

# Awake!

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**Help for  
Children With  
Learning Disabilities**

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What are common learning disabilities? What causes Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder? How can people cope with it?



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Just as a vase may be shattered if dropped, so a precious relationship may be ruined by lying. What truth about lying should we know?



### Romanian Conventions Held Despite Opposition 24

Romania at first denied Jehovah's Witnesses permission to hold conventions. Why? And why were they later permitted?

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# Living With a Learning Disability



Six-year-old David's favorite part of the day is story time. He loves it when

Mom reads to him, and he has no trouble remembering what he hears. But David has a problem. He cannot read for himself. In fact, any task that requires visual skill frustrates him.

Sarah is in her third year of school, yet her writing is unusually sloppy. Her letters are poorly formed, and some of them are written backward. Adding to her parents' concern is the fact that Sarah has trouble even writing her own name.

Josh, a young teen, does well in every subject at school except math.

The concept of numerical values completely baffles him. Just looking at numbers makes Josh angry, and when he sits down to do his math homework, his disposition rapidly deteriorates.

**W**HAT is wrong with David, Sarah, and Josh? Are they simply lazy, stubborn, perhaps slow-witted? Not at all. Each of these children is of normal to above-average intelligence. Yet, each one is also hampered by a learning disability. David suffers from *dyslexia*, a term that is applied to a number of reading problems. Sarah's extreme difficulty with writing is called *dysgraphia*. And Josh's inability to grasp the basic concepts of math is known as *dyscalculia*. These are just three learning disabilities. There are many more, and some experts estimate that altogether they affect at least 10 percent of the children in the United States.

## Defining Learning Disabilities

Granted, at times most youths find learning to be a challenge. Usually, though, this does not indicate a learning disability. Instead, it simply demonstrates that all children have learning strengths and weaknesses. Some have strong hearing skills; they

can absorb information quite well by listening. Others are more visually oriented; they learn better by reading. In school, however, students are clustered into a classroom and all are expected to learn regardless of the teaching method used. Hence, it is inevitable that some will have learning problems.

According to some authorities, however, there is a difference between simple *learning problems* and *learning disabilities*. It is explained that learning problems can be overcome with patience and effort. In contrast, learning disabilities are said to be more deep-rooted. "The learning disabled child's brain seems to perceive, process, or remember certain kinds of mental tasks in a faulty manner," write Drs. Paul and Esther Wender.\*

Still, a learning disability does not necessarily mean that a child is mentally handicapped. To explain this, the Wenders draw

\* Some studies suggest that learning disabilities may have a genetic component or that environmental factors, such as lead poisoning or drug or alcohol use during pregnancy, may play a role. Still, the precise cause or causes are not known.

an analogy with tone-deaf people, who cannot distinguish differences in musical pitch. "Tone deaf people are not brain-damaged and there is nothing wrong with their hearing," Wenders write. "Nobody would suggest that tone deafness is due to laziness, poor teaching, or poor motivation." It is the same, they say, with those who are learning disabled. Often, the difficulty focuses on one particular aspect of learning.

This explains why many children with learning disabilities have average to above-average intelligence; indeed, some are extremely bright. It is this paradox that often alerts doctors to the possible presence of a learning disability. The book *Why Is My Child Having Trouble at School?* explains: "A child with a learning disability is functioning two or more years below the expected level for his age and his assessed IQ." In other words, the problem is not simply that the child has trouble keeping up with his peers. Rather, his performance is not on par with *his own* potential.

### Providing Needed Help

The emotional effects of a learning disability often compound the problem. When children who are learning disabled do poorly in school, they may be seen as failures by their teachers and peers, perhaps even by their own family. Sadly, many such children develop a negative self-image that can persist as they grow. This is a valid concern, since learning disabilities generally do not

go away.\* "Learning disabilities are life disabilities," writes Dr. Larry B. Silver. "The same disabilities that interfere with reading, writing, and arithmetic also will interfere with sports and other activities, family life, and getting along with friends."

It is essential, therefore, that children with learning disabilities receive parental support. "Children who know that their parents are strong advocates for them have a basis for developing a sense of competency and self-esteem," says the book *Parenting a Child With a Learning Disability*.

But to be advocates, parents must first examine their own feelings. Some parents feel guilty, as if they were somehow to blame for their child's condition. Others panic, feeling overwhelmed by the challenges set before them. Both of these reactions are unhelpful. They keep the parents immobilized and prevent the child from getting the help he needs.

So if a skilled specialist determines that your child has a learning disability, do not despair. Remember that children with learning disabilities just need extra support in a specific learning skill. Take the time to become familiar with any programs that may be available in your area for children who are learning disabled. Many schools are better equipped to deal with such situations than they were years ago.

Experts emphasize that you should praise

\* In some cases, children manifest a temporary learning disability because their development in some area is delayed. In time, such children outgrow the symptoms.

### **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.**

Let us briefly consider three major symptoms of ADHD.

**Inattentiveness:** The child with ADHD cannot filter out unimportant detail and fo-

adults with ADHD symptoms and found that they metabolized glucose more slowly in the very areas of the brain that control movement and attention. In about 40 per-

your child for any accomplishments, no matter how small. Be generous with commendation. At the same time, do not neglect discipline. Children need structure, and this is all the more true of those who are learning disabled. Let your child know what you expect, and hold to the standards you set.

Finally, learn to view your situation realistically. The book *Parenting a Child With a Learning Disability* illustrates it this way:

"Imagine going to your favorite restaurant and ordering veal scallopini. When the waiter puts the plate in front of you, you discover rack of lamb. They're both delicious dishes, but you were prepared for the veal. Many parents need to make a mental shift in their thinking. You might not have been prepared for the lamb, but you find it's wonderful. So it is when you raise children with special needs."

## "Sit Still and Pay Attention!"

### Living With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

"All along, Jim had said that Cal was just spoiled and that if we—meaning me—cracked down on him, he'd shape up. Now here was this doctor telling us that it wasn't me, it wasn't us, it wasn't Cal's teachers: something really was wrong with our little boy."

**C**AL suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a condition characterized by inattention, impulsive behavior, and hyperactivity. The disorder is estimated to affect

from 3 to 5 percent of all school-age children. "Their minds are like TV sets with faulty channel selectors," says learning specialist Priscilla L. Vail. "One thought leads to another, with no structure or discipline."

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Let us briefly consider three major symptoms of ADHD.

**Inattentiveness:** The child with ADHD cannot filter out unimportant detail and focus on one topic. Thus, he is easily distracted by extraneous sights, sounds, and smells.\* He is paying attention, but no single feature in his environment stands out. He cannot determine which one deserves his primary concentration.

**Impulsive behavior:** The ADHD child acts before he thinks, without considering the consequences. He shows poor planning and judgment, and at times his actions are dangerous. "He rushes into the street, onto the ledge, up the tree," writes Dr. Paul Wender. "As a result he receives more than his share of cuts, bruises, abrasions, and trips to the doctor."

**Hyperactivity:** Hyperactive children are constantly fidgeting. They cannot sit still. "Even when they are older," Dr. Gordon Serfontein writes in his book *The Hidden Handicap*, "careful observation will reveal some form of continuous movement involving the legs, feet, arms, hands, lips or tongue."

Yet, some children who are inattentive and impulsive are not hyperactive. Their disorder is sometimes referred to simply as Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD. Dr. Ronald Goldberg explains that ADD "can occur without any hyperactivity at all. Or it can occur with any degree of hyperactivity—from barely noticeable, through rather annoying, to highly disabling."

### What Causes ADHD?

Over the years, attention problems have been blamed on everything from bad parenting to fluorescent lighting. It is now thought that ADHD is associated with disturbances in certain brain functions. In 1990 the National Institute of Mental Health tested 25

\* Since more males than females are affected, we will refer to the sufferer in the masculine gender.

adults with ADHD symptoms and found that they metabolized glucose more slowly in the very areas of the brain that control movement and attention. In about 40 percent of ADHD cases, the individual's genetic makeup seems to play a role. According to *The Hyperactive Child Book*, other factors that may be associated with ADHD are the use of alcohol or drugs by the mother during pregnancy, lead poisoning, and, in isolated cases, diet.

### The ADHD Adolescent and Adult

In recent years doctors have found that ADHD is not just a childhood condition. "Typically," says Dr. Larry Silver, "parents will bring in a child for treatment and say, 'I was the same when I was a kid.' Then they'll admit they still have problems waiting in line, sitting through meetings, getting things done." It is now believed that about half of all children with ADHD carry at least some of their symptoms into adolescence and adulthood.

During adolescence, those with ADHD may shift from risky behavior to delinquency. "I used to worry that he wouldn't get into college," says the mother of an ADHD adolescent. "Now I just pray that he stays out of jail." That such fears may be valid is shown by a study comparing 103 hyperactive youths with a control group of 100 children who did not have the disorder. "By their early 20s," reports *Newsweek*, "the kids from the hyperactive group were twice as likely to have arrest records, five times as likely to have felony convictions and nine times as likely to have served time in prison."

For an adult, ADHD poses a unique set of problems. Dr. Edna Copeland says: "The hyperactive boy may turn into an adult who changes jobs frequently, gets fired a lot, fiddles all day and is restless." When the cause is not understood, these symptoms can strain a marriage. "In simple conversa-

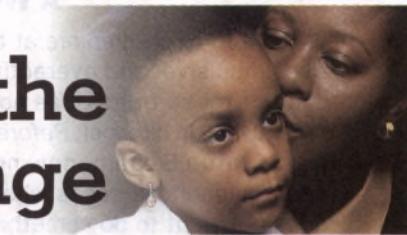
tions," says the wife of a man with ADHD, "he wouldn't even hear everything I said. It's like he was always somewhere else."

Of course, these traits are common to many people—at least to a degree. "You have to ask if the symptoms have always been there," says Dr. George Dorry. For example, he notes that if a man has been forgetful only since he lost his job or since his wife gave birth, that's not a disorder.

Furthermore, if one truly has ADHD, the

symptoms are pervasive—that is, they affect almost every aspect of the person's life. Such was the case with 38-year-old Gary, an intelligent, energetic man who could not seem to complete a single task without being distracted. He has already held more than 120 jobs. "I had just accepted the fact that I couldn't succeed at all," he said. But Gary and many others—children, adolescents, and adults—have been helped to cope with ADHD. How?

## Meeting the Challenge



OVER the years several treatments have been proposed for ADHD. Some of these have focused on diet. However, some studies suggest that food additives do not usually cause hyperactivity and that nutritional solutions are often ineffective. Other methods of treating ADHD are medication, behavior modification, and cognitive training.\*

**Medication.** Since ADHD apparently involves a brain malfunction, medication for restoring the proper chemical balance has proved helpful to many.<sup>#</sup> However, medication does not take the place of learn-

\* *Awake!* does not endorse any particular treatment. Christians should be careful that any treatment they pursue does not conflict with Bible principles.

<sup>#</sup> Some experience undesirable side effects from medication, including anxiety and certain other emotional problems. Furthermore, stimulant medication can aggravate twitches in patients with tic disorders such as Tourette syndrome. Medication should therefore be monitored under a doctor's supervision.

ing. It merely helps the child focus his attention, giving him a foundation upon which to learn new skills.

Many adults with ADHD have likewise been aided by medication. However, caution is in order—with youths and adults—since some stimulant medication used to treat ADHD can be addictive.

**Behavior modification.** A child's ADHD does not absolve parents from the obligation to discipline. Though the child may have special needs in this regard, the Bible admonishes parents: "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) In her book *Your Hyperactive Child*, Barbara Ingersoll notes: "The parent who simply gives up and lets his hyperactive child 'run wild' does the child no favor. Just like any other child, the hyperactive child needs consistent discipline coupled

with respect for the child as a person. This means clear limits and appropriate rewards and penalties."

It is therefore important that parents provide solid structure. Furthermore, there should be a strict routine in daily activities. Parents may wish to give the child some latitude in making up this schedule, including a time for homework, study, bath, and so forth. Then be consistent in following through. Make sure that the daily routine is adhered to. *Phi Delta Kappan* notes:

"Physicians, psychologists, school officials, and teachers have an obligation to the child and the child's parents to explain that the classification of ADD or ADHD is not a license to get away with anything, but rather an explanation that may lead to legitimate help for the child in question."

*Cognitive training.* This includes helping the child to change his view of himself and his disorder. "People with attention-deficit disorder feel 'ugly, stupid, and bad' even if they are attractive, intelligent,

### A Word of Caution to Parents

VIRTUALLY all children are at times inattentive, impulsive, and overactive. The presence of these traits does not always indicate ADHD. In his book *Before It's Too Late*, Dr. Stanton E. Samenow notes: "I have seen innumerable cases where a child who does not want to do something is excused because he is thought to suffer from a handicap or condition that is not his fault."

Dr. Richard Bromfield also sees a need for caution. "Certainly, some people diagnosed with ADHD are neurologically impaired and need medication," he writes. "But the disorder is also being named as the culprit for all sorts of abuses, hypocrisies, neglects and other societal ills that in most cases have nothing to do with ADHD. In fact, the lack of values in modern life—random violence, drug abuse and, less horrifically, unstructured and overstimulating homes—are more apt to foster ADHD-like restlessness than any neurological deficit."

It is thus with good reason that Dr. Ronald Goldberg warns against using ADHD as "a catchall concept." His advice is to "make sure no important diagnostic stone is left unturned." Symptoms that resemble ADHD may indicate any one of many physical or

emotional problems. The assistance of an experienced doctor is therefore essential in making an accurate diagnosis.

Even if a diagnosis is made, parents would do well to weigh the pros and cons of medication. Ritalin can eliminate undesirable symptoms, but it can also have unpleasant side effects, such as insomnia, increased anxiety, and nervousness. Thus, Dr. Richard Bromfield cautions against being too quick to medicate a child simply to eliminate his symptoms. "Too many children, and more and more adults, are being given Ritalin inappropriately," he says. "In my experience, Ritalin use seems to depend largely on parents' and teachers' ability to tolerate children's behavior. I know of kids who have been given it more to subdue them than to meet their needs."

Parents should therefore not be too quick to label their children as having ADHD or a learning disability. Rather, they should weigh the evidence carefully, with the help of a skilled professional. If it is determined that a child has a learning disorder or ADHD, parents should take the time to become well-informed about the problem so that they can act in the best interests of their children.

**The child with  
ADHD needs kind yet  
consistent discipline**

"and good-hearted," observes Dr. Ronald Goldberg. Therefore, the child with ADD or ADHD needs to have a proper view of his worth, and he needs to know that his attention difficulties can be managed. This is especially important during adolescence. By the time a person with ADHD reaches the teenage years, he may have experienced much criticism from peers, teachers, siblings, and perhaps even from parents. He now needs to set realistic goals and to judge himself fairly rather than harshly.

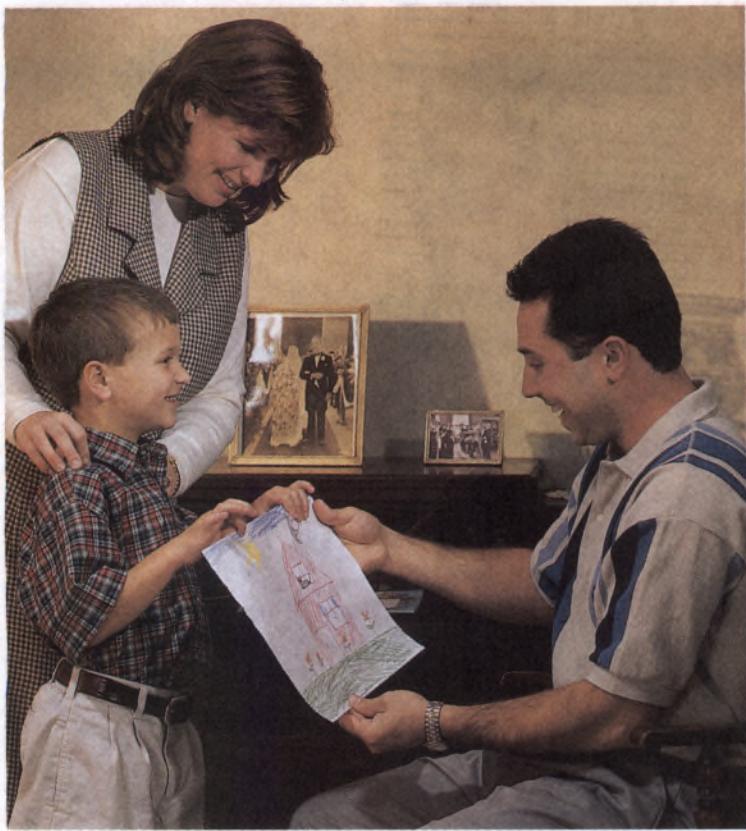
The above approaches to treatment can also be pursued by adults with ADHD. "Modifications are necessary based on age," writes Dr. Goldberg, "but the underpinnings of treatment—medication where appropriate, behavior modification, and cognitive [training]—remain valid approaches throughout the life cycle."

**Providing Support**

John, the father of an adolescent with ADHD, says to parents in a similar circumstance: "Learn all you can about this problem. Make informed decisions. Above all, love your child, build him up. Low self-esteem is a killer."



For the child with ADHD to have adequate support, both parents must cooperate. Dr. Gordon Serfontein writes that a child with ADHD needs "*to know that he is loved within the home and that the love comes from the love that exists between the parents.*" (Italics ours.) Unfortunately, such love is not always demonstrated. Dr. Serfontein continues: "It has been well established that in the family where there is [an ADHD child], there is almost a third higher instance of marital discord and breakdown than in the normal population." To prevent such discord, the father should play a significant role in raising the child with ADHD. The responsibility should not be placed solely upon the mother.—Ephesians 6:4; 1 Peter 3:7.



ADHD  
child  
disorder  
discipline  
parenting

### **Parental commendation goes a long way**

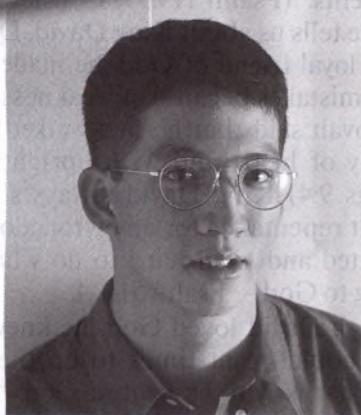
a child with ADHD. Of course, parents should do what they can to limit the child's disruptive behavior. Nevertheless, instead of lashing out in irritation, those who are related in the faith should strive to show "fellow feeling" and to "bestow a blessing." (1 Peter 3:8, 9) Indeed, it is often by means of compassionate fellow believers that God "comforts those laid low."—2 Corinthians 7:5-7.

Close friends, although not part of the family, can be of tremendous support. How? "Be kind," says John, quoted earlier. "Look deeper than your eyes can see. Get to know the child. Speak with the parents too. How are they doing? What do they contend with from day to day?"—Proverbs 17:17.

Members of the Christian congregation can do much to be of support to both the child with ADHD and the parents. How? By being reasonable in their expectations. (Philippians 4:5) At times, a child with ADHD may be disruptive. Rather than callously remarking, "Why can't you control your child?" or "Why don't you just discipline him?" a perceptive fellow believer will realize that the parents may already be overwhelmed with the daily demands of raising

Students of the Bible realize that all human imperfection, including learning disabilities and ADHD, has been inherited from the first man, Adam. (Romans 5:12) They also know that the Creator, Jehovah, will fulfill his promise to bring about a righteous new world in which distressing sicknesses will no longer exist. (Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:1-4) This assurance is an anchor of support to those affected by such disorders as ADHD. "Age, training, and experience are helping our son to understand and to manage his disorder," says John. "But he will never be totally cured in this system of things. Our daily comfort is that in the new world, Jehovah will correct our son's disorder and enable him to enjoy life to the full."

**Young  
People  
Ask...**



## How Can I Become a Friend of God?

**L**OYALTY." "Personal devotion." These are terms people often use to describe their attachment to their closest friends. Did you know that these terms can also describe an attachment to the Grand Creator of this awesome universe—that God himself can be your personal friend? Yes, the Bible speaks of having godly devotion, and that expression involves not only obedience but also a personal attachment to God, a closeness that springs from an appreciative heart.

Previous articles in this series have shown

that such an attachment is both possible and beneficial.\* But just *how* do you attain this personal friendship with God? It is not something that you are born with or that you automatically inherit from godly parents. Rather, it is something that comes only through genuine effort. The apostle Paul told the young man Timothy to 'train himself with godly devotion as his aim.' Yes, he had to put forth the kind of effort that an athlete puts forth in training! (1 Timothy 4:7, 8, 10) You must do likewise if God is to become your friend. But how can you begin training in this regard?

### Personal Knowledge of God

Since godly devotion springs from the heart, you must fill your heart with knowledge of God. Sad to say, when over 500 youths were asked "How often do you read the Bible alone?" 87 percent said either "occasionally," "hardly ever," or "never." Most youths evidently think that reading the Bible is dull and boring. But it doesn't have to be! Consider: Why do some youths memorize all kinds of sports statistics or learn the words of their favorite songs? Because they are interested in those things. Similarly, studying the Bible becomes interesting if you become absorbed in it. (1 Timothy 4:15) The apostle Peter urged: "Form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word." (1 Peter 2:2) Yes, you must form, or develop, such an interest in the Scriptures. This may take effort, but the rewards are worth it.<sup>†</sup>

For one thing, reading and studying God's Word and Bible-based publications will reveal "the pleasantness of Jehovah." (Psalm 27:4) One young Christian named Amber made it her goal to read the entire Bible. This took nearly a year. "I doubt there will

\* See *Awake!* issues of July 22 and November 22, 1995.

† See "Young People Ask . . . Why Read the Bible?" in our August 8, 1985, issue.

be many things in my life that require so much time and effort but bring so many rewards," explained Amber. "When I was reading it, I felt as if Jehovah were sitting me on his lap like a father and teaching me. I learned so much about Jehovah—things that drew me closer to him and made me want to fear him for the rest of my life."

When you read the Bible, you learn of many occasions when God loyally supported his friends. (Psalm 18:25; 27:10) You find out that his standards are always best and are for our lasting good. (Isaiah 48:17) Reading about God's matchless qualities, such as his love and wisdom, inspires you to want to imitate him. (Ephesians 5:1) But for such information to stir your heart, you must also meditate. As you read, ask yourself: 'What does this tell me about Jehovah? How can I apply this in my thinking and actions? How does this show that God is the best friend I could ever have?'

The knowledge you gain about God through personal and congregation study will help you grow closer to him in another way. A French proverb states: "They only are true friends who think as one." But how can you "think as one" with God? Young Denise explains: "The more you study and research a subject, the more you find out Jehovah's viewpoint on it. It helps when you know how he feels about something."

### **Upright Conduct Vital**

God chooses as his friends only those who respect his moral standards. "His intimacy is with the upright ones," says Proverbs 3:32. A youth striving to be upright will "take care to walk in the law of Jehovah." (2 Kings 10:31) How close will such obedient conduct bring a person to God? Jesus Christ said: "My Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our abode with him." (John 14:21-24) What a heartwarming picture! Imagine, the two great-

est persons in the universe giving their constant thought and care to a human! That will happen to you if you take care to walk in Jehovah's law.

Does being upright mean that you have to be perfect? Not at all! Making a mistake because of weakness does not mean that you have abandoned 'the pathway of God's commandments.' (Psalm 119:35) Consider what the Bible tells us about King David. Despite being a loyal friend of God, he made some serious mistakes because of weakness. Even so, Jehovah said that he had walked "with integrity of heart and with uprightness." (1 Kings 9:4) King David always showed heartfelt repentance for any wrongdoing he committed and tried hard to do what was pleasing to God.—Psalm 51:1-4.

Though David loved God, he knew how hard it could be at times to do the right thing. That is why he begged God: "Make me walk in your truth." Yes, he developed a sincere dread, or fear, of offending God. David could thus say: "The intimacy with Jehovah belongs to those fearful of him." (Psalm 25:5, 14) This is not a morbid fear but is a deeply felt reverence for the Creator and a wholesome dread of displeasing him. This godly fear is the bedrock upon which proper conduct is based. To illustrate, consider the example of a Christian youth named Joshua.

Joshua received a note from a schoolmate saying that she liked him and wanted to have a "relationship" with him. Joshua, though attracted to her, realized that association with an unbeliever could lead to immorality and could damage his friendship with Jehovah. So he told her in no uncertain terms that he was not interested! When he later told his mother how he had handled the situation, she exclaimed without thinking: "Oh, Joshua, you probably hurt her feelings!" Joshua replied: "But, Mom. I'd rather

hurt her than hurt Jehovah." His godly fear, his dread of displeasing his heavenly Friend, moved him to maintain upright conduct.

### **Seek Good Associates**

A youth named Lynn, however, kept getting into trouble. The problem? She was running with the wrong crowd. (Exodus 23:2; 1 Corinthians 15:33) The solution? Finding new friends! "If you have friends around you who love Jehovah," Lynn concluded, "it helps you keep a sensitive conscience and stay out of trouble. When they express disgust for wrongdoing, it makes you feel the same way."

Actually, your bad choice of friends can be the biggest obstacle to having a friendship with God. Eighteen-year-old Ann admitted: "Your associates have a big influence. Sooner or later you will be like them. They mold you into their thinking. The conversations may be mostly about sex. It may make you curious. You wonder what it would be like." Ann learned this the hard way. She says: "I know this is true. I got involved in immorality and got pregnant at 15."

Ann finally came to appreciate the truthfulness of the Bible's words: "Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4) Yes, Ann wanted to be—was determined to be—a friend of the world. But this only led to one heartache after another.



***Will my associates help me to be God's friend?***

Fortunately, Ann came to her senses. She felt deep regret over her course and sought help from her parents and the elders in her congregation. She also found herself a new set of friends. (Psalm 111:1) With much effort on her part, Ann was again able to be a friend of God. Now, several years later, she says: "My relationship with Jehovah is much closer."

Through personal study of the Bible, meditation, upright conduct, and wholesome associations, you too can cultivate a close friendship with God. Maintaining that friendship is another matter, however. How is it possible to do so despite difficulties and personal weaknesses? A future article in this series will discuss this matter.

# Snail Fever

## IS ITS END IN SIGHT?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN NIGERIA

**D**ESPITE stunning developments in the fields of medicine and science, humankind is unable to straighten out many of its age-old problems. This has been true of efforts to subdue snail fever.

Seemingly, all the means are available to do the job. Doctors understand the life cycle of the parasite involved. The disease is easily diagnosed. Effective drugs are available to cure it. Governmental leaders are eager to promote efforts to prevent it. Yet, the end is not in sight for this disease that plagues millions of people in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and South America.

Snail fever (also called bilharziasis or schistosomiasis) has plagued man for millennia. Calcified eggs found in Egyptian mummies furnish proof that the disease afflicted Egyptians in the days of the pharaohs. Thirty centuries later, the same disease continues to plague Egypt, sapping the health of millions of residents of that country. In some villages of the Nile Delta, 9 out of every 10 persons have been infected.

Egypt is just one of the 74 or more countries where snail fever is endemic. Worldwide, according to World Health Organization (WHO) figures, 200 million people are infected with the disease. Of the 20 million chronic sufferers, about 200,000 die each year. Among tropical parasitic diseases, snail fever is said to rank second only to malaria in terms of people it afflicts and the social and economic damage it causes.

### Life Cycle of the Parasite

Understanding snail fever, and thus knowing how to prevent and cure it, means understanding the parasite that causes it. A key point is this: To survive and prosper from generation to generation, this parasite requires two hosts, two living creatures inside which it can feed and develop. One is a mammal, such as a human; the other is a freshwater snail.

This is what happens. When a person infected with the parasite urinates or defecates into the water of a pond, a lake, a stream, or a river, he releases parasite eggs—possibly up to a million eggs a day. These eggs are too small to be seen without the aid of a microscope. When the eggs make contact with water, they hatch, freeing the parasites. The parasites use tiny hairs on their bodies to swim to a freshwater snail, which they penetrate. Inside the snail, they multiply for the next four to seven weeks.

When they leave the snail, they have only 48 hours to find and enter a human or other mammal. Otherwise, they will die. Upon reaching such a host who has come into the water, the parasite bores through the skin and enters the bloodstream. This may cause the person some itching, though often he has no clue that an invasion has taken place. Inside the bloodstream, the parasite makes its way to the blood vessels of the bladder or the intestines, depending on the species of parasite. Within weeks the parasites grow



**When they enter polluted waters,  
humans can become infected with parasites that cause snail fever**

into adult male and female worms up to one inch in length. After mating, the female begins to release eggs into the bloodstream of the host, thus completing the cycle.

About half the eggs leave the body of the host in the feces (in intestinal snail fever) or in the urine (in urinary snail fever). The rest of the eggs remain in the body and damage important organs. As the disease progresses, the victim may develop fever, abdominal swelling, and internal bleeding. Eventually the disease can lead to bladder cancer or failure of the liver or the kidneys. Some victims become sterile or paralyzed. Others die.

### Solutions and Problems

To prevent the spread of the disease, at least four things can be done. If any one of these measures were applied universally, the disease would be wiped out.

*A first measure is to eliminate the snails in the water sources.* Snails are vital to the development of the parasite. No snails, no snail fever.

The main effort has been to produce a poison that is strong enough to kill snails but will not pollute the environment. In the 1960's and 1970's, attempts to eradicate snails succeeded in killing all life in vast stretches of water. Efforts have been made

at Egypt's Theodor Bilharz Research Institute to find a molluscicide (an agent that kills snails) that does not harm other forms of life. Dr. Aly Zein El Abdeen, president of the institute, notes regarding such an agent: "It's going to be thrown in the water, which is used for crops, is drunk by people and by animals, and where fish live, so we have to be dead sure that none of these are affected."

*A second measure is to kill the parasites in humans.* Until the mid-1970's, treatment involved drugs that caused many side effects and complications. Often, treatment required a series of painful injections. Some complained that the cure was worse than the disease! Since then, new drugs, such as praziquantel, have been developed that are effective against snail fever, and these can be taken by mouth.

Though these drugs have proved successful in field projects in Africa and South America, a major problem for many countries has been the cost. WHO lamented in 1991: "The endemic countries are unable to proceed with large-scale [snail fever] control programmes because of the high cost of the treatment; the hard currency costs of the drug itself are usually more than the total per capita budget of most African ministries of health."

Even where the drugs are made available at no cost to the patient, many people do not go for treatment. Why? One reason is that the death rate from the disease is relatively low, so some people do not consider it a serious problem. Another reason is that people do not always recognize the symptoms of the disease. In some parts of Africa, blood in the urine (a primary symptom of the disease) is so common that it is considered a normal part of growing to maturity.

*A third measure is to keep the eggs out of the water systems.* If latrines were built to prevent contamination of local streams and ponds and if everyone used them, the danger of getting snail fever could be reduced.

Global studies show significant decreases in the disease after piped water supplies and latrines are installed, but these provisions do not guarantee prevention. "It takes only one person to defecate in the canal to perpetuate the cycle," observes scientist Alan Fenwick, who has researched snail fever for over 20 years. There is also the risk of broken sewage pipes leaking infected excreta into water sources.

*A fourth measure is to keep people out of water that is contaminated by the parasite.* This too is not as easy as it may appear. In many lands lakes, streams, and rivers that supply drinking water are used for bathing, irrigating crops, and washing clothes, as well. Fishermen come in contact with water daily. And in the intense heat of the tropics, to children a body of water can be an irresistible swimming pool.

#### **What Hope for the Future?**

There is no doubt that sincere people and organizations are working diligently to fight snail fever and that tremendous progress has been made. Researchers are even working to develop a vaccine against it.

Nevertheless, the prospects of eradicating the disease look remote. States Dr. M. Larivière in the French medical journal *La Revue du Praticien*: "Despite the successes . . . , the disease is far from disappearing." Though prevention and cure can be a reality for individuals, a universal solution to the problem of snail fever may not be found until God's new world is here. The Bible promises that there "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT LYING

**“YOU liar!”** Have those stinging words ever been hurled at you? If so, you no doubt realize the emotional wallop they carry.

Just as a cherished vase may shatter if knocked to the floor, so a precious relationship can be ruined by lying. True, over a period of time, you may be able to repair the damage, but the relationship may never again be quite the same.

“Those who learn that they have been lied to,” says the book *Lying—Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, “are wary of new overtures. And they look back on their past beliefs and actions in the new light of the discovered lies.” After deception has been exposed, a relationship that once flourished with open communication and trust may be stifled by suspicion and doubt.

With all the negative feelings associated with lying, we must ask, ‘How did such a devious practice get started?’

## The First Lie

When Jehovah God created the first human pair, Adam and Eve, he placed them in a beautiful garden home. Their home was free of any sort of deception or fraud. It was truly a paradise!

Sometime after Eve’s creation, however, Satan the Devil approached her with a tempting offer. Eve was

told that if she ate “the fruit of the tree,” which God forbade, she would not die as God had said she would. Rather, she would “be like God, knowing good and bad.” (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-5) Eve believed Satan. She took the fruit, ate it, and then gave some to her husband. But instead of becoming like God as Satan had promised, Adam and Eve became disobedient sinners, slaves of corruption. (2 Peter 2:19) And by telling that first lie, Satan became “the father of all lies.” (John 8:44, *Today’s English Version*) In time, this sinful trio learned that there are no winners when one lies or puts confidence in a lie.

## Death-Dealing Effects

Jehovah wanted all his creation—in heaven and on earth—to know that willful disobedience would not go unpunished. He acted swiftly by condemning the rebellious spirit creature to live the rest of his life outside God’s holy organization. Moreover, Jehovah God will eventually see that Satan is destroyed completely. This will occur when the “seed” that God promised to provide inflicts a fatal head wound.—Genesis 3:14, 15; Galatians 3:16.

For their part Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Eden. God sentenced Adam, saying: “In the sweat



**The effects  
of lying are like  
the shattering  
of a vase**

of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." In time, both he and Eve died, even as God had foretold.—Genesis 3:19.

As descendants of Adam, the entire human family have been "sold under sin." All humans have inherited imperfection that leads to death. (Romans 5:12; 6:23; 7:14) How appalling the consequences of that first lie have been!—Romans 8:22.

### A Deep-Rooted Practice

Since Satan and the angels who joined him in rebellion against God have not yet been executed, we should not be surprised that they inspire men to "speak lies." (1 Timothy 4:1-3) As a result, lying is deeply rooted in human society. "Lying has become so institutionalized," noted the *Los Angeles Times*, "that society is now largely desensitized to it." Many today closely associate politics and politicians with lying, but did you know that religious leaders are among the most notorious liars?

Religious opposers of Jesus spread lies about him during his earthly ministry. (John 8:48, 54, 55) He denounced them publicly, saying: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. ... When he speaks the lie, he speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie."—John 8:44.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**Organized Crime  
—How It Affects You**

**Flowers Show  
That Somebody Cares**

**Should Children Choose  
Their Own Religion?**

Do you recall the lie that was propagated when Jesus' tomb was found to be empty after his resurrection? The Bible says that the chief priests "gave a sufficient number of silver pieces to the soldiers and said: 'Say, "His disciples came in the night and stole him while we were sleeping.'"'" This lie was spread widely, and many were deceived by it. How wicked the religious leaders were!—Matthew 28:11-15.

### Religious Lies Today

What is a prominent lie that is told by religious leaders today? It is similar to the one that Satan told Eve: "You positively *will not die*." (Genesis 3:4) But Eve *did* die, and she returned to the earth, to the dust from which she was made.

Did she, however, only appear to die and actually live on in some other form? Is death just a doorway to another life? The Bible gives no indication that some conscious part of Eve lived on. Her soul did not survive. By disobeying God, she had sinned, and the Bible says: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4) Eve, like her husband, was created a living soul, and her life as a living soul ceased. (Genesis 2:7) Of the condition of the dead, the Bible says: "As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) What, though, do the churches commonly teach?

The churches often teach that humans have an immortal soul and that death releases it to experience another life—either of bliss or of torment. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, for example, says: "The Church expressly teaches the eternity of the pains of hell as a truth of faith which no one can deny or call in question without manifest heresy."—Volume 7, page 209, 1913 edition.

How different that teaching is from what the Bible plainly says! The Bible teaches that when a person dies, "he goes back to

his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." (Psalm 146:4) So, according to the Bible, the dead cannot suffer any pain, for they have no consciousness of anything whatsoever. Therefore, the Bible urges: "All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [mankind's common grave], the place to which you are going."—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

### Need to Be on Guard

Even as many were misled by the lies of the priests in Jesus' day, so there is a danger of being deceived by the false teachings of today's religious leaders. These people have "exchanged the truth of God for the lie," and they promote such false teachings as the immortality of the human soul and the idea that the souls of humans will be tormented in a hellfire.—Romans 1:25.

In addition, today's religions commonly put human tradition and philosophy on an equal footing with Bible truth. (Colossians 2:8) Thus, God's laws regarding morality—including laws on honesty and sexual conduct—are viewed as relative, not absolute. The result is as described in *Time* magazine: "Lies flourish in social uncertainty, when people no longer understand, or agree on, the rules governing their behavior toward one another."—Compare Isaiah 59:14, 15; Jeremiah 9:5.

Living in an environment where truth is held in little regard makes it difficult to heed the admonition of God not to tell lies. What can help us to be truthful all the time?

### Taking a Stand for Truth

Our desire to glorify our Creator provides us with the very best motivation to cultivate truthful speech. Significantly, the Bible calls him "the God of truth." (Psalm 31:5) So, if it is our desire to please our Creator, who hates "a false tongue," we will be moved to

imitate him. (Proverbs 6:17) How can we do this?

An earnest study of God's Word can give us what it takes to 'speak truth each one with his neighbor.' (Ephesians 4:25) However, simply *knowing* what God requires of us is not enough. If, like many in the world today, we have not always been inclined to tell the truth, we will need to make a real effort to do so. We may need to follow the apostle Paul's example and get tough with ourselves. "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave," Paul wrote.—1 Corinthians 9:27.

An additional help in the battle to tell the truth at all times is prayer. By begging Jehovah for assistance, we can have "power beyond what is normal." (2 Corinthians 4:7)

## Lying is comparable to death-dealing poison

Indeed, maintaining a "lip of truth" and putting away "the tongue of falsehood" may be a real struggle. (Proverbs 12:19) But with Jehovah's help it can be accomplished.—Philippians 4:13.

Always remember that it is Satan the Devil who makes it seem that lying is the normal thing to do. He deceived the first woman, Eve, maliciously lying to her. However, we know full well the disastrous consequences of Satan's lying ways. Untold suffering has been unleashed on the human family because of one selfish lie and three selfish individuals—Adam, Eve, and Satan.

Yes, the truth about lying is that it is comparable to a death-dealing poison. Thankfully, though, we can do something about it. We can stop the practice of lying and enjoy eternally the favor of Jehovah, a God "abundant in loving-kindness and truth."—Exodus 34:6.



# A Thrilling Surprise

Dana Folz was eight years old when he learned that he was adopted. Years later, he began to wonder, 'Who is my mother? What was she like?

Why did she give me up for adoption? Do I have brothers or sisters?'

Read Dana's account of how he finally found his birth mother and of the dramatic surprise that followed.

I WAS born August 1, 1966, in Ketchikan, Alaska, U.S.A. My sister Pam was two years older than I. Our father was a social worker for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and he was transferred often. We moved from place to place in Alaska. Afterward, we lived in Iowa, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Oregon.

While we were visiting relatives in Wisconsin in the summer of 1975, some cousins of mine made unkind remarks about another cousin. "He is adopted," they said, "and so is not really a Folz." After we returned home, I asked Mother about this and was surprised by the shocked expression on her face. She explained what adoption is. That night, as tears flowed from her eyes, she told me that I was adopted and that my sister was too.

Adoption did not mean that much to me then, and for a while I gave it little further thought. I had a mom and a dad, and life seemed to be the way it was supposed to be. My parents decided to stop moving and let the family put down roots. When I was nine, we settled in Vancouver, Washington. Dad and I were very close, while Mom and I were less so. I was independent and rebellious at times, and the frustration that this caused Mom may explain why we seemed to drift apart.

## Romance and College

When I was in high school, I met Trina, and we hit it off right away. After graduation I accepted an academic scholarship to Oregon State University, in Corvallis, Oregon. I spent my free time traveling back and forth to Vancouver to be with Trina, who had a year left in high school. I did little studying but figured I would do all right in college anyway. My first report card was a shock—it was the worst one I had ever had! I was embarrassed. But I didn't stop visiting Trina; I just took my books with me so I could study during my visits.

Then, one day, while riding my motorcycle back to school from Vancouver, I was involved in a serious accident. Shortly after that I was injured even more seriously when I was hit by a car while crossing a street at a crosswalk. I began working and lost the desire to return to college.

## Interest in Religion

In time, Trina and I began living together. We believed in God and wanted to know him. However, we felt that the churches were hypocritical. So we tried to read the Bible on our own, but we couldn't make head or tail of it.

One day, on my job in Portland, Oregon, coworkers began teasing a man whom I considered one of the nicest people I had ever met. Randy calmly put up with the harassment. Later that day I asked him: "What's this I hear about your being a minister?"

"That's right, I am," he said.

"With whom?" I asked.

"I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses."

"Who are Jehovah's Witnesses?"

"Are you serious?" he asked with a puzzled expression.

"Yes," I said. "Who are Jehovah's Witnesses? Should I know?"

"Yes," he said with a smile, "you should know. What are you doing for lunch?"

That was the first of a number of lunchtime Bible discussions. One night I told Trina about them. "Don't talk to Jehovah's Witnesses!" she exclaimed. "They're weird! They aren't even Christians. They don't celebrate Christmas." And she went on to tell me other things that she had heard about Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Someone has told you a lot of things that just aren't true," I said. After a lengthy conversation, I was able to convince her that she hadn't heard the whole truth. After that, she began having me ask Randy questions, and I would bring back one clear Scriptural answer after another. Finally, Trina said: "I never knew all of this was in the Bible, but I still think they're weird. If you want to keep talking to him about the Bible, I don't care; but just don't come home and push it on me."

#### A Distressful Period

I believed what I was learning from the Bible, but I felt I just couldn't live up to it. Trina and I seemed to be fighting more and more. So a friend and I decided to leave our girlfriends and start a new life in Oklahoma. I arranged for a leave of absence from work. Soon, my friend and I were settled in

an apartment in a small town near the Texas border. It didn't take me long to realize how much I missed Trina, but I decided I was going to have fun anyway.

I learned that the drinking age in Texas was 19, so when my friend left for a trip, I crossed the border one night to enjoy myself at a well-known rock-'n'-roll bar. I got really drunk, wrecked my car, and was taken off to jail. In time, I was able to contact my dad, and he bailed me out. Also, Trina took me back, for which I was thankful! I returned to my old job and resumed Bible discussions with Randy.

#### Taking Control of My Life

It had been nearly two years since I had first heard about Jehovah's Witnesses, and I decided to become more involved in my Bible study. I was now 20 years old, and the questions regarding my adoption that I mentioned at the beginning of this article began to plague me. So I started to make a serious search for my birth mother.

I called the hospital in Alaska where I was born and asked how to proceed. After learning what to do, I obtained a copy of my original birth certificate and I discovered that my mother's name was Sandra Lee Hirsch; but there was no listing for my father. Sandra was only 19 when I was born, so I assumed that she must have been a scared, single girl who had got into trouble and had made a very tough decision. There was not enough information on my birth certificate for me to locate my mother.

In the meantime, as a result of my Bible study with Randy, I was convinced that I had found the true religion. But I failed time and again to give up the defiling use of tobacco. (2 Corinthians 7:1) I felt that Jehovah had given up on me. Then, a Witness at the Kingdom Hall said something that really helped me. He mentioned that Satan is the one who wants us to fail and that it is sad to see some lose out on everlasting life by

giving up. "We need to throw our burdens on Jehovah," he said, "and rely completely on him to help us through our times of trouble."—Psalm 55:22.

That was exactly what I needed to hear! I began to apply what he said, praying often for Jehovah's help. Soon, I quit using tobacco. Trina and I were married, and I became regular in my Bible studies. In time, Trina also began to study. I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism on June 9, 1991. Less than two weeks later, our first daughter, Breanna Jean, was born.

### **My Relationship With Dad**

My dad and I were close. He was a very kind person who was always there with encouragement when I was frustrated. Yet, he was firm when I needed discipline. So, it was a difficult time early in 1991 when I learned that Dad had terminal lung cancer. By that time Mom and Dad had moved to Hamilton, Montana. We often traveled there to see him and to try to give support to Mom.

We were able to give Dad the book *Is This Life All There Is?* He promised to read it and said that he was worried about the welfare of his family. On my last visit, he told me how proud he was to have me as his son and how much he loved me. Then, as tears burst forth, he turned his head toward the window. We hugged several times before I left. Dad read about a third of the book before he died, on November 21, 1991.

After Dad's death and our subsequent move to Moses Lake, Washington, I had an even deeper desire to learn about my past. But despite all the time that I devoted to the search, we did not neglect spiritual interests. Trina was baptized on June 5, 1993, and six months later she gave birth to our second daughter, Sierra Lynn.

### **How I Found My Birth Mother**

I kept chipping away at Alaska's legal system, writing letter after letter to various

agencies as well as making my own computer searches. It was all to no avail. Then, toward the end of 1995, I had a medical check-up that revealed a heart irregularity. I was only 29, and my doctor wanted to know my medical history.

The doctor wrote a thorough, precise request, emphasizing that information in my adoption files could be vital to my physical welfare. In time, we received a response. It contained a judge's ruling declaring that he did not feel my medical need was serious enough to open the files. I was devastated. But a few weeks later, a letter arrived from a second judge. A court order had granted me access to my adoption files!

My actual adoption files arrived in early January 1996. They gave my birth mother's hometown and family background. Immediately, I did a computer search of Sandra's name along with the name of her hometown and came up with six phone listings. Trina and I decided that it was best that Trina make the phone calls. On the third call, a woman said that Sandra was her niece and provided her phone number.

### **The Call and the Surprise**

When Trina called the number, the woman who answered refused to identify herself. Finally, Trina said point-blank: "My husband was born in Ketchikan, Alaska, on August 1, 1966, and I need to know if you are the person I'm looking for." There was a long silence, and then, in a shaky voice, the woman asked for Trina's name and phone number and said she would call back. I didn't think she would call back right away, so I decided to get some things we needed at the store.

When I returned, Trina was on the phone and was teary eyed. She handed the phone to me. As Mother and I said hellos and exchanged small talk, Trina urgently whispered, "She really wanted to keep you." My

heart went out to Mother as she began telling about herself. "I want to thank you for the life you gave me," I said. "I have a good life and have had all the things I've needed. I have had good parents and lots of love and now have a wonderful wife and two beautiful daughters. I am very happy."

She began to cry. As we continued to talk, she told me of being raped, becoming pregnant, and receiving pressure to give me up; then she told me that afterward she married and that some time later, while she was in the hospital recovering from surgery, her baby daughter and her mother were killed in a fire. She said that at the time she felt that God had taken these loved ones away in payment for the son she had given up. "No," I immediately responded, "God doesn't work that way!" She said she knew that *now*, for after that tragedy, she had begun "searching for Bible truth" and was now "a Bible student."

I began thinking, 'This couldn't be true,' as I asked: "Who did you study with?" There

was a long silence. Then she said: "Jehovah's Witnesses." I was so shaken that I couldn't speak. In tears, I finally struggled to say, "I am a Witness too." When I repeated it more clearly, she was beside herself with joy. It was all too wonderful!

Mother became a Witness in 1975, sometime after the death of her baby daughter. When her husband began to progress spiritually, she told him about me. He comforted her and said that they would look for me. But not long afterward, he was killed in a car accident, leaving her with three small children to raise. We talked for hours for several evenings thereafter. Finally, we decided to meet in Phoenix, Arizona, the second week of February 1996. Mother had already planned to visit there with another Christian sister.

### A Memorable Reunion

For this trip Trina and I left our children at home. As I walked off the plane, I saw my mother and was finally able to hug her. When we embraced, she said she had waited 29 years to hold me, and she held me for a long time. We had a wonderful visit and shared pictures and stories. The highlight, however, was sitting next to Mother at a Kingdom Hall in Phoenix! We listened to the meeting together and stood next to each other as we sang Kingdom songs. It was a grand feeling that I will remember forever.

In April 1996, my sister Laura came from her home in Iowa to visit us. How wonderful to enjoy warm Christian association with her! I have also talked on the phone with my two newfound brothers. To be united with my family is wonderful, but to be united in love within Jehovah's organization is a gift that only our great God, Jehovah, could give.—*As told by Dana Folz.*



# ROMANIAN CONVENTIONS HELD DESPITE OPPOSITION

**A** “Messengers of Godly Peace” International Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses was scheduled to be held in Bucharest, Romania, from July 19 to 21, 1996. Some 40,000 delegates, including thousands from foreign countries, planned to visit this beautiful European capital of two million people. The National Stadium, with a seating capacity of 60,000, had been booked for the occasion. But then, on June 24, misinformed Romanian officials denied permission to hold the convention.

Jehovah’s Witnesses tried hard to have the order to cancel their convention rescinded, but to no avail. Therefore, arrangements had to be changed so that several thousand foreign delegates invited from a number of European countries, North America, and Japan could attend a convention in Budapest, Hungary, from July 12 to 14. The last-minute

changes resulted in considerable expense, inconvenience, and disappointment for many.

But what could be arranged for the local Romanian delegates? Officials in the cities of Cluj-Napoca and Brasov were contacted, and eventually it was possible to hold conventions there, from July 19 to 21. However, many Romanians were unable to get to Cluj-Napoca or Brasov. Therefore, two more conventions were held September 13 to 15, one in Baia-Mare and the other in Bucharest.

Why was the original convention in Bucharest canceled? And what prompted some officials later to alter their viewpoint, so that conventions were held in Romania, including one in Bucharest?

## Who Was Behind the Opposition?

During the international convention in Budapest, the Hungarian newspaper *Színes Vasárnap* observed regarding Jehovah’s Witnesses: “Bucharest was where they originally planned to hold their annual international meeting, but because of opposition from Orthodox Christians, the Romanian officials did not give Jehovah’s Witnesses permission to do so.” That the church was behind the opposition became widely known. For example, *Times Union*, an Albany, New



**Bucharest is a beautiful, modern city**

York, U.S.A., newspaper, reported: "Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist warned Orthodox believers to be on their guard against what he called Jehovah's Witnesses' 'heretical' beliefs."

Were the reports about clergy opposition to the convention true? Well, in June, all over the city—on church property, on walls and sides of buildings, and at subways—residents of Bucharest began observing posters that vilified Jehovah's Witnesses. One entitled "TO ALL ROMANIANS!" asked: "Does Romania need now an international Jehovahite convention . . . July 19-21? Christians—let us oppose this satanic convention!"

Another, which carried the heading "Attention to the JEHOVITE DANGER!" asserted: "Jehovah's Witnesses fight against Christianity . . . They seek to divide our people and to cause religious quarreling. . . . ALL YOU ROMANIANS, fight against this convention!"

"CALL TO ACTION" was the heading of yet another poster. "The Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood . . . calls all Orthodox believers to a protest meeting, which will be held Sunday, June 30." The poster concluded: "We will ask the authorities to cancel this convention. COME SO THAT WE MAY DEFEND OUR FOREFATHERS' FAITH. May God help us!"

The clergy even published and distributed a tract that claimed that Jehovah's Witnesses are "a political organization of communist faction." But this is also a bold lie, and perhaps most Romanians are well aware that it is. They know that Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted and often imprisoned by the Communists in years past.

#### **How Attitudes Were Affected**

Voices both inside and outside Romania quickly rose to counter the church-inspired attacks, and government officials could see that granting Witnesses the privileges that were extended to others was only right. The *Flagrant*, a Bucharest newspaper, predicted: "The current of adversity, hostility, and resentment against this first

Atenție! PERICOLUL IEHOVIST!

Sectă, fanatică și criminală, organizația "Marterii lui Iehova" ascunde sub masca credinței uriașe interese materiale, politice și occulte.

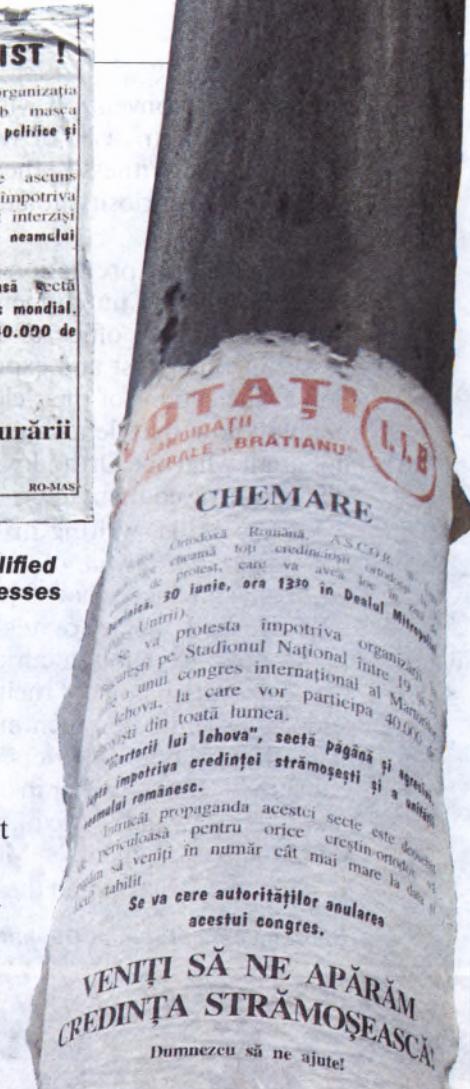
Marterii lui Iehova luptă pe ascuns împotriva creștinismului și împotriva oricărui stat național, de aceea sunt interzisi în unele țări. El urmăresc dezbinarea neamului și învățările noastre religioase.

În luna iulie, această periculoasă sectă organizează în București un congres mondial, la care intenționează să participe 40.000 de iehovisti.

**ROMÂNI**  
**luptați împotriva desfășurării**  
**acestui congres!**

RO-MAS

#### **Posters that vilified Jehovah's Witnesses**



international convention will have a paradoxical effect. Instead of turning people away from the Witnesses, the action will stir their interest, curiosity, tolerance, and sympathy."

How true this prediction proved to be! Many Orthodox Church members wrote or called the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bucharest and expressed indignation at the actions of their clergy. Informed people know that Jehovah's Witnesses are not at all what the Orthodox Church in Romania portrayed them to be.

Marius Milla, writing in the Romanian newspaper *Timisoara*, of July 6, 1996, noted: "I am convinced that 99 percent of those who accused the Jehovah's Witnesses so vehemently did not have enough curiosity to talk to them or to attend one of their meetings." He added: "It would be much more upbuilding if we, the Orthodox believers, would be more concerned with the rafter in our own eye and leave the straw in the eye of our neighbor to God's better judgment."—Matthew 7:3-5.

Then Mr. Milla quoted the speech that the

#### **Baptism candidates at Bucharest**



**At Brasov, where approval to hold the convention was granted only a couple of days in advance**

famous first-century lawyer Gamaliel gave to the religious leaders who were opposing Jesus' followers: "Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; (because, if this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them;) otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God." (Acts 5:38, 39) Summing up, Milla wrote: "Our attitude is antidemocratic, unbiblical, and antisocial."

Soon, criticism of the cancellation of the convention began to come from other parts of Europe and from the United States. The Romanian Helsinki Committee issued a press release that condemned "the public stand taken by Patriarch Teoctist, the

**A peak attendance of 22,004 at the convention in Cluj-Napoca**



representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church, against 'Jehovah's Witnesses.'

Hillary Clinton, wife of the U.S. president, happened to visit Romania at the time. The U.S. ambassador in Romania, Alfred Moses, explained why she did not enter the 18th-century Kretzulescu Church as she had planned: "Religious liberty is a principle sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States of America, as well as the Romanian Constitution. The presence on the church property of posters that denote lack of religious tolerance was not in agreement with the spirit of democratic pluralism and with the purposes of Mrs. Clinton's visit to Romania."

### Evidence of God's Support

Jehovah's Witnesses had held conventions in the city of Cluj-Napoca before, and officials there again welcomed them when they were denied the use of the National Stadium in Bucharest. But it was only a week before the convention was scheduled to begin that the contract for the stadium in Cluj-Napoca was signed. "How is it possible to organize such a huge convention in so short a time?" a reporter wanted to know.

"We are a united organization," he was told. "We are accustomed to holding conventions. But above all, Jehovah our God is supporting us."

Truly, it was with Jehovah's help and backing that so much was accomplished in such a short period of time. Imagine more than 20,000 people assembling together for three days on such short notice! The peak attendance was 22,004, and 799 were baptized. The newspaper *Adevărul de Cluj* reported after the convention: "The impression given by these people is that they are always smiling and that they are whole-souled in everything they do. Their solidarity was impressive . . . They displayed exemplary discipline in the way they conducted themselves and were extraordinarily clean."

What occurred in Brasov was especially impressive, since approval to hold the convention was granted only *a couple of days* before the convention was scheduled to begin! Yet, 7,500 accommodations in private homes were obtained. When one Witness spoke to his neighbors, they accommodated 30 delegates. And a congregation of Witnesses in Brasov had 500 delegates stay with them. Some delegates were accommodated in tents near the convention grounds; and when it rained, hospitable people in nearby apartment buildings came down and invited them to come to their own apartments. —Compare Acts 28:2.

The activity of Jehovah's Witnesses is restricted in predominantly Orthodox Bulgaria, which borders Romania to the south. When busloads of Bulgarian Witnesses headed for Bucharest, some customs officials apparently already knew about the change in convention sites. In Brasov a total of 1,056 Bulgarians enjoyed the complete program in their own language. Altogether, 12,862 attended the Brasov convention, and 832—66 of whom were Bulgarians—were baptized.

In September it was possible to organize smaller conventions in Baia-Mare and Bucharest for those unable to get to Cluj-Napoca and Brasov. There was a combined attendance of 5,340 at these two additional conventions, and 48 were baptized. Thus at last summer's "Messengers of Godly Peace" conventions in Romania, a total of 40,206 attended and 1,679 were baptized. Surely, Jehovah's blessing is upon those trying to serve him in Romania!

A representative of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bucharest observed: "In three weeks, we got publicity equivalent to years of witnessing throughout the country. What the Romanian Orthodox Church thought would hinder us actually turned out to be for the advancement of the good news."

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Helping the Deaf in Africa

"UNAD NEWS commends the selfless interest and efforts of Jehovah's Witnesses to learn sign language," stated the journal of the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD). The journal reported that a group of hearing Witnesses in Kampala, Uganda, have taken up learning sign language with the goal of providing spiritual care to hearing-impaired people in that land. The report added that two promising interpreters "are regular pioneers or full-time [ministers] in one of the world's fastest growing and highly respected religions, known internationally for its total adherence to biblical teachings."

### Wash Your Hands!

The American Society for Microbiology recently sponsored research to determine how many people wash their hands after visiting a public rest room, reports *The New York Times*. Evidently, almost everyone knows that they should wash their hands. In a telephone survey of 1,004 adults, 94 percent claimed that they always wash after using a public rest room. But do they? Researchers monitoring rest rooms in five large American cities found that out of 6,333 persons, only 61 percent of the men and 74 percent of the women washed their hands after using the toilet. Dirty hands spread diseases easily, and just one food handler with unwashed hands can make dozens of people sick. Part of the problem may be a lack of parental direction.

"Moms often today are not telling their kids to wash their hands," noted Dr. Gail Cassell. "Schools aren't telling children about it. We need to be reminded that this is important."

### Laugh, and Live Longer?

It has long been believed that laughter is good medicine. Ten years ago scientists at the State University of New York decided to find out why it is. They



recently revealed their discovery that laughter helps trigger the release of powerful hormones that energize a person's immune system. One group of hormones, called cytokines, has been found to promote the activity of white blood cells, which are needed to ward off viral and bacterial infections and which destroy potential cancer cells. These are just "one of the substances whose levels are increased by laughter," says *The Sunday Times* of London. The link between laughter and cytokines has led some researchers to refer to them as happy hormones. Thus, the paper calls laughter "a recipe for a long life."

### Catholic Church in a "Time of Peril"

A document issued by a group that includes seven

bishops describes the Catholic Church as being in a "time of peril," reports the *Star-Telegram*, of Arlington, Texas. The document "calls on the church to heal its deep divisions," says the newspaper. Polls show that many of the 60 million Catholics in the United States disagree with such church teachings as priestly celibacy and the ordination of women. At a news conference releasing the document, the late cardinal Joseph Bernardin expressed his concern about "an increasing polarization within the church and, at times, a mean-spiritedness" that interferes with the church's mission. "As a result, the unity of the church is threatened," he said. "The faithful members of the church are weary and our witness to government, society and culture is compromised."

### Progress by Looking Backward

Before transistors, there were vacuum tubes. Now researchers are taking a look backward. "We're revisiting vacuum tubes from the 1940s," says physicist Griff L. Bilbro, of North Carolina State University. "But now we're taking advantage of new materials and computer design tools to predict their performance at very high frequencies, for use in radar and cellular phones." One difference between the old and the new tubes is size. The new tubes are tiny and come in arrays about the size of a match head. They are made by "encasing electrodes in diamond, then evacuating the air from the interiors," says *Science News* magazine. "A

big difference between the new diamond vacuum tubes and the large glass bulbs of 50 years ago is heat. The old tubes had to glow red-hot to emit streams of electrons. The new tubes produce current at room temperature." Besides being more durable than semiconductors and computer chips, the new tubes also outperform them at high levels of temperature, voltage, and radiation.

### Dolphin Lifeguards

A man swimming in the Red Sea may have been saved by a group of dolphins, reports the *Journal of Commerce*. Mark Richardson, of Britain, was swimming off the Egyptian shore when he was attacked by a shark. After he suffered bites to his side and arm, he was encircled by three bottlenosed dolphins "flapping their fins and tails to scare away the shark." The dolphins then "continued to circle Mr. Richardson until his friends got to him." According to the *Journal*, "such behavior by dolphins is common when mothers are protecting their calves."

### "Fast-Food" Communion

An American entrepreneur, Jim Johnson, is producing disposable prepackaged sacraments for use in church Communion services, reports *Christianity Today*. The small purple plastic cups, about the size and shape of a single-serving container of coffee creamer, enclose a swallow of grape juice or wine. They also come with an unleavened bread wafer sealed inside the double pull-tab cover. According to Johnson, the product has the advantages of quicker preparation and cleanup time, economy, and hygiene.

More than 4,000 churches have already switched over to the new product, although some complaints have been raised about the "mass-market" approach to the Communion. Johnson counters: "Jesus provided the first fast-food meal when he fed the multitudes."

### Commuting Pigeons

Pigeons in London have long been observed hitching rides on the subway with earthbound commuters, reports *New Scientist* magazine. Additionally, some people claim that the birds even know at which stop they should get off. Following



an invitation by the magazine, a number of readers wrote to tell about their own experiences with the feathered travelers. One man, for example, wrote: "During 1974-76, I regularly encountered a single pigeon of light reddish colouring boarding the underground at Paddington and disembarking at the next station." Another man observed a similar spectacle as far back as 1965. It would seem that pigeons have been dodging fares in London's transit system for some 30 years!

### Australian State Legalizes Euthanasia

A man in Australia's Northern Territory has become the first person to die under a new state law permitting doctor-

assisted suicide, reports *The New York Times*. The man was in his 60's and was suffering from prostate cancer that was considered terminal. "This is the first time ever a man has legally ended his life," said Dr. Philip Nitschke, the physician who administered a lethal dose of barbiturates to the man. "The man was hooked up to a machine that allowed him to start the process of his own death by pressing a key on a bedside laptop computer," Nitschke explained. The new law, however, is facing bitter opposition. The national parliament is considering legislation to override the law, and the law is being challenged in court by some doctors and churches.

### Churches Converted

According to the Dutch newspaper *Het Overijssels Dagblad*, about 300 church buildings in the Netherlands have been converted to supermarkets, apartments, exhibition halls, and office buildings. With church attendance in the Netherlands down about 50 percent over the last 15 years, many churches are glad to find someone who is willing to take the burden of costly maintenance off their shoulders. Some church buildings have been sold for the token sum of one guilder (about 60 cents, U.S.)! Transforming a former church into a commercial building, however, sparks a lot of emotional pain, especially among older ones. One authority remarked: "They have attended there for years. They were baptized and united in wedlock there, and now they see people doing the most common things there . . . , even cursing."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Friendship** I send you my sincere thanks for the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Can't I Keep Friends?" (May 22, 1996) You have no idea how much this article helped me. It showed me that, despite obstacles, it is possible to have lasting friendships. At times, we lose friends because we postpone settling misunderstandings. This article helped me to fight my weaknesses in this regard.

A. M. P., Brazil

The article arrived at just the right time. Three months ago my cherished friendship with another girl began to cool off; we got to the point of not talking to each other anymore. When the article arrived, my friend and I both read it and realized that we had been behaving foolishly. We talked things out and clarified a whole series of misunderstandings. Now our friendship has renewed vigor.

N. T., Italy

**Volcano Disaster** I remember the news reports of the eruption of Mount Pinatubo back in 1991. But I put it out of mind until reading the article "Lahars—Mount Pinatubo's Aftermath." (May 22, 1996) I had never heard of lahars before and found the article fascinating. The courage and helpfulness shown by the Garcia family, though in the path of a lahar, was outstanding.

S. F., Canada

The article touched me deeply. It was moving to read the experiences of Christian brothers who maintained their zeal for spiritual things, even though they found themselves in unpleasant conditions. This has encouraged me not to let little problems make me miss Christian meetings or impede me from participating in the preaching work. Thank you for the article!

S. D., Italy

My husband and I had never heard of lahars, but now we realize how serious and dan-

gerous they are. We would like our brothers in the Philippines to know that we are praying for them and for those who were able to help them.

C. A. B., Guatemala

**Green Flash** I just read the article "Have You Ever Seen a Green Flash?" (May 22, 1996) A few years ago, while flying in the Alaskan bush, I was amazed to see a blue-green flash that lasted just a fraction of a second. I had never found an article explaining this occurrence until now. I sometimes thought it must have been something that I just imagined!

G. C., Alaska

**Panic Attacks** I want to express my gratitude for the article "Coping With Panic Attacks." (June 8, 1996) I have suffered such attacks for six years. After serving as a pioneer (full-time evangelizer) for a year, I had to stop because I did not have the strength to cope with the attacks. How painful it was when because I appeared to be healthy, close friends did not understand this. It is difficult to describe how happy I was to read this article.

O. S., Ukraine

I have served as a full-time minister for eight years. But for a number of years, I have had a feeling of worthlessness and I have suffered much anxiety. When I read this article describing symptoms similar to mine, I immediately started to put its counsel into practice. My feelings have started to improve, and my heart is calmer.

K. M., Thailand

I have undergone medical treatment for panic attacks and have been helped. Yet, I have secretly been tormented by the question, 'Am I spiritually weak or lazy?' Reading the article lifted a tremendous burden from my shoulders.

P. P., Finland



## SAVE YOUR HEARING!

A RECENT survey of 400 youths in France revealed that 1 out of every 5 of them suffers from hearing loss. A similar study a decade earlier showed that only 1 out of every 10 young people suffered such loss. Acting upon the dramatic increase in hearing loss of the young, last year the French National Assembly voted to limit the level of sound from personal stereos to 100 decibels.

Much of the blame for the hearing loss is placed on the high sound levels emanating from headphones of personal stereos. Ear surgeon Jean-Pierre Cave says that volumes above 100 decibels can result in permanent damage after a few hours. It takes only minutes for such damage

to occur when the volume is above 115 decibels. FNAC, a leading French electronics retailer, says most of its personal stereos produce more than 100 decibels. Some personal stereos can put out 126 decibels, which is 400 times as much power as 100 decibels!

Rock concerts may be hurting even more young people than personal stereos are, according to French hearing specialist Christian Meyer-Bisch. Indeed, regular attenders of rock concerts had significant hearing loss compared with healthy 18-year-olds. No wonder French National Assembly deputy Jean-François Mattei warned: "We're producing a generation of deaf people."

So to save your hearing, watch that volume!

**WHEN TWA flight 800 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean last July 17, all 230 persons aboard perished. These included 16 high school French students and five adult chaperones from Montoursville, a small Pennsylvania town of about 5,000. At a town memorial service on August 17, one of the speakers, Rudolph Giuliani, mayor of New York City, noted that if the same percentage of the population of New York City had died,**

**35,000 lives would have been snuffed out!**

The high school principal, Dan Chandler, was asked to speak at the funerals of several students. He quoted the Bible promise at Revelation 21:4, which says that in God's new system of things "death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." As to why such tragedies occur, he pointed to Ecclesiastes 9:11, which speaks of "time and unforeseen occur-

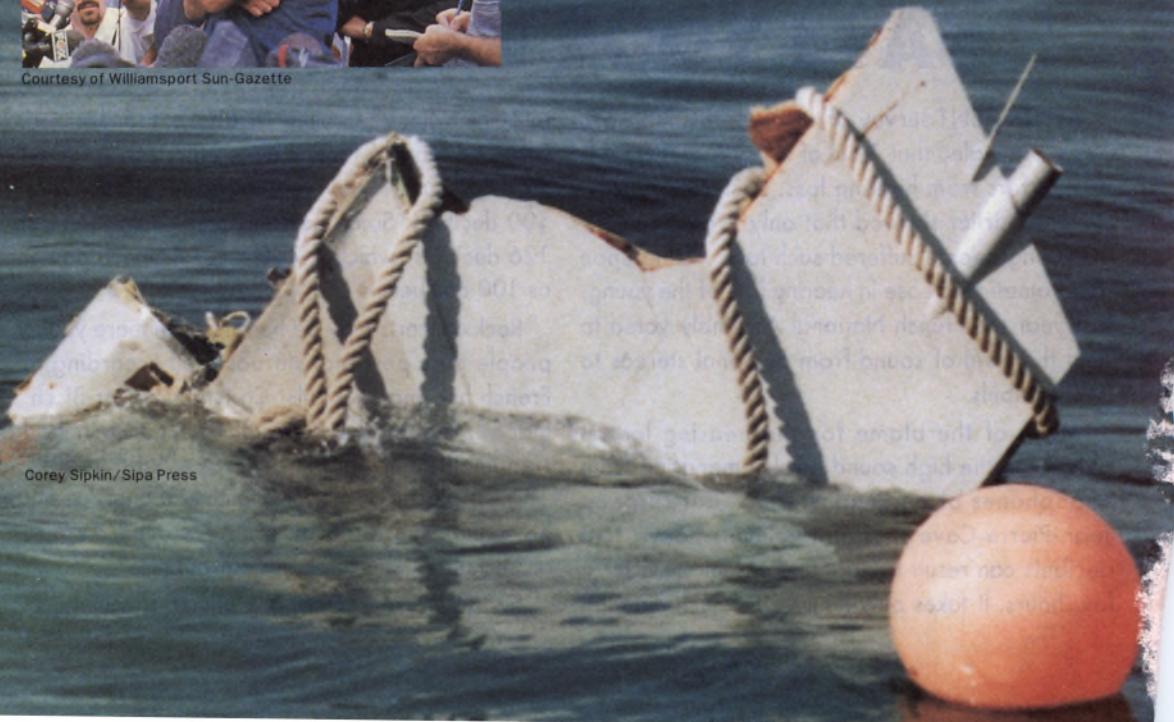
**rence" befalling all of us. Many were surprised to hear their high school principal offer such comforting comments.**

To offer further help, Chandler set up a table at the high school to make available such publications as the 32-page brochure *When Someone You Love Dies* and the tract *What Hope for Dead Loved Ones?* Hundreds of pieces of Bible literature were accepted, and many expressed thanks for the comfort these provided.



Courtesy of Williamsport Sun-Gazette

## **COMFORT FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS**



Corey Sipkin/Sipa Press