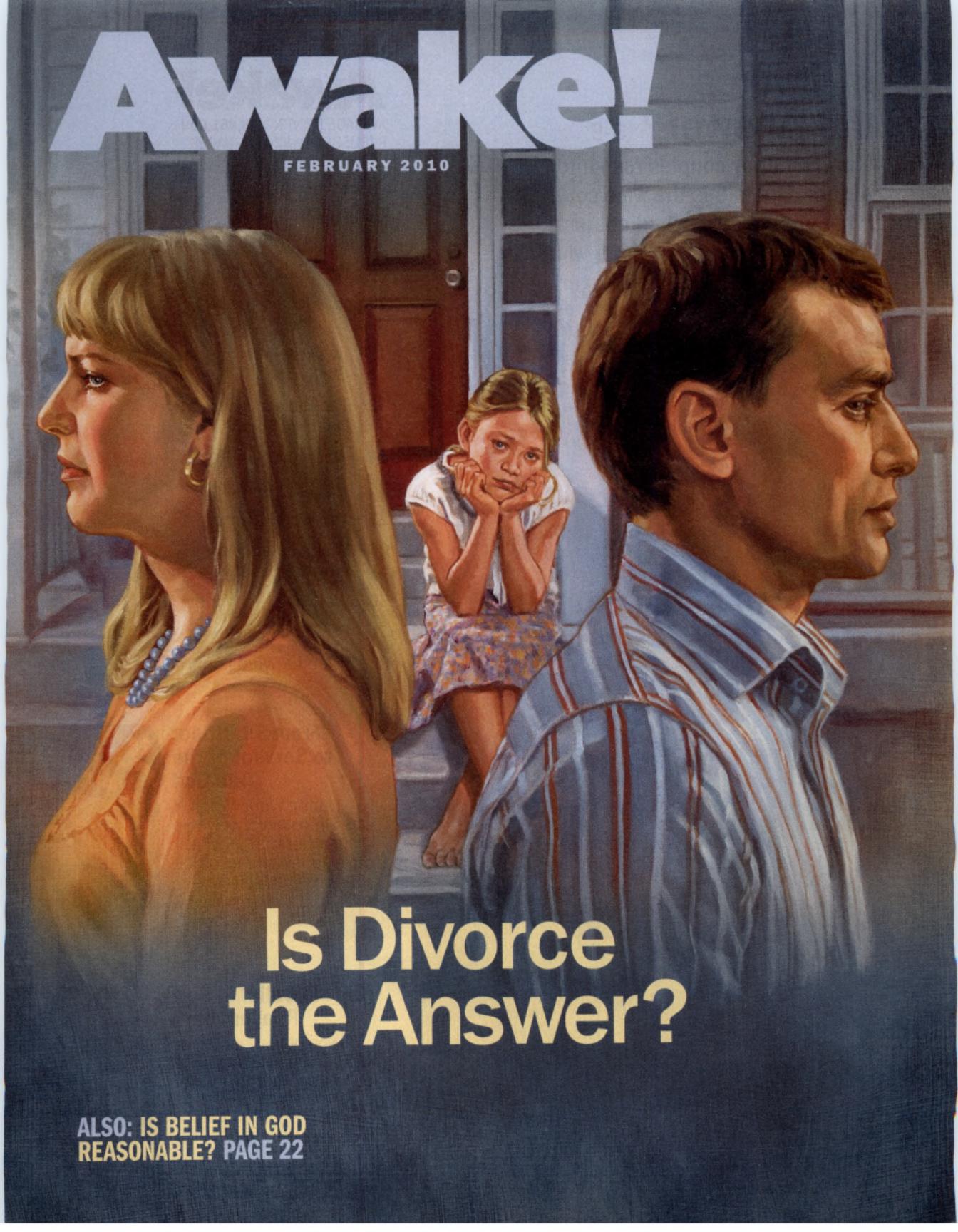


Awake!

FEBRUARY 2010

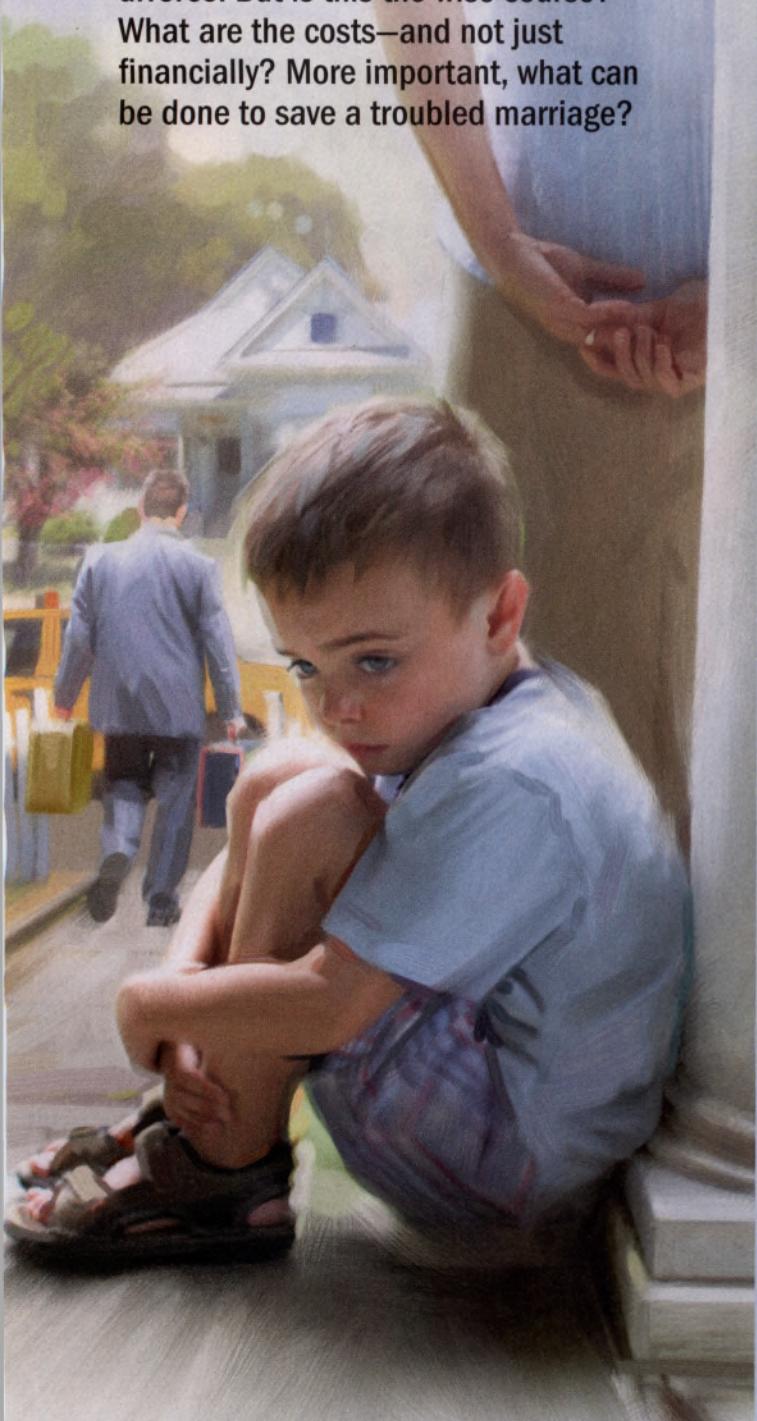


Is Divorce the Answer?

ALSO: IS BELIEF IN GOD
REASONABLE? PAGE 22

Is Divorce the Answer? 3-9

Many unhappy couples rush into divorce. But is this the wise course? What are the costs—and not just financially? More important, what can be done to save a troubled marriage?



Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 38,451,000
PUBLISHED IN 82 LANGUAGES

- 3 "I Want Out!"
- 4 Four Things You Should Know About Divorce
- 8 Can Your Marriage Be Saved?
- 10 Was It Designed? Sharkskin
- 11 Awake! Helps to Save an Unborn Child
- 12 The Bible's Viewpoint Dating With a View to Marriage
- 14 When the Sun Turned Red
- 16 The Colorful Kingfisher
- 21 The World's Smallest Bat
- 26 Young People Ask Why Are We Always Arguing?
- 30 Watching the World
- 31 For Family Review
- 32 "I Need a Word From You"

From SS Officer to Servant of the True God

During World War II, it was almost inconceivable for a German SS officer to disobey a direct order. Yet, this officer did. Find out why.



Is Belief in God Reasonable?

Do you believe in God or not? Let the evidence lead you to a sound conclusion.



"I WANT OUT!"



The run-down house shows signs of neglect. Over the years, it has weathered many storms, not all of them successfully. Now the structure is fragile, and the collapse of the house seems imminent.

THAT picture describes the state of many marriages today. Have you ever felt that your own marriage may be heading in the same direction? If so, be assured that no couple is immune to problems. In fact, the Bible realistically acknowledges that those who marry are likely to have "pain and grief."—1 Corinthians 7:28, *The New English Bible*.

Underscoring the truthfulness of those words, one team of researchers describe marriage as "the most risky undertaking routinely taken on by the greatest number of people in our society." They add: "What starts out as a relationship of great joy and promise can become the most frustrating and painful endeavor in a person's lifetime."

What about *your* marriage? Is it characterized by one or more of the following traits?

- Constant arguing
- Bitter speech
- Infidelity
- Resentment

If your marriage seems fragile and its collapse seems imminent, what should you do? Is divorce the answer?



"FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM"

In some lands, divorce rates have skyrocketed. Consider the United States, where for many years divorce was relatively uncommon. After 1960, writes Barbara Dafoe Whitehead in her book *The Divorce Culture*, "the rate accelerated at a dazzling pace." She states: "It doubled in roughly a decade and continued its upward climb until the early 1980s, when it stabilized at the highest level among advanced Western societies. As a consequence of this sharp and sustained rise, divorce moved from the margins to the mainstream of American life in the space of three decades."

FOUR THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DIVORCE



After assessing the damage, the owners have a choice—either tear down the house or save it.

IS YOUR marriage at a similar juncture? Perhaps your spouse has betrayed your trust or recurring conflicts have sapped the joy from your relationship. If so, you might tell yourself, 'We've fallen out of love' or 'We just aren't meant for each other' or 'We didn't know what we were doing when we got married.' You could even be thinking, 'Maybe we should divorce.'

Before making a hasty decision to end your marriage, think. Divorce does not always end life's anxieties. On the contrary, often it merely exchanges one set of problems for another. In his book *The Good Enough Teen*, Dr. Brad Sachs warns: "Separating couples fantasize about the perfect divorce—the sudden and

permanent passing of gray and stormy conflict, replaced by the cool, comforting breezes of serenity and congeniality. But such a state is just as eternally elusive as is the perfect marriage." It is important, then, to be fully informed and to approach the question of divorce realistically.

The Bible and Divorce

The Bible does not treat divorce casually. It states that Jehovah God views as treacherous and hateful the frivolous putting away of one's mate, perhaps with the motive of taking another spouse. (Malachi 2:13-16) Marriage is a permanent bond. (Matthew 19:6) Many marriages that broke up on trivial grounds could have been saved if partners had been more forgiving.—Matthew 18:21, 22.

At the same time, the Bible allows for divorce and remarriage on one ground—sexual relations outside the marriage. (Matthew 19:9) Therefore, if you learn that your mate has been unfaithful, you have the right to terminate the marriage. Others should not impose their views on you, and it is not the purpose of this article to tell you what to do. In the end, you are the one who will live with the consequences; therefore, you are the one who must decide.—Galatians 6:5.

Nevertheless, the Bible states: "The shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) Hence, even if you have Scriptural grounds for divorce, you would do well to give serious thought to what that step will entail. (1 Corinthians 6:12) "Some may think that they

Awake!®

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

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, 1000 Red Mills Road, **Wallkill, NY 12589-3299**. © 2010 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

have to decide quickly," says David, in Britain. "But having been through a divorce, I can say from experience that time is needed to think things through."*

Let us consider four important issues

* Names in this article have been changed.

1 The Problem of Finances

Daniella, in Italy, was married for 12 years when she found out that her husband had been having an affair with a colleague. "By the time I knew about it," says Daniella, "the woman was six months pregnant."

After a period of separation, Daniella decided to get a divorce. "I tried to save my marriage," she says, "but my husband continued to be unfaithful." Daniella feels that she made the right choice. Still, she relates: "As soon as we separated, my economic situation became disastrous. Sometimes I didn't even have an evening meal. I would just drink a glass of milk."

Maria, in Spain, suffered a similar setback. "My ex-husband doesn't give us any financial support," she says, "and I have to work very hard to pay off debts he had. I also had to move from a comfortable house to a small apartment in an unsafe area."

As these experiences show, the breakup of a marriage often deals a devastating financial blow to women. In fact, a seven-year European study revealed that while the income

you need to think about. As we do, please note that none of the divorced individuals quoted say that they made a wrong decision. However, their comments highlight some of the challenges that often arise in the months and even years after ending a marriage.



of men increased by 11 percent after divorce, women's income decreased by 17 percent. "It's difficult for some women," says Mieke Jansen, who headed the study, "because they have to care for the children, find a job as well as deal with the emotional trauma of divorce." London's *Daily Telegraph* noted that according to some attorneys, such factors are "forcing people to think twice about splitting up."

What might happen: If you divorce, there may be a reduction in your income. You may also have to move. If you retain custody, it may be difficult to support yourself and adequately care for the needs of your children.
—1 Timothy 5:8.

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese⁺ (audio, Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech, + Danish, + Dutch, + English, + Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish, + French, + Georgian, German, + Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian, + Japanese, + Kannada, Kirghiz, Korean, + Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian, + Polish, + Portuguese, + Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, + Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sisulu, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, + Swahili, Swedish, + Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

+ CD also available.

° MP3 CD-ROM also available.

^ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address. **America, United States of:** 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. **Australia:** PO Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** PO Box N-1247, Nassau, NP. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Am Steinfels, 65618 Selters. **Guam:** 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. **Guyana:** 352-360 Tyrell St, Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. **Hawaii:** 2055 Kamehameha IV Road, Honolulu, HI 96819-2619. **Jamaica:** PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. **Puerto Rico:** PO Box 3980, Guayanabo, PR 00970. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

"EVERY CHILD'S BIRTHRIGHT"

"When I was five years old, my father had a brief affair with his secretary, and my parents divorced. As far as taking care of me, they did everything 'right' according to the wisdom of the day. They reassured me that while they did not love each other anymore, they still loved me, and after my father departed to his bachelor apartment across town, both continued to care for my material needs.

"Two years later my mother remarried, and we moved out of the country. After that, I only saw my father every few years. I have seen him just once in the past nine years. He missed most of my growing up, and he does not know my three children—his grandchildren—except through what I've shared with him in letters and photos. They have missed knowing their grandfather.

"As a child of divorce, I grew up without any visible scars. But inside I battled monsters of rage, depression, and insecurity without knowing why. My trust in men was nonexistent. It wasn't until I was in my 30's that a mature friend helped me to identify the roots of my hostility and I began to work at letting go of it.

"My parents' divorce took away from me every child's birthright—the feeling of being secure and protected. The world is a cold, scary place, but it seems to me that the family unit is a wall against it, where the child can come to feel nurtured and comforted. Shatter the family unit, and the protective wall crumbles too."—Diane.

2 Parenting Issues

"My husband's unfaithfulness came as a terrible shock," says a woman in Britain named Jane. "Also, I was devastated to think that he actually chose to leave us." Jane divorced her husband. She still believes that she made the right decision, but she admits: "One challenge I faced was having to be both mom and dad to the children. I had to make all the decisions myself."

The situation was similar with Graciela, a divorced mother in Spain. "I was given full custody of my 16-year-old son," she says. "But adolescence is a difficult time, and I was ill-prepared to raise my son alone. I spent days and nights sobbing. I felt like a failure as a mother."

Those who share custody may face an additional problem—having to negotiate with the ex-spouse on such delicate issues as visitation arrangements, child support, and discipline. Christine, a divorced mother in the United States, says: "Creating a working relationship with your ex is not easy. There are so many emotions involved, and if you're not careful, you could end up using your child as a tool to try to manipulate the situation."

What might happen: The custody arrangements set forth in a court of law may not be what you would prefer. If you share custody, your ex-spouse may not be as reasonable as you would like regarding the aforementioned matters of visitation, financial support, and so on.

3 The Effect of Divorce on You

Mark, from Britain, was betrayed by his wife more than once. "The second time," he says, "I couldn't cope with the possibility that it could happen again." Mark divorced his wife, but he found that his feelings for her lingered. "When people say negative things about her, they think they're helping; but they're not," he says. "Love stays for a long time."

David, quoted earlier, was similarly devastated when he found out that his wife was involved with another man. "I reacted with total disbelief," he says. "I truly wanted to spend every day of my life with her and our children." David chose to divorce, but the breakup has left him with doubts about his future. "I wonder if someone could really love me or whether this might happen again if I remarry," he says. "My confidence has been shaken."

If you are divorced, it is only to be expected that you will experience a wide range of emotions. On the one hand, you might still feel love for this person with whom you shared a one-flesh bond. (Genesis 2:24) On the other hand, you might feel resentful over what has occurred. "Even after several years," says Graciela, quoted earlier, "you feel confused, humiliated, and helpless. Many happy moments from your marriage come to mind, and you think: 'He used to tell me that he couldn't live without me. Was he always lying? Why did this happen?'"

What might happen: You may have lingering feelings of anger and resentment over the ways in which your spouse mistreated you. At times, loneliness may be overwhelming.

—Proverbs 14:29; 18:1.



4 The Effect of Divorce on Children

"It was devastating," says José, a divorced father in Spain. "The worst moment was when I discovered that the other man was my sister's husband. I just wanted to die." José found that his two boys—ages two and four—were also affected by their mother's course. "They could not come to terms with the situation," he says. "They didn't understand why their mother was living with their

"CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE"

"My parents divorced when I was 12 years old. In one way, I was relieved. Things got a lot more calm and peaceful around the house; I didn't have to listen to all that fighting anymore. Still, I had mixed emotions.

"After the divorce, I wanted to get along with both of my parents, and I tried very hard

to stay as neutral as possible. But no matter what I did, I always felt like I was caught in the middle. My dad told me that he thought my mom was going to turn me against him. So I had to reassure him constantly that my mom wasn't trying to poison my mind. My mom was also very insecure. She said she was afraid

that I was listening to negative things my dad told me about her. It got to the point that I didn't feel like I could talk to either of my parents about what I was going through anymore because I didn't want to hurt them. So, basically, from the age of 12 on, I kept my feelings about the divorce to myself."—Sandra.

uncle and why I had taken them with me and moved in with my sister and my mother. If I had to go somewhere, they would ask, 'When are you coming home?' or they would say, 'Daddy, don't leave us!'"

Children are often the forgotten casualties on the divorce battlefield. But what if two parents just do not get along? In such a case, is divorce really "better for the children"? In recent years, that notion has come under attack—especially when marital problems are not extreme. The book *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* states: "Many adults who are trapped in very unhappy marriages would be surprised to learn that their children are relatively content. They don't care if Mom and Dad sleep in different beds as long as the family is together."

Admittedly, children are often aware of parental conflicts, and marital tension can take a toll on their young minds and hearts. However, to assume that a divorce will automatically be in their best interests could be a mistake. "The structure that marriage provides appears to help parents maintain the kind of consistent, moderate discipline to which children respond, even when the marriage is less than ideal," write Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher in their book *The Case for Marriage*.

What might happen: Divorce could have a devastating effect on your children, especially if you do not encourage them to have a healthy relationship with your ex-spouse. —See the box "Caught in the Middle."

This article has discussed four factors that you would do well to consider if you are thinking about divorce. As mentioned earlier, if your spouse has been unfaithful, the decision is yours to make. Whichever course you choose, you need to be aware of the consequences. Know what challenges you will face, and be prepared to deal with them.

After considering the matter, you might feel that the better option is to work to improve your marriage. But is that really possible?

CAN YOUR MARRIAGE BE SAVED?

The owners acknowledge that their house is in poor condition, but they have decided to restore it.

WOULD you like to do the same with your marriage? If so, where can you begin? Try the following suggestions.

1 Make a resolve.

Agree with your mate that you will work together to restore peace to your marriage. Try writing your decisions on paper. When both you and your spouse are committed, saving your marriage becomes a team project.
—Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.

2 Identify the problem.

What is it that has interfered with your marriage? In one sentence, write out what you think is lacking or what you wish could change. (Ephesians 4:22-24) Understandably, the problem you identify may be different from that noted by your spouse.

3 Set a goal.

Where would you like your marriage to be six months from now? What specific improvements would you like to see? Write your goal on paper. When you have a clear vision as to what you need in your marriage, your goal will be easier to attain.
—1 Corinthians 9:26.

4 Apply Bible counsel.

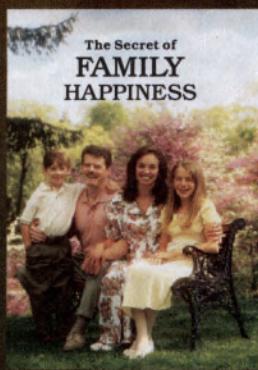
Once you have identified your problem and determined the improvements you would like to make, look to the Bible for advice. Its principles are timeless, and they really work. (Isaiah 48:17; 2 Timothy 3:17) For example, the Bible encourages you and your spouse to be forgiving. Indeed, the Bible says that “it is beauty . . . to pass over transgression.”—Proverbs 19:11; Ephesians 4:32.

Even if at first your efforts seem futile, do not give up! The book *The Case for Marriage* reports the encouraging results of one study, stating: “The truth is shocking: 86 percent of unhappily married people who stick it out find that, five years later, their marriages are happier.” Even couples who described themselves as very unhappy experienced a turnaround.

Perhaps the same can be true for you. The publishers of this magazine, Jehovah’s Witnesses, have found that

the Bible provides practical principles for married couples. For instance, many marriages improve when spouses are kind and tenderly compassionate and freely forgive each other. Wives have learned the value of displaying a “quiet and mild spirit,” and husbands have experienced the benefits of not being bitterly angry with their wives.—1 Peter 3:4; Colossians 3:19.

These Scriptural principles are effective because the Bible’s Author, Jehovah God, created the marriage arrangement. Why not ask Jehovah’s Witnesses for more information on how the Bible can help *your* marriage?*



* To help families, Jehovah’s Witnesses have published a 192-page book entitled *The Secret of Family Happiness*. Write to the publishers at the appropriate address on page 5 of this magazine for more information.

WAS IT DESIGNED?

Sharkskin



To the eye, the skin of a shark appears smooth. But if you could feel it—safely, of course—you would discover that sharkskin actually has a texture like sandpaper when you move your hand from the tail toward the head.*

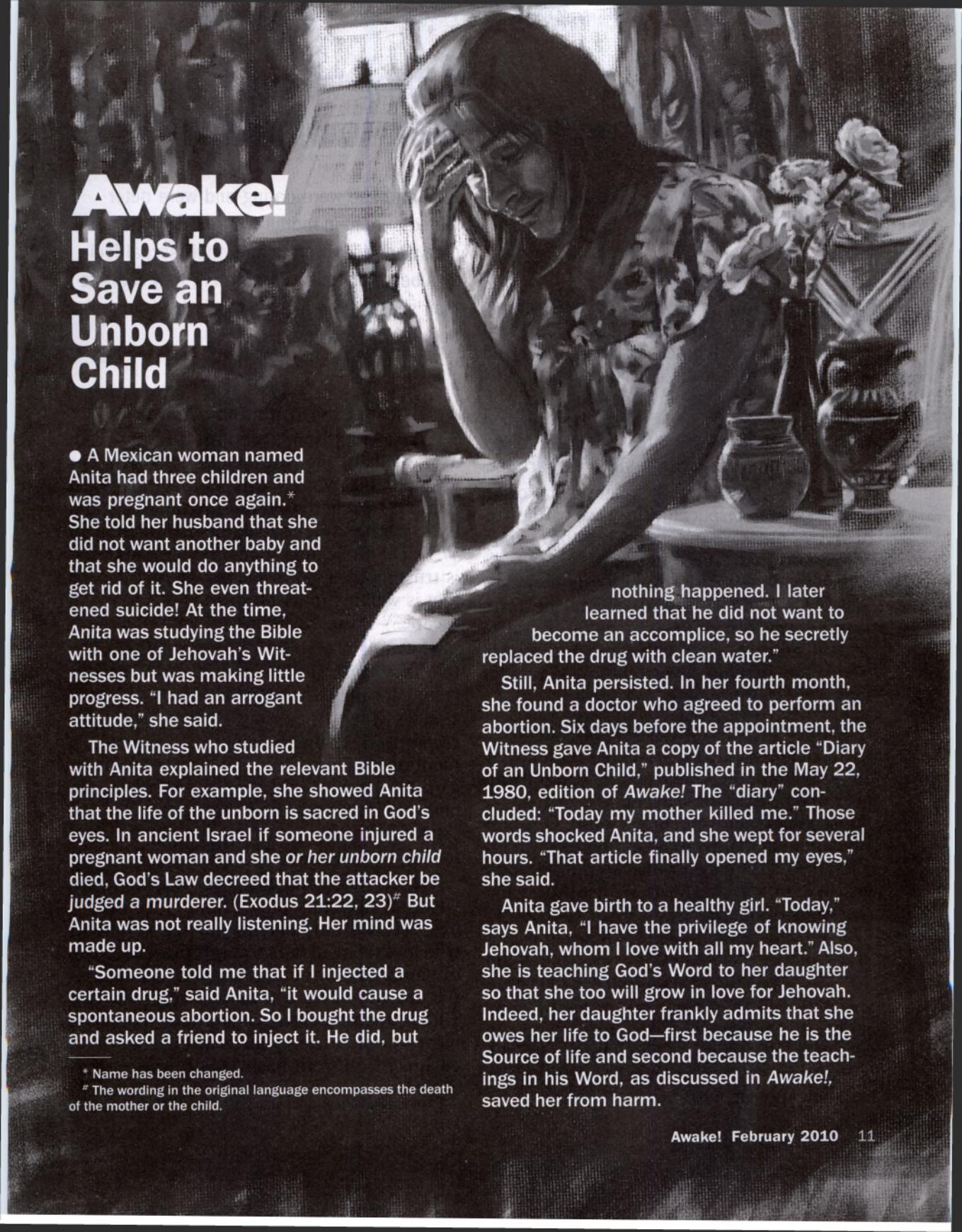
Consider: The tiny grooved scales that produce this effect help the shark in two ways. First, they channel the water, allowing the shark to swim with minimal resistance. Second, the scales flex as the shark swims, creating an unstable surface so that parasites cannot find a home there.

The properties of sharkskin have a wide range of applications. For instance, scientists have already produced a swimsuit that because of the shark-inspired texture of its outer surface increases the wearer's swimming speed by about three percent. They believe that the same principles can be employed to develop cars and boats with less friction drag.

Researchers also hope to tap into the hygienic properties of sharkskin to manufacture a microbe repellent coating for boats that would be more friendly to the environment than metal-based antifouling paints. Other applications include medical products and devices that will reduce the risk of hospital-acquired infections.

What do you think? Did the shark's skin—with its energy-efficient, hygienic properties—come about by chance? Or was it designed?

* The roughness of the skin is not noticeable when you move your hand from the head toward the tail.

A black and white photograph of a woman holding a baby. The woman is wearing a patterned headscarf and a dark dress. She is looking down at the baby she is holding. In the background, there are some vases with flowers and a small bowl on a surface.

Awake! Helps to Save an Unborn Child

● A Mexican woman named Anita had three children and was pregnant once again.* She told her husband that she did not want another baby and that she would do anything to get rid of it. She even threatened suicide! At the time, Anita was studying the Bible with one of Jehovah's Witnesses but was making little progress. "I had an arrogant attitude," she said.

The Witness who studied with Anita explained the relevant Bible principles. For example, she showed Anita that the life of the unborn is sacred in God's eyes. In ancient Israel if someone injured a pregnant woman and she or her *unborn child* died, God's Law decreed that the attacker be judged a murderer. (Exodus 21:22, 23)[#] But Anita was not really listening. Her mind was made up.

"Someone told me that if I injected a certain drug," said Anita, "it would cause a spontaneous abortion. So I bought the drug and asked a friend to inject it. He did, but

nothing happened. I later learned that he did not want to become an accomplice, so he secretly replaced the drug with clean water."

Still, Anita persisted. In her fourth month, she found a doctor who agreed to perform an abortion. Six days before the appointment, the Witness gave Anita a copy of the article "Diary of an Unborn Child," published in the May 22, 1980, edition of *Awake!* The "diary" concluded: "Today my mother killed me." Those words shocked Anita, and she wept for several hours. "That article finally opened my eyes," she said.

Anita gave birth to a healthy girl. "Today," says Anita, "I have the privilege of knowing Jehovah, whom I love with all my heart." Also, she is teaching God's Word to her daughter so that she too will grow in love for Jehovah. Indeed, her daughter frankly admits that she owes her life to God—first because he is the Source of life and second because the teachings in his Word, as discussed in *Awake!*, saved her from harm.

* Name has been changed.

[#] The wording in the original language encompasses the death of the mother or the child.

Dating With a View to Marriage

TRUE worship involves more than simply attending a weekly religious service. It is a way of life that influences one's conduct and moral standards. Jesus Christ said that only those "doing the will" of God merit His favor. (Matthew 7:21) To please God, we need to keep our relationship with the opposite sex honorable and date with a view to marriage.

How can you keep your relationship clean in God's eyes, especially in view of the tremendous pressure on couples to throw moral restraint aside? First, recognize that God's standards were set down with our very best interests in mind. Second, accept the truth about human nature. Third, lay definite ground rules for right behavior. And fourth, have God in your relationship. Consider these points one by one.

Standards Tailor-Made for Our Benefit

At Isaiah 48:17, 18, we read: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

Yes, the commandments and principles set down in God's inspired Word, the Holy Bible, are for *our* benefit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) They are evidence that our Creator really cares about us and wants us to be happy and successful in all aspects of life. (Psalm 19:7-10) Is that how you feel in your heart? If so, you are showing true wisdom.

Julie and Lee were dating and were determined to remain morally clean.* But one evening when they were alone, their sexual feelings began to build. Fortunately, they came to their senses before going too far and committing a serious wrong.

Accept the Truth About Yourself

Like a true friend, Jehovah is honest with us; he tells us the truth about ourselves. For example, his Word warns us that "the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) The Bible also states: "He [or she] that is trusting in his own heart is stupid, but he that is walking in wisdom is the one that will escape."—Proverbs 28:26.

How might a couple who are dating show that they trust in their own hearts? One way is by allowing themselves to get into circumstances where they may be tempted to become overly intimate, similar to the couple mentioned above. Another way is by disregarding the wise advice of God-fearing parents. Such parents know that sexual feelings, especially during youth, can be like a powerful engine that has to be well controlled.

Hence, young people who 'walk in godly wisdom' take parental guidance seriously. Yes, they take to heart the advice of parents who love them enough to say things that a son or daughter may not want to hear. Of course, the one who loves you most is your heavenly Father, Jehovah God, who advises you to "remove vexation from your heart, and ward off calamity from your flesh." (Ecclesiastes 11:9,

* Some names have been changed.



Early in their relationship, prudent couples agree on Scripturally appropriate expressions of affection and are determined to stay within those limits

10) How can you do that? By not giving in to improper desires.

Lay Clear Ground Rules for Behavior

"With those consulting together there is wisdom." (Proverbs 13:10) Early in their relationship, prudent couples apply those words by agreeing on Scripturally appropriate expressions of affection and by being determined to stay within those limits. To take liberties with each other or to be overconfident is like driving dangerously. It is too late to make resolutions about road safety when you are being pulled out of a wreck!

"A shrewd man [or woman] sees trouble coming and lies low," the Bible says. "The simple walk into it and pay the penalty." (Proverbs 22:3, *The New English Bible*) Cou-

ples can avoid much trouble by dating in the company of a wholesome group or a suitable chaperone. The penalty for foolishness while dating may include a damaged conscience, lack of respect for yourself and the other person, and shame for all concerned, including family members. So be shrewd; agree to apply Scriptural standards and stick to them!

Make Jehovah the 'Third Cord'

Marriage is like a threefold cord, with God as the primary strand. "A threefold cord cannot quickly be torn in two," says Ecclesiastes 4:12. The same principle can apply to dating couples. Those who want God's blessing on their relationship receive that blessing when they stay close to God individually. Says Psalm 1:1-3: "Happy is the man [or woman] that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones . . . But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night . . . , and everything he does will succeed."

Yes, real success in life, including success in courtship and marriage, comes when we do things Jehovah's way. After all, he is our Creator, and romantic attraction and marriage are precious gifts from him. As such, they deserve our utmost respect.—James 1:17.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- How do we know that God wants the best for us?—Isaiah 48:17, 18.
- What truth about ourselves should we accept?—Jeremiah 17:9.
- What is the secret to success while dating and, later, in marriage?—Psalm 1:1-3.

When the Sun Turned Red

FOR several months during the summer of 1783, a strange, dry fog settled over large parts of the Northern Hemisphere. The sun turned bloodred, vegetation withered, and a countless number of people died. In fact, estimates indicate that the fog took the lives of tens of thousands in France and England alone. Many others fell sick—so many, apparently, that farmers struggled to find workers to gather in the crops that were unaffected.

The fog has been called “one of the most remarkable meteorological and geophysical phenomena of the last millennium.” At the time, however, only the people of Iceland knew the cause—a local volcanic eruption of a kind that experts say occurs once every few centuries. Understandably, Iceland was worst hit, losing an estimated 20 percent of the population.

The Laki Fissure Eruption

On June 8, 1783, residents of the Síða area of southern Iceland saw the first ominous signs of what has come to be known as the Laki fissure eruption. Because the event was documented by observers in a number of lands, researchers have been able to piece together a map showing the path of the volcanic cloud day by day. One of the eyewitnesses in Iceland, Jón Steingrímsson, recorded seeing “a black haze” extend out from the north. Darkness spread over him, and the ground became coated with fine ash. Then earthquakes and tremors began. He noted that a week later, “a terrible stream of fire poured forth from the Skaftá [River] canyon,” engulfing all that lay in its path. Steingrímsson documented the event for eight months.

In what is technically called a continental flood basalt eruption, a 16-mile-long fis-

sure in the earth’s crust ejected three and a half cubic miles of lava, more than any volcanic eruption on record! Flaming fountains of molten rock shot thousands of feet into the air, and lava flowed some 50 miles from the fissure, covering 225 square miles and filling the channel of the Skaftá River.

Over the following year, ash and toxic chemicals that had settled on the Icelandic grass killed more than 50 percent of the cattle and about 80 percent of the horses and sheep. Famine became widespread. The Laki fissure also belched an estimated 122 million tons of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere, where it reacted with water vapor to produce about 200 million tons of acidic aerosol.*

Distant Consequences

That summer, winds carried the noxious atmosphere great distances. In Britain and France, people described a “peculiar haze or smoky fog” that was unlike any other in living memory. Foul-smelling and sulfurous, it caused respiratory ailments, dysentery, headaches, sore eyes, sore throats, and other problems. The thick cloud of sulfur dioxide along

* Sulfur dioxide is also a troublesome air pollutant today, causing acid rain. The gas is a product of the combustion of fossil fuels, such as coal, gas, and petroleum.

Aerial photo of the Laki fissure landscape

Lava fountain: © Tom Pfeiffer; aerial photo: U.S. Geological Survey; satellite photo: Jacques Desclaux, MODIS Rapid Response Team, NASA/GSFC



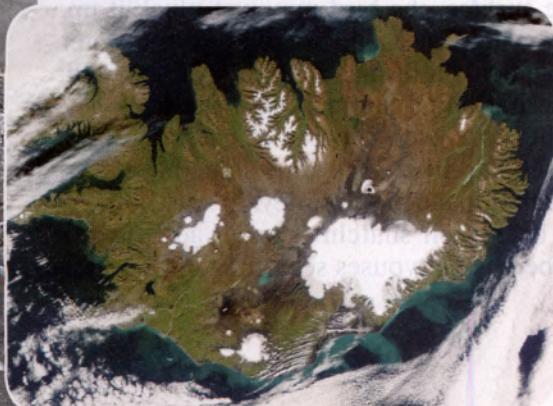


An example of an incandescent lava fountain

with sulfuric acid proved deadly to young and old.

A report from Germany stated that in one night the toxic plume killed the leaves on the trees lining the banks of the Ems River. In England, vegetables shriveled and leaves died, as if scorched. Similar reports came from France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Scandinavia, and Slovakia. Indeed, the chemical fog was observed as far away as Portugal, Tunisia, Syria, Russia, western China, and Newfoundland.

Satellite view of Iceland



The indications are that temperatures were also affected as the heavily contaminated atmosphere blocked the sun's rays. In 1784 continental Europe was about four degrees Fahrenheit cooler than the average temperature there during the second half of the 18th century. Iceland was almost nine degrees cooler. In North America, the winter of 1783/1784 was so cold that ice floes were reported to have "floated down the Mississippi . . . and out into the Gulf of Mexico."

Some scholars believe that the near extinction of the Kauwerak people, an Inuit group in northwest Alaska, may have been linked to famine caused by the Laki eruption. Tree-ring data indicate that the summer of 1783 was Alaska's coldest in over 400 years. Indeed, the Kauwerak have an oral tradition about a year when the warm season ended in June, followed by extreme cold and starvation.

Laki and the Modern World

The natural disaster of 1783 is all but forgotten, partly because it happened a long time ago but also because most who experienced it were unaware of the cause. In Iceland, however, the Laki eruption is remembered as the greatest natural calamity in the country's history.

Some interpreted the disaster as divine chastisement. The Bible, however, does not support that view. (James 1:13) God does not act indiscriminately against good and bad, for "all his ways are justice." (Deuteronomy 32:4) Justice will be demonstrated in an outstanding way in the future when God intervenes in human affairs. His purpose, the Bible states, will be to eradicate all causes of death and suffering, which include natural disasters.—Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:3, 4.

1. Homs. 2. Jars. 3. Toches. 4. Seven. 5. Elia.



The Colorful KINGFISHER

A FLASH of turquoise or electric blue dives into a stream and quickly emerges again, flapping into the air with a fish in its beak. This is often the first glimpse that people get of a kingfisher, a colorful bird with a relatively large head and beak. Despite the name, however, kingfishers are not all fish-eaters. Some species prefer lizards, snakes, crabs, or even insects—often catching the latter in flight. Moreover, only about a third of the world's kingfishers live near water. Their habitats range from dense tropical forests to coral islands to deserts. One desert dweller is the red-backed kingfisher, which makes its home in the dry interior of Australia.

The species that do fish are masters of the art. Usually, the bird watches patiently from a perch. When it spots a fish, it tenses for the dive, instinctively factoring in the refraction of light, which seems to alter the position of the fish. Then the bird dives toward the water, beating its wings to give it speed. If the fish is near the surface, the bird may just pluck it up. Otherwise, it folds its wings back and shoots into the water like a dart. "The whole act is a display of extraordinary skill, performed without hesitation or fumble," says the book *The Life of Birds*. Kingfishers are even capable of catching more than one fish at a time! And in cold regions some have been observed diving through thin ice to seize prey. In Australia the azure kingfisher has been seen snatching small aquatic animals that were disturbed by platypuses searching for food underwater in a river.

Courtship and Homemaking

Kingfisher courtship rituals can be quite entertaining. Some species pair up in aerial chases, after which the male displays his nest-digging skills. Rituals may also include feeding—the male advertising his worthiness by offering the female a tasty morsel.

Kingfishers do not construct typical bird's nests. Some make their home in a chamber at the end of a tunnel that they may excavate in a bank, ditch, or gravel pit. Others set up house in a rabbit burrow or in a hole in a tree.

In order to construct an earthen chamber, a kingfisher may excavate a tunnel two or three feet long. Getting it started, though, can be a challenge. Several species address the problem by flying straight at the bank with their bill outstretched—a high-risk strategy that can stun or even kill a bird! In the tropical rain forests of New Guinea and northern Australia, the paradise kingfisher commonly excavates a hole in a termite nest. The insects seem to put up with the intrusion, repairing the damage once the birds vacate after breeding.

Parenting can also be hard work for kingfishers. An observer in Africa saw one pair deliver between 60 and 70 fish every day to their five nestlings, besides feeding themselves. In one instance a male successfully reared its brood even though its mate had died four days before the young hatched. In some species other nonbreeding birds help the parents incubate the eggs and later tend to the young.

From Ireland to the Solomon Islands

The common kingfisher has a vast range that stretches from Ireland in the northwest across Europe and Russia to the Solomon Islands in the southeast. Since its territory includes regions where freezing conditions occur in winter, it is one of the few species that migrate, some for nearly 2,000 miles. A good number of common kingfishers, as well as the pied kingfisher and the white-throated

"OBSERVE INTENTLY THE BIRDS OF HEAVEN"

Jesus Christ was a careful observer of the natural world, often using his observations in well-thought-out illustrations that taught moral and spiritual truths. For example, Jesus said: "Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are?" (Matthew 6:26) What a touching lesson in God's love for his human creation!



kingfisher, can be found in Israel by the Sea of Galilee and along the Jordan River. Jesus Christ likely observed those handsome birds and their ways.—See the box "Observe Intently the Birds of Heaven."

A particularly well-known kingfisher is Australia's laughing kookaburra. About 17 inches long and equipped with a powerful 3-inch beak, this largely brown species is a familiar garden bird in the land down under. Known for its fiendish "laughter," the kookaburra is a fearless hunter whose diet includes snakes up to three feet long!*

Although kingfishers have few natural enemies, their numbers decline when rivers become polluted or forest habitats are destroyed. Indeed, approximately 25 kingfisher species are classified in categories ranging from near threatened to critically endangered. Hopefully, conservation efforts will help to preserve these beautiful and often entertaining birds.

* The related blue-winged kookaburra, found across northern Australia, does not "laugh."



From SS Officer to Servant of the True God

AS TOLD BY GOTTLIEB BERNHARDT

I was an officer serving in the German SS, Hitler's elite guard, at Wewelsburg Castle. In April 1945, I received an order to execute prisoners at a nearby concentration camp. They were Jehovah's Witnesses. The SS demanded unquestioning obedience to authority. This put me in a moral dilemma. Let me explain why.

I WAS born in 1922 in a village near the Rhine River in Germany. Although the area was strongly Roman Catholic, our family belonged to a Pietist group, a religious movement that originated in the 17th century. In 1933, when I was 11 years old, Hitler came to power in Germany. A few years later, because I excelled academically as well as in sports, I was selected to attend an academy near Marienburg, now Malbork, in Poland. There, hundreds of miles from home, I was immersed in National Socialist, or Nazi, ideology. Students were taught such things as honor, diligence, loyalty, obedience, a sense of duty, and a hallowed respect for our German heritage.

World War II and the SS

When the second world war broke out in 1939, I enlisted in the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, an elite military unit under Hitler's personal command. The unit supplied bodyguards for government officials, and it was used for special military operations. I saw ac-

tion in Belgium, France, Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. While in Bulgaria, I attended a religious service conducted by an army priest. 'Are the same kind of services being held by the enemy?' I wondered. I also asked myself: 'Does God bless war? Does he take sides?'

Later, I was selected to attend the *Junkerschule*, an academy for young men destined to occupy senior military posts. Thereafter, I was attached to a unit guarding the Reich headquarters in Berlin, where I once observed Hitler scream publicly at a high-level politician. 'That was disgraceful behavior,' I thought. But I dared not say so out loud!

In Berlin, I met Inge, who also worked at the headquarters. When we were due to be married, my unit was suddenly airlifted to the Russian front—without proper winter clothing! The situation left us soldiers aghast, for in the winter of 1941/1942, temperatures fell to below minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit. There I was awarded my second Iron Cross. Later,

after having been seriously wounded, I was flown back to Germany. Inge and I were married in 1943.

My next posting was to Hitler's Obersalzberg headquarters in the Bavarian mountains. Also present was Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, who arranged for me to be treated by his personal masseur and physician, Felix Kersten. Later I learned that Kersten owned an estate called Hartzwalde, near Berlin. In the latter part of the war, he asked Himmler to allow Jehovah's Witnesses from a nearby concentration camp to work on his estate. Himmler agreed, and Kersten treated the Witnesses with respect. A Witness who worked for Kersten in Sweden always put a copy of *The Watchtower* in Kersten's suitcase for the Witnesses in Germany.*

Jehovah's Witnesses Enter My Life

In late 1944, Himmler assigned me as personal adjutant to an SS general who was commander of the Wewelsburg Castle, a 400-year-old fortress near the city of Paderborn. Himmler planned to make Wewelsburg into a cult center for SS ideology. Near the fortress

* See *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1972, page 399.

**Our wedding picture,
February 1943**



**Wewelsburg Castle was to become a
center of SS ideology**

was a small concentration camp called Niederhagen, which housed a special category of inmates—Jehovah's Witnesses, also called Bible Students.

An inmate named Ernst Specht came several times to treat my injuries. "Good morning, Sir," he would say.

"Why do you not say 'Heil Hitler!'" I demanded.

He tactfully replied, "Were you raised as a Christian?"

"Yes," I said. "I had a Pietist upbringing."

"Then," he continued, "you will know that the Bible promises salvation (*heil*) through only one person, Jesus Christ. That is why I cannot say 'Heil Hitler!'"

Both astonished and impressed, I asked, "Why are you here?"

"I am a Bible Student," he said.

Conversations with Ernst and another Witness, Erich Nikolaizig, who worked as a hairdresser, touched my heart. Such discussions were forbidden, however, and my commanding officer ordered me to stop. Nevertheless, I felt that if everyone in Germany—a so-called Christian land with millions of church



With my wife, Inge, today

members—had behaved as the Witnesses did, there would have been no war. ‘They ought to be admired, not persecuted,’ I thought.

During that time, a distraught widow phoned to ask for transport for her son, who urgently needed to have his appendix removed. I promptly ordered transport, only to have the order rescinded by my commanding officer. Why? Her husband had been executed as a member of a group that attempted to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. The boy died, and I could do nothing about it. That incident plays on my conscience to this day.

Although I was only in my early 20’s, I began to see life as it really is—not as Nazi propaganda presented it. At the same time, my admiration for Jehovah’s Witnesses and their teachings grew. This, in turn, led to the most dramatic decision of my life.

In April 1945, Allied armies were approaching, and my superior officer fled Wewelsburg. A unit then arrived with orders from Himmler to destroy the fortress and kill the prisoners. The commander of the nearby concentration camp handed me a list of inmates to be executed—all Witnesses. Why? They reportedly knew the location of art treasures plundered by the Third Reich, works of art that had apparently been hidden in some

of the buildings. That secret could not get out! So, what should I do about the execution order?

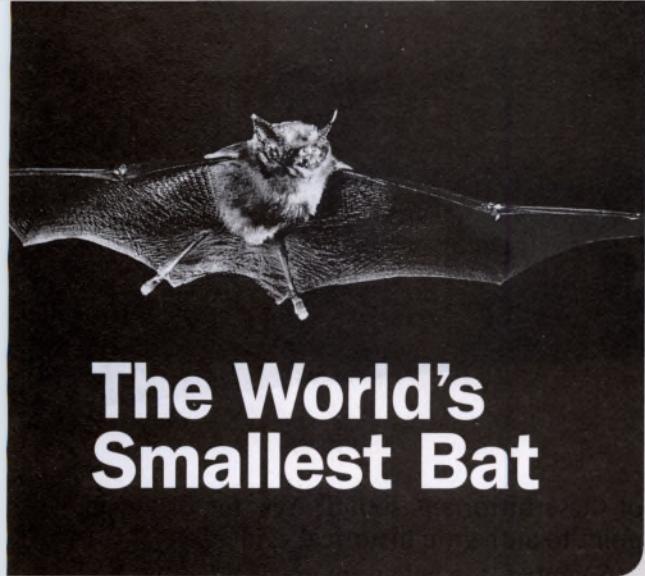
I approached the camp commander and said: “American troops are coming. Don’t you think it would be wise for you and your men to leave?” He needed little persuasion! I then did the unthinkable for an SS officer—I disobeyed an order, and the Witnesses lived.

An Honor to Be Their Brother

After the war, Inge and I made contact with Jehovah’s Witnesses and began to study the Bible in earnest. A Witness lady named Auguste, along with others, helped us. My war injuries and the harsh postwar period made life hard. Still, my wife and I dedicated our lives to Jehovah and got baptized—I in 1948, Inge in 1949.

In the 1950’s, several Witnesses who had been at Wewelsburg during the war returned there for a reunion. They included Ernst Specht, Erich Nikolaizig, and another faithful inmate, Max Hollweg. I consider it a great honor to be called their brother, for these courageous men of God had risked their lives to witness to me. Also at the reunion was Martha Niemann, who had been a secretary at Wewelsburg. She too had been deeply impressed by the conduct of the Witnesses and had become a dedicated servant of Jehovah.

As I look back over the years, I see abundant evidence that “the whole world is lying in the power of [Satan the Devil]”—something I did not appreciate as a naive, idealistic young man. (1 John 5:19) I also see clearly the vast difference between serving tyrannical regimes, such as Hitler’s, and serving Jehovah. The former demand blind obedience, whereas Jehovah wants us to serve him out of love based on an accurate knowledge of his personality and purposes as revealed in the Bible. (Luke 10:27; John 17:3) Yes, Jehovah is the one I shall serve for as long as I live.



The World's Smallest Bat

● In 1973, Thai biologist Kitti Thonglongya and his team collected more than 50 unidentified bats in caves near the Sai Yok waterfall in Thailand. He sent specimens to Dr. J. E. Hill of the British Museum of Natural History in London. Sadly, Kitti died before learning that he had discovered a new bat species, which Hill named *Craseonycteris thonglongyai* in Kitti's honor. Its common name is Kitti's hog-nosed bat.

About 1.25 inches long, with a wingspan of approximately 5 inches, Kitti's hog-nosed bat is the smallest known bat and is one of the smallest mammals. In fact, it is so tiny that it is sometimes called the bumblebee bat. Its other distinctive traits are the piglike nose (reflected in its name), the complete absence of a tail, and large ears with swollen tragi, or ear canal covers.

A Small Habitat

These bats can be found only in the Sai Yok National Park in Thailand and in nearby parts of Myanmar. Like many other species, Kitti's hog-nosed bats employ echolocation when on the hunt for insects. Having wings that are long for its size, the mammal is well adapted to hovering, which may enable it to pluck prey from the foliage of trees. When roosting, the animal prefers the warm upper regions of limestone caves with high ceilings and many cham-

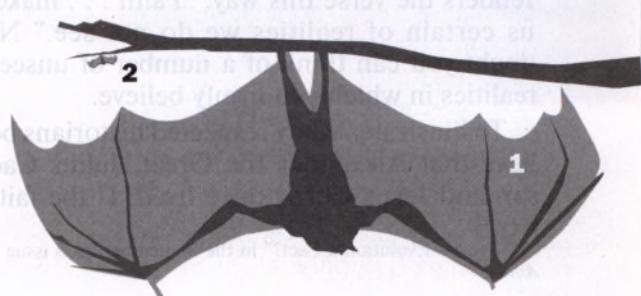
bers—places that afford more protection and minimize the loss of body heat, which is an important consideration for tiny, warm-blooded mammals. What wonderful instincts and abilities the Creator gave these amazing little creatures!—Revelation 4:11.

Because Kitti's hog-nosed bat is extremely rare and occupies just a small territory, its survival is at risk if its circumstances do not improve. Efforts have been made to provide better protection, but deforestation, logging, road construction, and tourism continue to be a threat. Whether this tiny mammal has the resilience to survive the onslaught of human intrusion into its fragile habitat remains to be seen.



THE BIGGEST AND THE SMALLEST

There are nearly 1,000 species of bats, and they are the only mammals that can fly. The largest bats (**1**), called flying foxes, may have a wingspan in excess of five feet and weigh over two pounds. By comparison, Kitti's hog-nosed bat (**2**) has a span of about five inches and weighs in at a mere 0.07 of an ounce.



Is Belief in God Reasonable?



▲ The Print Collector/age fotostock

HAVE you wondered why everything from atomic particles to vast galaxies is governed by precise mathematical laws? Have you reflected on life itself—its variety, its complexity, and its amazing design? Many attribute the universe and the life in it to a great cosmic accident and evolution. Others give credit to an intelligent Creator. Which viewpoint do you feel is more reasonable?

Of course, both viewpoints involve faith. Belief in God rests on faith. As the Bible says, “no man has seen God at any time.” (John 1:18) Likewise, no human saw the forming of the universe or the commencement of life. Nor has anyone ever seen one kind of life evolve into a higher kind or even into a different kind. The fossil record shows that the major groups of animals appeared suddenly and have remained virtually unchanged.* The key question, therefore, is this: Which faith sits on a firm foundation—faith in evolution or faith in a Creator?

Is Your Faith Based on Solid Evidence?

Genuine “faith,” says the Bible, is “the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.” (Hebrews 11:1) *The New English Bible* renders the verse this way: “Faith . . . makes us certain of realities we do not see.” No doubt you can think of a number of unseen realities in which you firmly believe.

To illustrate: Many respected historians believe that Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Jesus Christ once lived. Is the faith

of these historians sound? Yes, for they can point to authentic historical evidence.

Scientists too believe in unseen realities because of the “evident demonstration” that those realities exist. For example, the 19th-century Russian chemist Dmitry Mendeleyev became entranced with the relationship between the elements, the basic building blocks of the universe. He realized that they had certain things in common and could be grouped by both atomic weight and chemical properties. Because of his faith in the order of the groups, he drafted the periodic table of the elements and correctly predicted the existence of a number of elements unknown at the time.

Archaeologists draw conclusions about earlier civilizations, often from items that have lain buried for thousands of years. Imagine, for example, that an archaeologist has unearthed dozens of carefully cut stone blocks of precisely the same size neatly aligned on top of one another. They are also set out in a distinct geometric pattern that does not occur naturally. What would the archaeologist conclude? Would he attribute his find to coincidence? Most likely not. Rather, he would interpret it as evidence of past human activities, and that would be a reasonable conclusion.

To be consistent, should we not apply the same reasoning to the design manifest in the natural world? Many people have taken that view, including respected scientists.

* See “Is Evolution a Fact?” in the September 2006 issue of *Awake!*



**If ancient structural design is attributed to humans,
to whom do we attribute design in nature?**

Blind Chance or Purposeful Design?

Years ago, British mathematician, physicist, and astronomer Sir James Jeans wrote that in the light of advancing scientific knowledge, "the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine." He also stated that "the universe appears to have been designed by a pure mathematician" and that it provides "evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds."

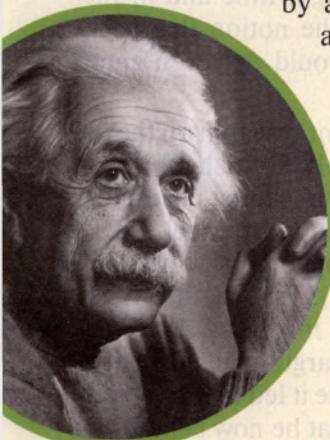
Other scientists have arrived at a similar conclusion since Jeans penned those words. "The overall organization of the universe has suggested to many a modern astronomer an element of design," wrote physicist Paul Davies. One of the most famous physicists and mathematicians of all time, Albert Einstein, wrote: "The fact that [the natural world] is comprehensible is a miracle." In the eyes of many, that miracle in-

cludes life itself, from its fundamental building blocks to the amazing human brain.

DNA and the Human Brain

DNA is the genetic material of all cellular organisms and the molecular basis for heredity.* This complex acid has been compared to a blueprint or a recipe, for DNA is packed with information, which is encoded in chemical form and stored in a molecular environment that is capable of interpreting that code and acting on it. How much information is stored in DNA? If the basic units, called nucleotides, were converted into letters of the alphabet, they would "occupy more than a million pages of a typical book," says one reference.

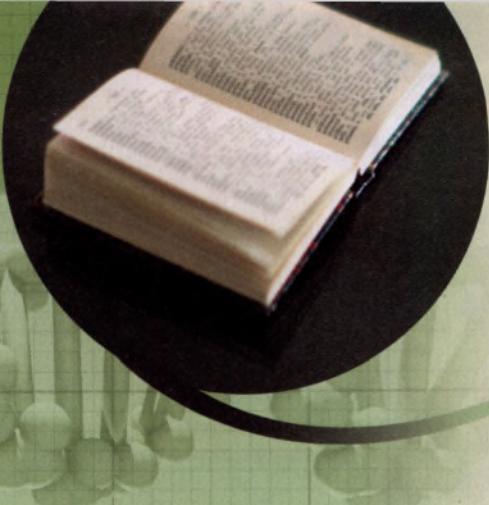
In most organisms, DNA is bundled up into threadlike bodies called chromosomes, which are safely stored inside each cell's nucleus. The nuclei, in turn, have an average diameter of about 0.0002 of an inch. Think about that—all the information that produced your unique body is found in tiny packages that have to be observed under a microscope! As one scientist rightly said, living organisms have "by far the most compact information storage/retrieval system known." That's saying something when you reflect



Albert Einstein

* DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid.

DNA is like a microscopic book that contains precise instructions for intelligent life



on the memory capacity of computer chips, DVDs, and the like! What is more, DNA has by no means revealed all its secrets. "Every discovery reveals a new complexity," says *New Scientist* magazine.*

Is it reasonable to attribute such perfection of design and organization to blind chance? If you were to stumble across a highly technical manual a million pages thick and writ-

* When Charles Darwin formulated his ideas on evolution, he had no idea of the complexity of the living cell.

SHOULD RELIGIOUS EVILS JUSTIFY DISBELIEF IN GOD?

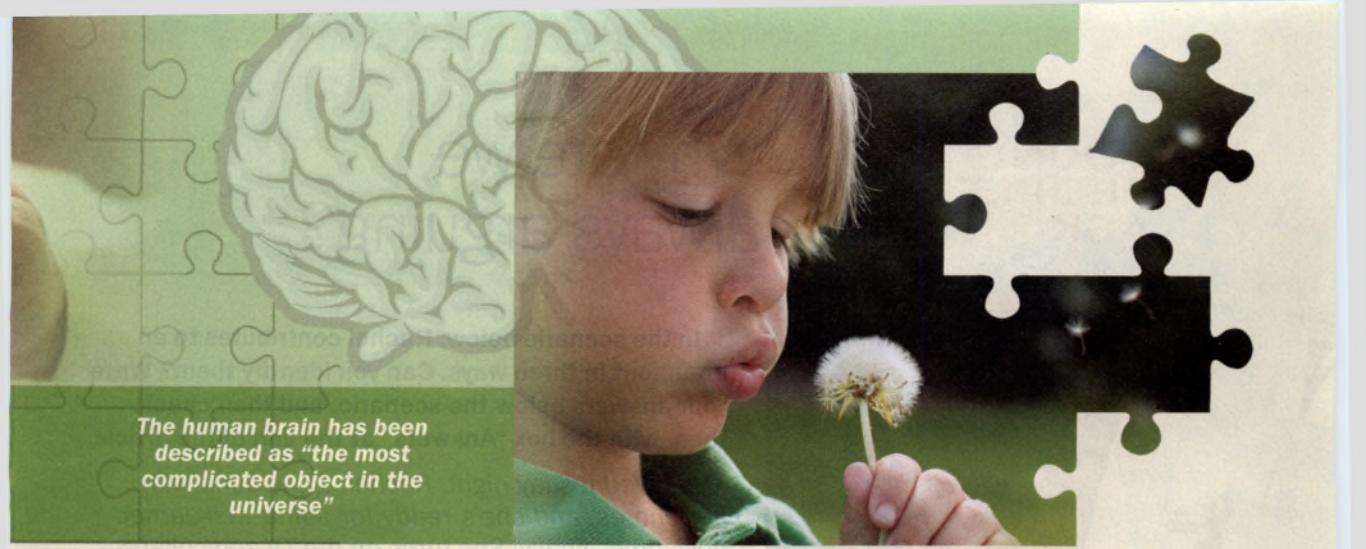
Many people do not believe in a Creator because of the well-known abuses and corruptions that blacken the history of many religions. Is that a sound reason for disbelief? No. "The excesses and atrocities of organized religion," says Roy Abraham Varghese in his preface to Antony Flew's book *There Is a God*, "have no bearing whatsoever on the existence of God, just as the threat of nuclear proliferation has no bearing on the question of whether E=mc²."^{*}

* Energy equals mass multiplied by the square of the speed of light.

ten in an efficient, elegant code, would you conclude that the book somehow wrote itself? What if that book were so small that you needed a powerful microscope to read it? And what if it contained precise instructions for the manufacture of a self-repairing, self-replicating intelligent machine with billions of parts, all of which had to be fitted together at precisely the right time and in the right way? To be sure, the notion that such a book just happened would not even enter one's mind.

After examining current research on the inner workings of the cell, British philosopher Antony Flew, once a leading champion of atheism, stated: "The almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), [show] that intelligence must have been involved." Flew believes in "following the argument no matter where it leads." In his case it led to a complete change in thinking, so that he now believes in God.

The human brain too leaves many scientists in awe. A product of DNA, the brain has been described as "the most complicated object in the universe." Even the most advanced supercomputer looks positively primitive next to this approximately three-pound pinkish-gray mass of neurons and other struc-



The human brain has been described as “the most complicated object in the universe”

tures. In the opinion of one neuroscientist, the more that scientists learn about the brain and the mind, “the more magnificent and unknowable it becomes.”

Consider: The brain enables us to breathe, laugh, cry, solve puzzles, build computers, ride a bicycle, write poetry, and look up at the night sky with a sense of reverential awe. Is it reasonable—indeed, consistent—to attribute these abilities and capacities to blind evolutionary forces?

Belief Based on Evidence

In order to understand ourselves, should we look down, as it were, to apes and other animals, as evolutionists do? Or should we look up to God for answers? Granted, we have certain things in common with animals. We have to eat, drink, and sleep, for example, and we are able to reproduce. Still, we are unique in many ways. Reason suggests that our distinct human traits stem from a Being higher than ourselves—that is, from God. The Bible put that thought succinctly, stating that God formed mankind “in his image” morally and spiritually speaking. (Genesis 1:27) Why not contemplate God’s qualities, some of which are recorded at Deuteronomy 32:4; James 3:17, 18; and 1 John 4:7, 8.

Our Creator has given us the “intellectual capacity” to investigate the world around

us and to find satisfying answers to our questions. (1 John 5:20) In this regard, physicist and Nobel laureate William D. Phillips wrote: “When I examine the orderliness, understandability, and beauty of the universe, I am led to the conclusion that a higher intelligence designed what I see. My scientific appreciation of the coherence, and the delightful simplicity of physics strengthens my belief in God.”

Some two thousand years ago, a discerning observer of the natural world wrote: “[God’s] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship.” (Romans 1:20) The writer—the Christian apostle Paul—was an intelligent man and highly educated in the Mosaic Law. His reason-based faith made God a reality to him, while his acute sense of justice moved him to give due credit to God for his creative works.

It is our sincere hope that you too will see that it is not at all unreasonable to believe in God. In fact, like Paul, may you do more than simply believe that He exists. May you also grow to appreciate—as millions already have—that Jehovah God is a spirit person with endearing qualities that resonate in the human heart and draw us to him.—Psalm 83:18; John 6:44; James 4:8.

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

Why are we always arguing?



In the scenario below, Rachel contributes to an argument in three ways. Can you identify them? Write your answers below the scenario, and then check them with the box "Answers" at the end of the article.

It's Wednesday night. Rachel, 17, is done with her chores, and she's ready for some well-earned downtime—finally! She turns on the TV and collapses into her favorite chair.

As if on cue, Mom appears in the doorway, and she doesn't look happy. "Rachel! Why are you wasting your time watching TV when you're supposed to be helping your sister with her homework? You never do as you're told!"

"Here we go again," Rachel mutters, loud enough to be heard.

Mom leans forward. "What did you say, young lady?"

"Nothing, Mom," Rachel says with a sigh, rolling her eyes.

Now Mom is really angry. "Don't use that tone with me!" she says.

"What about the tone you're using with me?" Rachel shoots back.

Downtime is over... Another argument has begun.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

DOES the above scenario seem familiar? Do you and your parents constantly argue? If so, take a moment to analyze the situation. Which topics cause the most conflict? Put a check mark next to the ones that apply—or fill in your own topic next to "Other."

- Attitude
- Chores
- Clothing
- Curfew
- Entertainment
- Friends
- Opposite sex
- Other

Regardless of the topic, arguing leaves you—and your parents—feeling stressed. Of course, you could just bite your tongue and put on a show of agreeing with everything your parents say. But does God expect you to do that? No. It is true that the Bible tells you to “honor your father and your mother.” (Ephesians 6:2, 3) But it also encourages you to develop your “thinking ability” and to use your “power of reason.” (Proverbs 1:1-4; Romans 12:1) When you do, it’s inevitable that you will have strong convictions, some of which may differ from those of your parents. However, in families that apply Bible principles, parents and youths can communicate peacefully—even when they *don’t* see eye to eye.—Colossians 3:13.

How can you express yourself without turning normal conversation into open warfare? It’s easy to say: “That’s my *parents’* problem. After all, *they’re* the ones who are always on my back!” But think: How much control do you have over others, including your parents? Really, the only person you can change is *you*. And the good news is, if you do your part to ease the tension, your parents are more likely to remain calm and hear you out when you have something to say.

So let’s see what *you* can do to put a lid on the arguing. Apply the suggestions that follow, and you might amaze your parents—and *yourself*—with your newfound communication skills.

(*Suggestion: Put a check mark next to the suggestions that you need to work on.*)

○ **Think before you respond.** The Bible says: “Good people think before they answer.” (Proverbs 15:28, *Today’s English Version*) Don’t blurt out the first thing that comes to your mind when you feel that you’re under attack. For instance, suppose your mom says: “Why didn’t you wash the dishes? You *never* do as you’re told!” An impulsive reply might be, “Why are you nagging me?” But use your thinking ability. Try to perceive the feel-

WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY



Daniel

“ I had to realize that although I work and support myself financially, I still live in my mom’s house and have to **listen** to her. She has taken care of me for many years, so when she checks up on me —like with regard to my curfew—I completely understand. ”

“ If my parents and I don’t agree on something, we pray about it, look up information on it, and discuss it. We always come to a mutual resolution in this way. When we **keep Jehovah involved**, it always works out in the end. ”



Cameron

ing behind your mom’s words. Usually, statements with terms like “always” and “never” are not to be taken literally. They do, however, indicate an underlying emotion. What might it be?

Perhaps your mom is frustrated, feeling that she is burdened with more than her share of the housework. It could be that she merely wants reassurance that she has your support. Or, to be honest, maybe you’ve built up a track record of balking at chores. In any event, saying “Why are you nagging me?” will

get you nowhere—except maybe into an argument! So instead, why not put your mom at ease? For example, you could say: “I can see you’re upset, Mom. I’ll do the dishes right away.” A caution: Do not lace your words with sarcasm. Responding with empathy will more likely ease the tension between you.

Below, write a statement that *your* dad or mom might make that could provoke you, if you let it.

Now think of an empathetic response you could use that might address the feeling behind the statement.

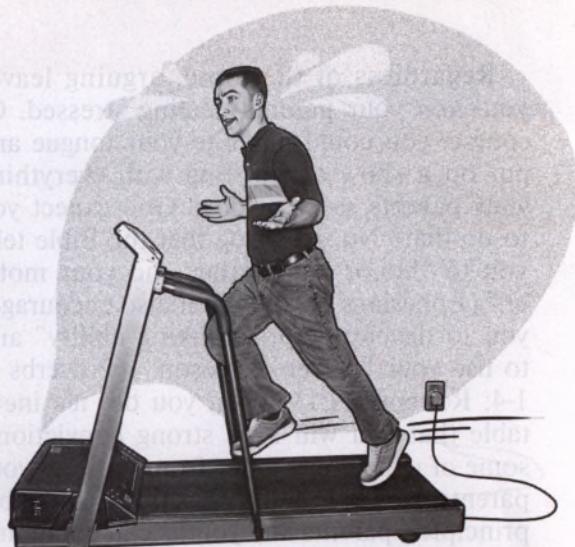
○ **Speak respectfully.** Michelle has learned from experience the importance of *how* she speaks to her mother. “No matter what the issue is,” she says, “it always comes back to Mom’s not liking my tone of voice.” If that’s often true in your case, learn to speak quietly and slowly, and avoid rolling your eyes or giving other nonverbal indications of your annoyance. (*Proverbs 30:17*) If you feel that you’re about to lose control, offer a brief, silent prayer to God. (*Nehemiah 2:4*) Of course, your objective isn’t to get divine help to ‘get your parent off your back’ but to maintain self-control so that you don’t add fuel to the fire.—*James 1:26*.

In the space below, write down some words and actions *you* would do well to avoid.

Verbal expressions (what you say):

Nonverbal expressions (your facial and body language):

○ **Listen.** The Bible states: “You will say the wrong thing if you talk too much.” (*Proverbs 10:19, Contemporary English Version*) So make sure you give your dad or mom a



Arguing with your parents is like running on a treadmill—you’ll expend a lot of energy, but you won’t get anywhere

chance to speak, and give your parent your full attention. Turn off your music, set aside your book or magazine, and maintain eye contact. Don’t interrupt to justify your actions. Just listen. Later, when they’re finished talking, you’ll have plenty of opportunity to ask questions or to explain your viewpoint. On the other hand, if you dig in your heels and press your viewpoint *now*, you might only make things worse. Even if there’s more you’d like to say, right now is probably “a time to keep quiet.”—*Ecclesiastes 3:7*.

○ **Be willing to apologize.** It’s always appropriate to say “I’m sorry” for anything you

TO THINK ABOUT

- Why do some of your peers often prize the ability to argue?
- Why does Jehovah view an argumentative person as being foolish?—*Proverbs 20:3*.

Before hastily concluding
that the world's spirit of re-
bellion has taken control of
your teen, realize that much
of what you observe is part
of your child's natural devel-
opment. Your child may ar-
gue a point just to prove that
she or she is growing up. Re-
sists the urge to get involved in
disputes. Remember, how you
respond to provocation teaches
a lesson to your teen. Exer-
cise patience and long-
suffering, and you will set a
good example for your son or
daughter to follow.—Gallatians
5:22, 23.

view, even if you feel that view is incorrect. Most teens respond better to a listening ear

ANSWERS

1. The use of sarcasm ("Here we go") poured fuel on the fire of Mom's frustration.
2. Rachel's facial expression (rolling her eyes) was just asking for trouble.

3. Talking back ("What about the ton with me?") almost always backfires

Storage/Type

at the Web site
the "Young People Ask"

in discuss even difficult topics
ts—without arguing!

times have come to us, but they will little them peacefully. Practice

Writing your part to reduce the
you and your parents.

The word "you," try expressing your child's behavior after you have examples. When others you. For example, "When I feel . . . , I believe that or not, deep down your feelings are important to your teen. By letting your teen know how you are affected, you are more likely to elicit his/her cooperation.

Hard as it may be, hold back until your temper is in check. (Proverbs 10:19) If the issue that is causing the argument involves chores, discuss it with your child. Write down what specifically what is required of him or her and, if necessary, make clear what the consequences will be if your expectations are not met. Patients will be if your expressions make clear what the consequences are not met. Patients will be if your expressions make clear what the consequences are not met. Patients will be if your expressions

REVIEWS

WIRELESS

of what you

er for you. In
n "of Loving-
with his own

love or pre-

www.watchtower.org

More articles from
series can be found
in the sidebar.
like the task
events by carrying
out a single

Find that you can't get along with your parents.

the skills outlined below to succeed in a changing world.

(Nomads 14; Sustaining the Tension between the Past and the Future)

- Look at the scenario that opened this article. Can you identify some things Racheli's mom did that only contributed to an argument? How can you avoid arguing with your teen?
- The following are some points to keep in mind:
 - Avoid sweepingly assertive statements such as "You always . . ." or "You never . . ." Such statements only invite a defensive response. After all, they are likely to be exaggerated assertions, and your child knows it. Your child may also know that sweepingly assertive statements are really more about your anger than his or her irresponsibility.

ANONIMO

A NOTE TO PARENTS

ANSWERS

1. The use of sarcasm ("Here we go again") only poured fuel on the fire of Mom's frustration.
 2. Rachel's facial expression (rolling her eyes) was just asking for trouble.
 3. Talking back ("What about the tone you're using with me?") almost always backfires.

More articles from the "Young People Ask" series can be found at the Web site www.watchtower.org/ype

stand to gain by doing your part to reduce the tension between you and your parents.

Succesful families have conflicts, but they know how to settle them peacefully. Practice the skills outlined in this article, and you may find that you can discuss even difficult topics with your parents—without ruining it!

"Distraction Overload"

Some forms of high-tech communication can hinder concentration on other tasks. Experts who study human-machine interactions—things like instant messaging, calendar reminders, e-mail alerts, and computer pop-ups—report that the wired world suffers from “distraction overload and continuous partial attention.” The result of a succession of interruptions may be that “you risk never focusing exclusively on any thought or perception for long and never being able to work straight through to completion on anything,” says *Newsweek* magazine. Among other things, such distractions can cause “memory loss” and “decreased memory accuracy” as well as potentially disastrous errors.

Need for Interpreters

Courts, law-enforcement agencies, hospitals, and other service providers in the United States are often in need of help to understand what people are saying. On-demand interpreting services are filling the need to communicate in what a Reuters news report calls “an increasingly polyglot world.” One California-based company employs 5,200 interpreters who speak 176 languages—from the relatively common, such as Chinese, Russian, and

“A staggering 60 per cent of the world’s population now [have] a cellphone subscription . . . It’s a massive change from just six years ago, when less than 15 per cent had cell access.”

—MACLEAN’S, CANADA.

Over the last decade, 1,068 new species have been discovered in the greater Mekong region of Southeast Asia.

—WORLD WILDLIFE FUND, UNITED STATES.

“America has less than 5% of the world’s people but almost 25% of its prisoners. It imprisons 756 people per 100,000 residents, a rate nearly five times the world average.”—THE ECONOMIST, BRITAIN.

Spanish, to the more obscure, such as languages spoken in parts of Africa and Mexico. In less than a minute, such companies can “evaluate what language the individual speaks” and put an interpreter on the line to help clients “get people talking,” says the report.

Unexpected Source of Gold

Nagano Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, has “discovered a new source of mineral wealth—sewage,” says a Reuters news report from Japan. Analysis revealed that the ash from incinerated sewage sludge processed at the Suwa treatment plant contained a percentage of gold much higher than the ore extracted from Japan’s richest gold mines. The prefecture expects to receive 15 million yen, over \$167,000, for the gold in just one fiscal year. It is thought that the high concentrations of gold in the sewage are “due to the large number of precision equipment manufacturers in the vicinity that use the yellow metal,” says the report.





What Is Missing From This Picture?

Read Judges 7:15-22. Now look at the picture. What features are missing? Write your answers on the lines below.

1.
2.
3.

FOR DISCUSSION:

Why did Gideon and his men win the battle? Why were Gideon and his men so brave? When might you need to be brave like Gideon?



CHILDREN'S PICTURE SEARCH

Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT KING DAVID?

- 4. How many older brothers did David have?**

CLUE: Read 1 Samuel 16:10, 11.

- 5. What was the name of David's oldest brother?**

CLUE: Read 1 Samuel 17:28.

FOR DISCUSSION:

Why, do you think, was David's oldest brother so harsh with him? Why should you be kind to your brothers and sisters?

● Answers on page 15

FROM THIS ISSUE

Answer these questions, and provide the missing Bible verse(s).

- PAGE 4** Marriage is what type of bond?

Matthew 19:_____

- PAGE 9** "It is beauty" to do what?

Proverbs 19:_____

- PAGE 12** What is the heart? Jeremiah 17:_____

- PAGE 22** What is faith? Hebrews 11:_____



"I Need a Word From You"

● The branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico received the following letter from a woman who works in a school that gives special attention to the disabled and mentally ill. She wrote: "On May 9, my lovely mom passed away. I can't describe my feeling of loss. A few months before she died, I did research for my job on the subject of thanatology, the study of death and how to deal with it psychologically. I thought it would help me too, but it didn't."

Then, in one of her moments of sorrow, she prayed to God, saying, "I need a word from you." "That night," she said, "I read the brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*. I felt it was written for me. It shows that it is all right to cry. In the section 'How Can I Live With

My Grief?" it states: 'Do not underestimate the value of prayer. . . . The help that God supplies does make a difference. . . . True, divine help does not eliminate the pain, but it can make it easier to bear. That does not mean that you will no longer cry or will forget your loved one. But you can recover.' Those words work."

If you have lost a loved one in death and feel the need of a comforting word, perhaps you or someone you know will receive comfort from reading the 32-page brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*.

