of righteousness—something belief in mythology can never do.—2 Peter 3:13.



Gross ist Je - ho - va der
Great is Je - ho - vah, the

Herr, den
Lord! for

Franz Schubert, Op. 79, No. 2
Composed 1825
Original key

A Song That Stayed With Her

"AT SCHOOL I sang a hymn with the words, 'the great Jehovah enthroned in his glory.' I often wondered, 'Who is this Jehovah?'"

That remark from Gwen Gooch, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and whose life story was published in *The Watchtower*, struck a chord with at least one reader.* Vera, from Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., recalls, "I had the same experience in high school."

After hearing a certain song, Vera, much like Gwen, was profoundly curious as to who this Jehovah might be. Vera's curiosity was satisfied back in 1949 when her brother first told her about Jehovah, the personal name of God in the Bible.

Vera has been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for about half a century now. But she never forgot that hymn from her high school days. "For years," she says, "I have tried to locate the source." Finally, with the help of a music store, she met with success. The song is from an 1825 composition by Franz Schubert. The words that accompany the music do indeed



Vera

praise Jehovah. For example, among the lyrics are the following:

"Great is Jehovah, the Lord! for Heaven and Earth proclaim his wondrous pow'r. . . . You hear it in wild, raging storm, in the roar of the stream's thundering call. . . . You hear it in the murmurs of woodlands and forests, see it in the waving of golden corn; in sweet-scented flowers' brilliant array, in stars that fill all the blue skies of Heaven. . . . Fearful sounds His thunder's report, and flames from His lightnings wildly dart through the sky. But greater by far your beating heart still proclaims Jehovah's pow'r, . . . the everlasting Lord God. Look to Him on High and hope for grace and for mercy. . . . Great is Jehovah, the Lord!"

Vera notes: "I have at times used the lyrics of this song to show people that in the 1800's there were those who knew God's name and praised him also." The truth is that from earliest times men and women of faith have been moved to praise Jehovah with songs. It is a practice that will continue forever, for there is no end of reasons to praise the Creator of heaven and earth.

* See *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1998.



THE AVOCADO

Truly a
Versatile Fruit!

By Awake! correspondent in Colombia

THE Spanish conquistadores of the early 16th century had never seen anything like it. It was about the size and shape of a big pear, but it remained green even when ripe. Its flesh was soft and buttery in texture, with a somewhat nutty flavor. Eventually, it became known as the avocado, from the Aztec word *ahuacatl*.

The avocado was first introduced to the European public in 1519, by Martín Fernández de Enciso. Enciso had seen the fruit near what is now Santa Marta, Colombia, at the time of one of the first Spanish expeditions to South America. During those years of exploration, Europeans first tasted a number of new foods besides the avocado, including chocolate, corn, and the potato.

Of course, none of those foods were really new. All of them had been known and enjoyed by the native inhabitants of the temperate areas of the Western Hemisphere for centuries. Among some indigenous tribes, the avocado was so highly esteemed that it

was used as a wedding gift as well as a gift to welcome visitors.

Growing Avocados

Today the avocado is cultivated in many places with a warm or temperate climate, including Australia, Israel, Kenya, New Zealand, North and South America, and the Philippines. It is one of about 20 tropical fruits that have become commercially important worldwide.

Scattered throughout the tropical lands of the Americas, however, are many varieties of avocado, ranging from some no larger than a hen's egg to others as big as a medium-sized melon, weighing up to four pounds. Their color may vary from green to dark purple, and the skin of some varieties is rough and brittle, while that of others is thin



and smooth. It is possible, though, to cultivate orchards that produce avocados of uniform appearance and quality.

When flowering, avocado trees are covered with thousands of pale-yellow blossoms. However, only 1 in 5,000 of these blossoms will become an avocado. An unusual characteristic of these flowers is that each of them bears a stamen, or pollen-producing structure, and at the same time, a pistil, or ovary-bearing structure. This could allow for self-pollination were it not for a marvelous mechanism in the avocado tree that programs these structures to be active at separate times.

As a result, some trees open their flowers as pollen receptors with the morning sun and close the flowers at midday. These same flowers then reopen as pollen producers in the evening. Other trees in the vicinity will have the opposite cycle. Pollination occurs when a tree that is producing pollen is near one that is at the same time receiving pollen. Also, bees or other insects are important to the transfer of the pollen. Thus, an intricate coordination of sunlight, heat, insects, wind, and location makes possible the reproduction of this fruit.

Nutritious and Useful

The avocado has outstanding nutritional value, being high in protein, riboflavin, niacin, potassium, and vitamin C. It is said to contain no less than 11 vitamins and 14 minerals. In some parts of Central America, an avocado with tortillas is considered a complete meal. The avocado is also rich in fat, and its oil is similar to olive oil in that it contains monounsaturated fats. The oil is also used in the fabrication of soaps and cosmetics.

Almost every part of the avocado tree is useful. The wood is used as fuel. The pit, or seed, is used in South America to mark

clothing, since it leaves an indelible stain. In some parts of the Philippines, the leaves are used to make tea. The bark of the tree can reportedly be used to tan leather.

Buying and Eating the Fruit

If you go to the market to buy avocados, do not try to judge their ripeness by the color of their skin, since this differs from one variety to another. Try gently squeezing the fruit. If it is slightly soft, it is ripe. Avocados should be stored in warm, well-ventilated places, and you can aid the ripening process slightly by wrapping them in newspaper. They may also be kept in the refrigerator, even after they have been opened. By sprinkling the open side of the fruit with lemon juice, you may forestall the browning of the pulp.

Many enjoy eating avocados with citrus fruits or tomatoes. Their taste may be enhanced by a sharp or tangy dressing. In addition, the avocado goes well with shrimp, crab, or lobster, and avocados can be used to advantage in many types of salads. Some people combine them with other fruits to make a refreshing juice.

When avocados are mashed with spices and other ingredients, a delicious spread is produced that can be used on crackers. Not to be overlooked, of course, is the famous guacamole, made with avocados, tomatoes, onions, green peppers, and spices. The fruit can also be served with cooked foods, as part of a main dish. In that case, it should be added at the last moment, being kept away from heat.

Perhaps the avocado already plays an important role in your diet. In some parts of the world, however, it may be considered an exotic and rare fruit. If you have never tasted an avocado, why not do so the next time you have the opportunity. You may find that this truly versatile fruit is also delicious!

WATCHING THE WORLD

Preparation for Disaster Needed

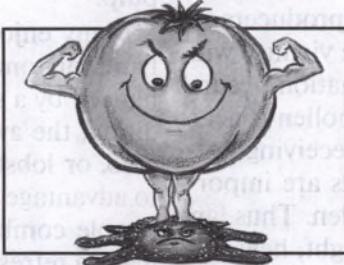
"According to the *World Disasters Report 1999*," says a statement by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "last year's season of natural disasters was the worst on record causing more damage than ever before." Drought, declining soil fertility, floods, and deforestation forced 25 million people to flee their land and seek refuge in urban squatter communities, creating "more 'refugees' than wars and conflict." Hardest hit were countries in the developing world, where 96 percent of all deaths from natural disasters occurred. Over the last five years, aid agency funds have decreased by 40 percent. Highlighting the need for a change of outlook on disaster preparedness, the federation's director of disaster policy, Peter Walker, observed: "The knee-jerk reaction to disaster response is not working . . . We don't wait until a house catches fire, then raise money for the fire department."

Danger When the Bamboo Flowers

Large areas of northeast India are covered by bamboo forests. Fear arose in the states of Manipur and Mizoram as the bamboo there began to blossom. Why? Because the blossoming of the particular species of bamboo plants in these areas, called *mautang*, occurs only once in about 50 years, and it attracts rats. Feeding on the flowers, the rats repro-

duce rapidly and then start attacking the food crops, eventually creating famine conditions. According to *The Times of India*, a famine occurred in 1957 after the bamboo had blossomed in 1954/55. In an attempt to forestall another famine, the government of Mizoram State sponsored a drive to kill the rats. They offered one rupee for each rat tail. As of April, about 90,000 tails had been collected, and funds were being requisitioned to continue the antirat campaign.

Tomatoes Versus Cancer



Recent studies presented by the American Association for Cancer Research suggest that the tomato may have a substance that inhibits the growth of prostate cancer. The substance that gives the red color to tomatoes, lycopene, may reduce the size of carcinogenic tumors of the prostate and reduce metastasis, the spread of cancer to other tissues of the body. A study published by the U.S. National Cancer Institute "revealed that the tomato and all of its derivatives had a positive effect not only against prostate cancer but also against that of the pancreas, lung, and colon."

Children's Mental Problems

A fifth of British young people under the age of 20 are experiencing mental-health problems, according to a report by the Mental Health Foundation. While "the Government, professionals and media seem obsessed with children's physical well-being and academic achievements," comments foundation director June McKerrow, children "are failing to thrive emotionally." The report mentions that a number of factors may be behind this. Children "are forced from an increasingly early age to compare themselves with their contemporaries through exams and assessments," and most leave school regarding themselves as failures. Outdoor games, which aid youngsters "to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience," have been replaced by computers and television. Advertising "stirs up desires to have things they do not have or to be someone they are not." Additionally, with the divorce rate verging on 50 percent and many parents at work, children's stresses are "heightened because they cannot rely on the emotional stability of their families," notes *The Daily Telegraph*.

What Goes Up Comes Down

It has been common in some areas of the United States and in several Latin American countries for revelers to celebrate the start of a new year by firing their guns into the air. But police are urging them

not to do so. "When you fire a gun into the air," said Los Angeles police chief Willie Williams, "that bullet does come down someplace." And that someplace may be in someone else's head. Over a dozen people have been killed in this way over a few years' time in the United States. Additionally, hundreds of cases of injury and property damage have been reported, sometimes caused by bullets that came from miles away. Often, people who fire into the air mistakenly think that the bullets disintegrate in the air or that they will not harm anyone as they descend. But a bullet shot straight up can return with a tremendous impact that is "enough to break the skin, put out an eye or penetrate the soft part of a baby's skull," according to Fred King, spokesman for the Houston Police Department.

Increasing Religious Intolerance

According to the International Helsinki Federation, a human rights organization, "a manifold pattern of virtual persecution" of so-called new religions has developed in Europe, reports *Catholic International*. To counteract minority religions, several governments are trying to adopt legal measures that are in violation of commitments to promote freedom of conscience and religion. Controversial parliamentary reports and black lists of "dangerous sects" in Belgium, France, and Germany have increased intolerance and discrimination. However, Willy Fautré, president of Human Rights Without Frontiers,

points out that only a "very limited number" of these religious movements pose a threat to society and that fears have been exaggerated. Mainstream churches, he said, have added to the problem by acting as "both parties and judges" in the disputes and by advocating "confrontation rather than dialogue."

Rising Child Delinquency

In Germany last year, the number of crimes committed by youths increased, reports the newspaper *Hessische-Niedersächsische Allgemeine*. "The number of children suspected of inflicting bodily harm" on others went up by 14.1 percent. Particularly noticeable was the rise in the number of child suspects under the age of 14—152,774—an increase of 5.9 percent. Calling this development "very alarming," Federal Minister of the Interior, Otto Schily, highlighted the need for stronger preventive measures. While the government can help, especially in the fields of education and labor, he pointed out, it is the family that particularly plays an important role in crime prevention.

Canada's Newest Territory

People who "routinely want to nap during the day, doze off during meetings, or are having difficulty concentrating" are not getting enough sleep at night, says the *Toronto Star* newspaper. Most people consistently need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night to function well during the day. Here are some suggestions the experts give on how to get it: Make sleep a priority. Take time to unwind before bedtime. A leisurely walk may help, but avoid vigorous exercise in the last three hours. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day. If you wake up at night, do not fret or try to solve problems—instead, attune your mind to pleasant thoughts. If you're still awake after half an hour, get up and do something relaxing, such as reading for pleasure. Be careful not to eat or drink too much near bedtime, but don't go to bed hungry either.



FROM OUR READERS

Grandparents Thank you for the loving way you dealt with the subject "Grandparents—Their Joys, Their Challenges." (March 22, 1999) I am a single grandparent raising two grandsons. Their mother was and still is a drug abuser. As the article brought out, I had the boys' anger to contend with. I had no concept of what it felt like to be abandoned by both parents. But just last year my younger grandson said to me, "Thank you for taking us in." Those words made all the struggles and tears worthwhile.

D. B., United States

Thanks to the love and faithfulness of our dear grandmother, my brothers and I survived years of parental neglect and abuse. The Bible truths she inculcated in our hearts gave us the strength to carry on. Today, her three grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren are all dedicated Christians.

B. L. B., Brazil

I have a 17-month-old baby, and there has been tension between my mother-in-law and me over his care. I was so jealous that I got to the point where I couldn't even enjoy Christian meetings. This article, though, helped me to see that she is not malicious and that she is not trying to take possession of him. I thank Jehovah that I received this information when I most needed it.

M. Z. C., Mexico

Five Sons I found the article "I Thank Jehovah for My Five Sons" (March 22, 1999) to be interesting, as there were several similarities between Helen Saulsbury and my mother. Both were baptized the same year. Like Helen, my mother stayed home and cared for us when our family was financially strained—my father's company went bankrupt. She likewise served as a pioneer,

a full-time evangelizer, and always told us interesting experiences from the field. This made the pioneer service very appealing to me. Now that I have two daughters myself, I can understand how much effort my mother put forth for us.

M. S., Japan

A special thank-you for the article. As a father, I try to follow the Bible's counsel, but I often feel inadequate. The Saulsbury family's experience strengthened me to carry on.

R. M. R., Brazil

Wanting Things I am a 12-year-old girl. I want to thank you for the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Can't I Have the Things I Want?" (March 22, 1999) There are things I want—like a bicycle and a guitar. But my father is not able to provide them for me. This disappoints me. Nevertheless, your article really encouraged me. Thank you for publishing this fatherly advice.

C. U., Nigeria

Muscles After I finished exercising this morning, I sat down to read the article "Muscles—Masterpieces of Design." (April 8, 1999) I started to think about my eye muscles moving as I read each page, my arm muscles contracting and relaxing as I sipped from my coffee mug, my leg muscles working as I shifted around in my seat. Wow! What a marvel of design!

N. T., Belize

Our muscles reveal just a small part of the vast wisdom and intelligence of our Grand Creator, Jehovah God. Reading about the human body has always fascinated me. But this is the first time I have read such an article that was so well written and easy to understand.

P. J. O. S., Brazil

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'THEY WERE SO REFRESHING!'

RECENTLY the general manager of a hotel located near one of the international airports in Japan visited the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ebina. He seemed quite excited. Why?

During 1998, over 200 Witnesses stayed at the manager's hotel on their way to and from their international conventions in Africa, Australia, Korea, and North America. When the service staff of the hotel had a meeting to review the activities of the past year, they commented that of the hotel's 30,000 annual guests, these convention delegates were the most impressive they had served.

Therefore, the hotel manager traveled to Ebina to express appreciation. 'Those guests,' he said, 'were very polite and left their rooms clean and tidy. They often expressed their appreciation. Moreover, they provided words of encouragement from the Bible. They were so refreshing!'

The manager continued: 'We see many guests who are troubled. So we have been looking for some helpful information for them. We would like them to benefit from the Bible's teaching because it exerts a positive influence on the lives of people.'