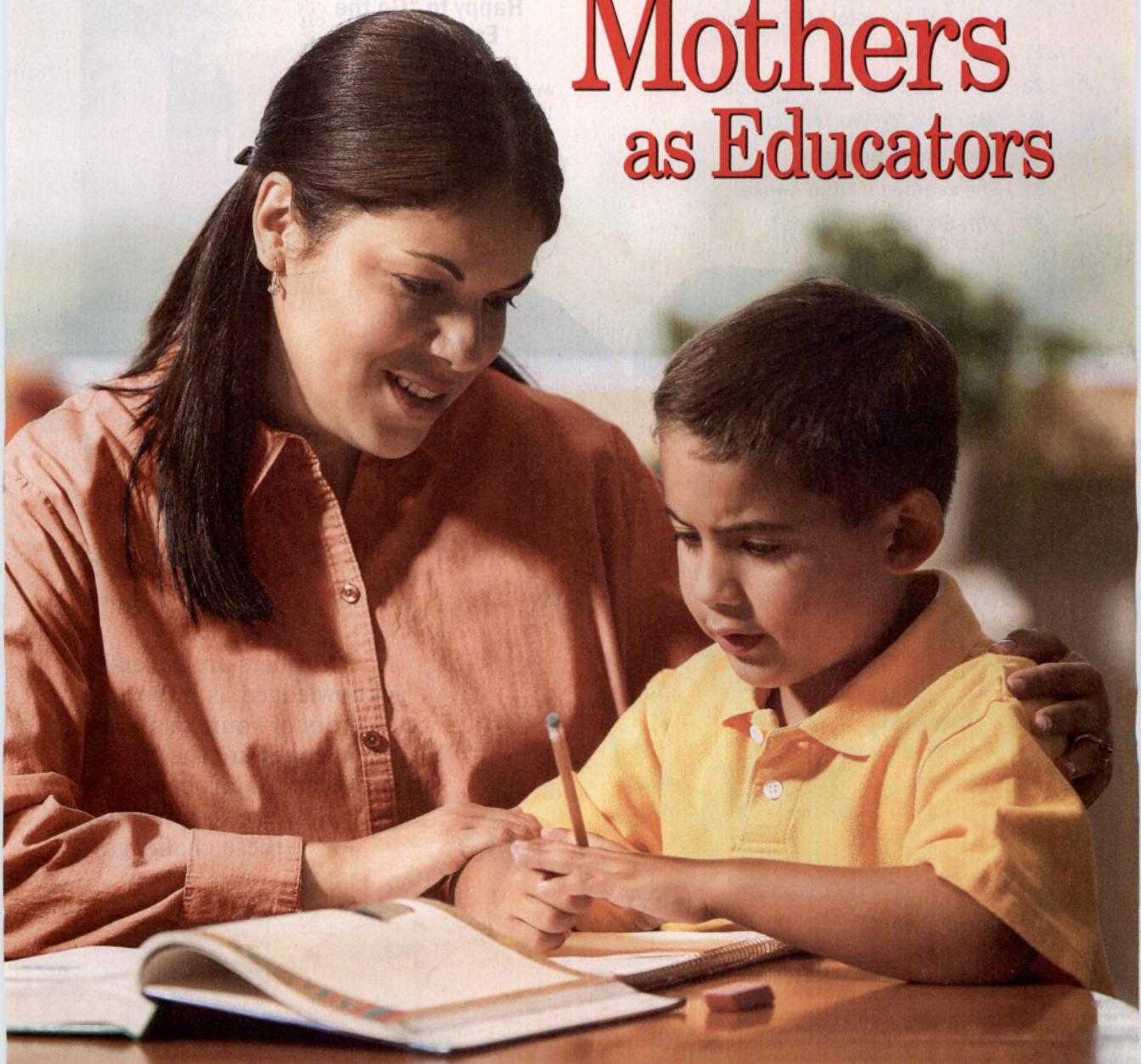


Awake!

FEBRUARY 22, 2005

The Role of Mothers as Educators



Awake!

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The Role of Mothers as Educators 3-11

Mothers are generally acknowledged as important educators of young children. What challenges are they facing in various parts of the world?

How are they meeting these challenges?



The Challenges Mothers Face

"It is the tasks connected with the home that are the fundamental tasks of humanity. . . . If the mother does not do her duty, there will either be no next generation, or a next generation that is worse than none at all."

—Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States.

CLEARLY, a mother is essential to human life, but her role involves far more than just bearing children. Regarding the role of mothers in most parts of the world today, one writer observed: "She is the primary protector for each child's health, education, intellect, personality, character, and emotional stability."

One of a mother's many functions is that of educator of her children. A child's first words and its pattern of speech are usually learned from its mother. Thus, a person's first language is often referred to as his mother tongue. The mother generally spends more time with the children each day than her mate, so she may be their chief teacher as well as principal disciplinarian. Thus, the Mexican proverb "Education is breastfed" honors the important role of mothers.

Our Creator, Jehovah God, also honors mothers. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone by "God's finger," urges children: "Honor your father *and your mother.*" (Exodus 20:12; 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10) Moreover, a Bible proverb refers to "the law of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8) The importance of teaching children during the first three years of life—when most are largely under their mother's care—is now widely acknowledged.

What Are Some Challenges?

For many mothers a challenge to teaching their children during the crucial formative years is the



Mothers have a great deal to do with each child's health, education, personality, and emotional stability



"When it comes to stimulating a child's intelligence and curiosity, as well as developing his/her creativity, a mother's role is vital."

—Regional Summit on Children's Rights, Burkina Faso, 1997.

pressure to work secularly to help support the family. Statistics gathered by the United Nations show that in many developed countries, more than half of mothers with children under the age of three are employed.

Additionally, mothers often bear the burden of bringing up their children by themselves because their husbands have left home to find work in another city or country. For example, it is reported that in some regions of Armenia, almost one third of the men have gone abroad in search of work. Other mothers are left alone to raise their children because their husbands have abandoned them or have died.

In some countries another challenge for many mothers is that they lack an education. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that two thirds of

the world's 876 million illiterates are women. In fact, in Africa, the Arab states, and East and South Asia, according to UNESCO, over 60 percent of the women are illiterate. Furthermore, large numbers of men believe that educating women is unnecessary and even makes them unfit for their childbearing role.

The magazine *Outlook* says that in one district of the state of Kerala in India where girls are commonly mothers by age 15, no one wants an educated bride. In neighboring Pakistan, sons are given priority. Their upbringing prepares them to find better-paying jobs so they can support their parents in their old age. On the other hand, according to the book *Women's Education in Developing Countries*, "parents fail to invest in their daughters because they do not expect them to be able to make an economic contribution to the family."

Then there is the challenge of dealing with local customs. For instance, in some countries a mother is expected to support such customs as the sale of young daughters in marriage and female genital mutilation. There is also a taboo on mothers' teaching and disciplining their sons. Is a mother obliged to follow such customs and leave the teaching of her sons to others?

In the following articles, we shall see how some mothers are meeting such challenges. We will also try to come to a greater appreciation of mothers and motherhood and obtain a balanced view of the mother's role as an educator of her children.

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.

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Mothers Meeting the Challenges

A MAJOR challenge for many mothers today is working secularly to help provide financially for their family. Moreover, for one reason or another, some also have to rear their children without another's help.

Margarita is a single mother in Mexico rearing two children by herself. "It has been difficult to train them morally and spiritually," she observes. "In the past my adolescent son came home from a party half drunk. I warned him that if it happened again, I wouldn't let him in the house. So the next time it happened, with much pain of heart, I locked him out. Thankfully, he didn't do it again."

Soon afterward, Margarita began studying the Bible, which helped her to instill moral values in her children. Now both of them are full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses.

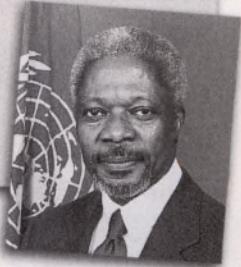
When Husbands Go Abroad

Many husbands in less-developed countries move to more prosperous lands for employment, leaving their wives to raise the children. Laxmi, a mother in Nepal, says: "My husband has been abroad for seven years. The children are less obedient to me than to their

"Study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, of whole countries."

—UN Secretary-General
Kofi Annan, March 8, 2003.

UN/DPI photo by Milton Grant



father. If he were here on a regular basis to take the lead, it would be easier."

Despite the difficulties, Laxmi is meeting the challenge. Because her education is limited, she has arranged for tutors to help her older children with their schoolwork. However, she pays particular attention to their spiritual education by conducting a weekly Bible study with them. She holds a daily discussion of a

Semimonthly Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,[#] Danish,[#] Dutch, English,[#] Estonian, Finnish,[#] French,[#] German,[#] Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,[#] Japanese,[#] Korean,[#] Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,[#] Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,[#] Swahili, Swedish,[#] Tagalog, Ukrainian

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Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America:** United States of Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

Bible text and regularly takes them to Christian meetings.

Mothers With Limited Education

In some countries another challenge is a relatively high rate of illiteracy among women. Illustrating the disadvantage of being an uneducated mother, Aurelia, in Mexico, a mother of six, explains: "My mother always said that women were not meant to study. So I never learned to read and couldn't help my children with their homework. That hurt. But since I didn't want them to suffer as I had, I worked hard to get them an education."

With even a limited education, a mother can make a difference. The saying is true: "Educate women and you educate the teachers of men." Bishnu, in Nepal, a mother of three sons, used to be illiterate, but her desire

to learn Bible truths and teach them to her children caused her to make a real effort to learn to read and write. She

Bishnu learned to read and write and then helped her sons to get a fine education



saw to it that her children did their homework, and she regularly went to their schools to discuss their work with their teachers.

As to their spiritual and moral education, Bishnu's son Silash explains: "The thing I liked most about her efforts to teach us was that if we made mistakes, she would give us Bible examples to correct us. This method of teaching was effective and helped me to accept the counsel." Bishnu has been a successful educator of her sons, all three of whom are God-fearing young men.

Antonia, in Mexico, a mother who is raising two children, says: "I only went to primary school. We lived in an isolated village, and the nearest secondary school was a long way off. But I wanted my children to have more education than I did, so I devoted a lot of time to them. I taught them their ABC's and numbers. My daughter could spell her name and write all the letters of the alphabet before she went to school. My son could read well by the time he went to kindergarten."

When asked what she did to give them a spiritual and moral education, Antonia explains: "I taught them Bible stories. Before my daughter could speak, she could communicate Bible stories by using gestures. My son gave his first public Bible reading at our Christian meetings at the age of four." Many mothers with limited education are meeting the challenge as educators.

Combating Harmful Customs

A custom among the Tzotzil of Mexico is to sell their daughters into marriage at the age of 12 or 13. Often girls are sold to a much older man who wants a second or third wife. If the man is dissatisfied with the girl, he can return her and get his money back. Petrona was faced with this custom as a child herself. Her mother had been sold as a wife, had borne a child, and had been divorced—all by the time she was 13! That first child died, and Petrona's mother was sold two more times afterward. Altogether, she bore eight children.



Antonia's young son gives Bible readings at Christian meetings

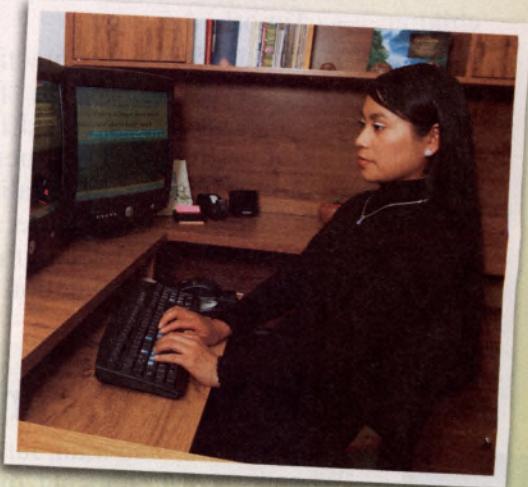
Petrona wanted to avoid such a life and explains how she was able to do it: "When I finished primary school, I told Mother that I didn't want to marry but wanted to continue my schooling. Mother told me that she couldn't do anything about it and that I should talk to my father."

"I am going to marry you off," Father told me. "You know how to speak Spanish. You know how to read. What more do you want? If you want to study, you'll have to pay for your schooling yourself."

"So that is what I did," Petrona explains. "I embroidered cloth to get the money for my expenses." That was how she escaped being sold. After Petrona grew up, her mother began to study the Bible, and this gave her the courage to inculcate Bible-based values in Petrona's younger sisters. From the mother's own experience, she was able to teach them the sad consequences that result from the custom of selling young girls in marriage.

Another custom among many is for only the fathers to discipline sons in the family. Explains Petrona: "Tzotzil women are taught that they are inferior to the males. The men are very domineering. Little boys copy their fathers, and they say to their mothers: 'You can't tell me what to do. If my father doesn't tell me, I won't obey.' So mothers cannot educate their sons. But now that my mother has studied the Bible, she has had success in instructing my brothers. They have learned Ephesians 6:1, 2 by heart: 'Children,

Petrona is a volunteer at the Mexico branch of Jehovah's Witnesses. Her mother, who eventually became a Witness, is teaching Petrona's younger siblings





**Waris Dirie is
a well-known
spokeswoman
against female
genital mutilation**

Photo by Sean Gallup/
Getty Images

be obedient to your parents. . . . Honor your father and *your mother*.'"

Mary, a mother in Nigeria, also comments: "Where I grew up, the culture of the people does not allow a mother to teach or discipline boys. But following the Biblical example of Lois and Eunice—Timothy's grandmother and mother—I was determined not to allow local customs to deter me from teaching my children."—2 Timothy 1:5.

Yet another custom commonly practiced in some countries is what some term "female circumcision," now generally called female genital mutilation (FGM). The operation removes part or most of a girl's genitalia. The custom was publicized by Waris Dirie, a well-known fashion model and special ambassador for the United Nations Population Fund.

In accord with local Somalian custom, as a child she was subjected to FGM by her mother. According to one report, between eight and ten million women and girls in the Middle East and Africa are at risk of undergoing FGM. Even in the United States, an estimated 10,000 girls are at risk.

What beliefs underlie this practice? Some think that the female genitals are evil and that they make a girl unclean and therefore unmarriageable. In addition, cutting off, or removing, the genitals is looked upon as insurance of the child's virginity and faithfulness. Failure by the mother to perpetuate this custom may incur the wrath of her husband and the local community.

Many mothers, however, have come to realize that there is no legitimate reason—religious, medical, or hygienic—to support this painful practice. The Nigerian documentary *Repudiating Repugnant Customs* reveals that many mothers have courageously refused to subject their daughters to it.

Indeed, mothers all over the world are successfully protecting and educating their children in spite of many challenges. Are their efforts truly appreciated?

She Made Sacrifices for Us

A young Brazilian man, Juliano, says: "When I was five years old, my mother had a promising career. With the birth of my sister, however, she decided to leave her job in order to care for us. Counselors at work tried to dissuade her from leaving. They said that after her children married and left home, everything she had done for them would be lost—that she was investing in something that would bring no return. But I can say that they were wrong; I will never forget her demonstration of love."

*Juliano's mother with her children;
at left: Juliano when he was five*



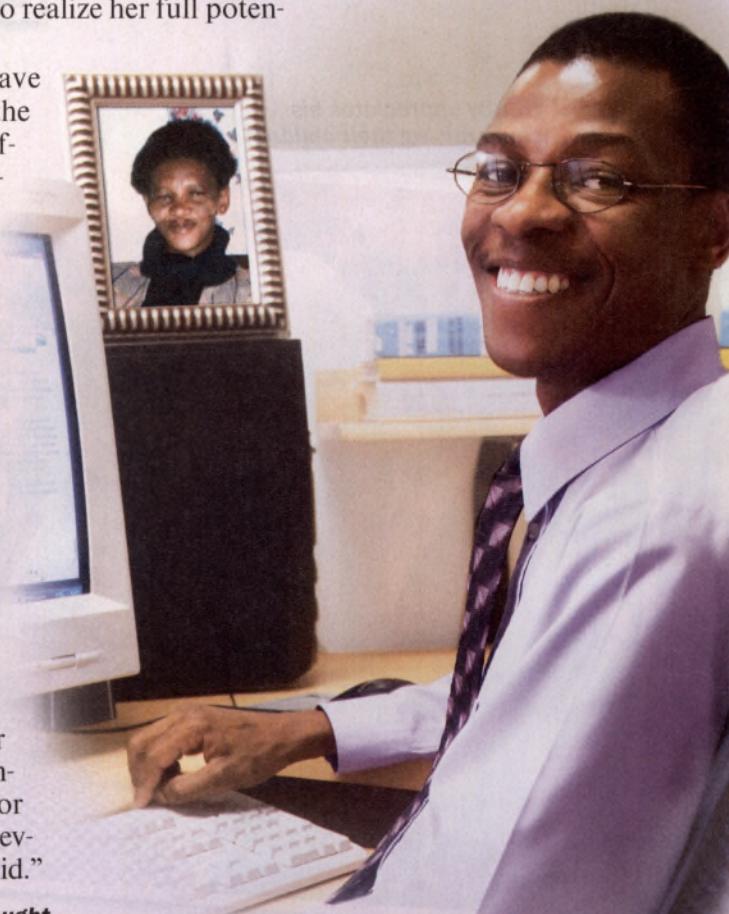
A Mother's Honored Role

AMOTHER'S role has often been unappreciated and even belittled. A few decades ago, some people began to demean the role of caring for children. Their view was that it was less important than a career and was even a form of oppression. While most would find that attitude extreme, mothers are commonly made to feel that being a homemaker and caring for children is a second-class occupation. Some even feel that a woman needs a career outside the home in order to realize her full potential.

Yet, many husbands and children have come to appreciate the mother's role in the family. Carlo, who serves at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Philippines, explains: "I am here today because of the training my mother gave me. My father was a disciplinarian and carried out punishment quickly, but Mother helped us by explaining and reasoning things out. I really appreciate her way of teaching."

Peter, in South Africa, is one of six children who were raised by a mother with a limited education. His father had abandoned the family. Peter reflects: "As a maid and a janitor, Mother did not earn much. It was difficult for her to pay school fees for all of us. Often we went to bed hungry. It was a challenge for her just to keep a roof over our heads. In spite of all these difficulties, Mother never gave up. She taught us never to compare ourselves with others. Were it not for her courageous commitment, we would never have made it through life the way we did."

Peter's mother taught him not to give up



A Nigerian husband, Ahmed, expresses how he feels about his wife's assistance in raising their children: "I appreciate my wife's role. When I am not at home, I have confidence that the children are well cared for. Instead of feeling challenged by my wife, I thank her and let the children know that they must respect her just as they respect me."

A Palestinian man readily praises his wife's success as a mother: "Lina has accomplished a lot with our daughter and contributes much to the spirituality of our family. From what I can see, her success is due to her religious beliefs." Lina is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and follows Bible principles in educating her daughter.

Ahmed greatly appreciates his wife's help in raising their children



Lina's husband attributes their daughter's fine behavior to his wife's religious beliefs

What are some of these principles? What can be said about the Bible's view of mothers? How were mothers in early times accorded a position of dignity and respect as educators of their children?

A Balanced View of Mothers

At creation the woman was assigned an honorable role in the family arrangement. The opening book of the Bible says: "Jehovah God went on to say: 'It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him.'" (Genesis 2:18) The first woman, Eve, was thus provided as Adam's complement, or counterpart. She was fitted just perfectly to be a helper for him. She was to be a part of God's purpose for them to produce children

and care for them as well as to take care of the earth and its animals. She would provide the intellectual stimulus and support of a true companion. How happy Adam was for receiving this beautiful gift from the Creator!—Genesis 1:26-28; 2:23.

Later, God established guidelines as to how women were to be treated. For example, Israelite mothers were to be shown honor and not to be treated with contempt. If a son ‘called down evil upon his father and his mother,’ he would be subject to the death penalty. Christian youths were urged to be “obedient to [their] parents.”—Leviticus 19:3; 20:9; Ephesians 6:1; Deuteronomy 5:16; 27:16; Proverbs 30:17.

Under the husband’s direction, the mother was to be the educator of both daughters and sons. A son was commanded ‘not to forsake the *law* of his mother.’ (Proverbs 6:20) Also, Proverbs chapter 31 provides “the weighty message that [King Lemuel’s] mother gave to him in correction.” She wisely directed her son to avoid improper use of alcoholic beverages, saying: “It is not for kings to drink wine or for high officials to say: ‘Where is intoxicating liquor?’ that one may not drink and forget what is decreed and pervert the cause of any of the sons of affliction.”—Proverbs 31:1, 4, 5.

Further, every young man contemplating marriage would be wise to consider the description of “a capable wife” that was given by King Lemuel’s mother, who said: “Her value is far more than that of corals.” Then, after describing the important contribution that such a wife makes to a household, the king’s mother said: “Charm may be false, and prettiness may be vain; but the woman that fears Jehovah is the one that procures praise for herself.” (Proverbs 31:10-31) Clearly, our Creator made women to occupy a position of honor and responsibility in the family.

In the Christian congregation, wives and mothers are also honored and appreciated. Ephesians 5:25 says: “Husbands, continue lov-

ing your wives.” To the young man Timothy, whose mother and grandmother raised him to respect “the holy writings,” this inspired counsel was given: “Entreat . . . older women as mothers.” (2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Thus, a man should have respect for an older woman as if she were his mother. Truly, God values women and accords them a dignified place.

Express Your Appreciation

A man raised in a culture in which women were viewed as inferior relates: “I received an education centered on the man, and I have observed the mistreatment of and lack of respect for women. So I have had to struggle to view women as the Creator views them—as a complement, or helpmate, in the home and as part of a team in the education of children. Although it is difficult for me to express words of praise to my wife, I recognize that what is good in my children is due to her labor.”

Indeed, mothers who assume their responsibility as educators can feel proud of their role. It is a worthwhile career. They rightfully deserve commendation and heartfelt expressions of appreciation. We learn so much from mothers—habits that stand us in good stead throughout life, good manners so essential for good relationships, and in many cases a moral and spiritual upbringing that keeps youths on course. Have you recently expressed your appreciation to your mother for what she has done for you?

In Our Next Issue

- Can We Afford Cleaner Energy?
- Can You Smile at a Crocodile?
- Is God Everywhere?



Catholicism With an African Flavor

By *Awake!* writer in Brazil

IN Salvador, the capital of Bahia State, Brazil, the new year is marked by a festival of huge proportions. Hundreds of women lead a procession up to the Catholic church of Bonfim, where they wash the church steps with perfumed water. This rite honors Oxalá, African god of creation.

As many as a million spectators witness this ceremony. To the rhythm of African percussion instruments, they join in the boisterous street party that follows.

This 250-year-old ritual is a striking example of syncretism, a term meaning a mixture of religious beliefs, a trademark of Brazil's Catholicism. More than 70 million Brazilians are said to be directly or indirectly linked to Candomblé, Umbanda, Xangô, and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Yet, at the same time, the vast majority claim to be Catholic.

How did this fusion take place? How does the Catholic Church view it? And is the intermingling of religious beliefs something to be praised or shunned?

'Springboard to the True Faith'

Estimates vary, but it is probable that more than six million Africans from Yoruba, Bantu, and other tribal backgrounds were transported to Brazil as slaves between the mid-16th century and 1888, when slavery was finally abolished. The mixture of traditional African beliefs and Catholicism in Brazil is thus a legacy of slavery.

While insisting on the conversion of all slaves, the Catholic Church nonetheless gave its blessing to the intermingling of Catholicism with elements of African religion. According to historian Roger Bastide, Jesuit missionaries believed that native Africans, like children, should be drawn to the Catholic faith through music and dance as well as their love of titles and honorary positions. "They should not be forced to break com-

▲ Afro-Brazilian priestesses washing the steps of the church
▼ Crowds on the steps of the church of Bonfim, in Brazil



pletely with their traditional customs,” wrote Bastide, “but these should be evaluated and the acceptable ones used as a springboard to help them attain the true faith.”

In various all-African religious brotherhoods, such as those dedicated to Catholic “Saint” Benedict and the Virgin of the Rosary, many African traditions received a “Christian” varnish. Once a year, on “Saint” Benedict’s feast day, such fraternities would elect a king and a queen from among their members, a custom derived from the succession of African tribal kings.

“Saints” or *Orixás*?

The belief in numerous intercessors between God and man is common to Catholicism and to African religions. The Yoruba, for example, believed in *orixás*. These were thought to be deified warriors and kings that controlled natural forces and served as intermediaries between the people and their supreme god, Olorun. Similarly, Roman Catholics believe that “saints” intercede with God for man. And they invoke specific “saints” for protection in connection with particular activities.

Instead of abandoning their *orixás*, many slaves simply cloaked their devotion to the *orixás* in the veneration of “saints” with similar characteristics. Thus, the Yoruba god of warfare, Ogun, assumed the identity of the Catholic “saints” Anthony or George, both soldiers and heroes of Christendom.

Similarly, Yemanjá, mother of all the *orixás* and goddess of the seas, matched up with various “apparitions” of the Virgin Mary. The Lord of Bonfim, Salvador’s most popular “saint,” was equated with Oxalá, the supreme *orixá* of the Yoruba pantheon. This association is still celebrated in the annual ritual of the washing of the church steps.*

* According to the *Dicionário de Cultos Afro-Brasileiros* (Dictionary of Afro-Brazilian Religions), the washing of the steps of the Bonfim is closely related to a Yoruba ceremony called water of Oxalá, which involves the ritual washing of the *otás* (sacred stones) of Oxalá.

“People here believe sincerely and with the same conviction in Jesus, in Catholic saints, and in the *orixás*,” comments one Catholic leader from the city of Salvador. “Many flit between one religion and another,” adds a Brazilian anthropologist. “They walk out of Mass in a Catholic church and straight into [an African] candomblé center.”

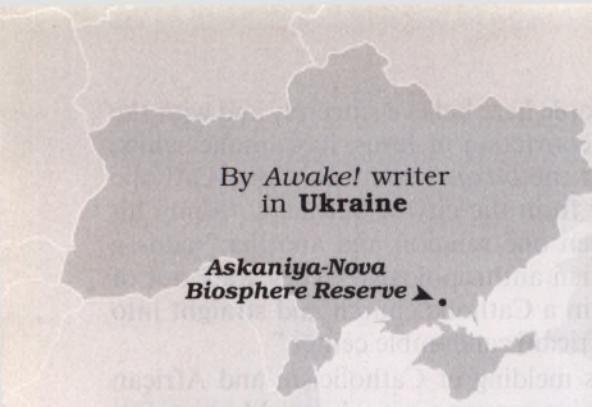
This melding of Catholicism and African beliefs is a sensitive issue. Lucas Moreira, former president of the Brazilian Catholic Episcopal Conference, asserted: “Each one should follow his own faith, with no mixing.” Yet, another Catholic bishop observes: “Syncretism is a reality that defies the church’s action.”

The battle lines are drawn. Conservative church leaders combat what they view as pagan and demonic, while others press for the inclusion of African symbols and dance in the rites of the Catholic Church.

What Would Jesus Say?

Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, preached to a variety of religious and ethnic groups. But he was adamant when he said: “True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and *truth*, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him.” (John 4:23) Moreover, Jesus explained that the Father, Jehovah God, reveals the truth by means of His Word, the Bible.—John 17:17.

Jesus instructed his followers to teach ‘people of all the nations to observe *all the things he had commanded*.’ (Matthew 28:19, 20) He never suggested that they modify his teachings in order to attract people who held to different traditions and beliefs. In the days of the apostles, some people did try to introduce ideas and customs borrowed from other religions. However, such attempts were condemned. “Get out from among them, and separate yourselves,” wrote the apostle Paul, “and [God] will take you in.”—2 Corinthians 6:17.



By *Awake!* writer
in Ukraine

Askaniya-Nova
Biosphere Reserve ▲

DO YOU enjoy observing animals in their natural setting? If so, you would delight in a visit to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America all in one place. How is such a visit possible? By a trip to the Askaniya-Nova Biosphere Reserve in southern Ukraine. Here herds of wild animals from these six continents roam the plains and live in peace and harmony.

The history of the reserve goes back to 1883. That year a German settler named Friedrich Pfalz-Pfein set aside a piece of virgin steppe as a reserve. He already had a private zoo with over 50 species of birds and mammals there. Later, in 1887, a botanical garden was added. Presently the Askaniya-Nova Biosphere Reserve contains a botanical park, a steppe reserve consisting of over 27,000 acres of virgin prairie land, and a zoo.

Approaching the reserve, the botanical park comes into view first. Over the years a large variety of trees from many parts of the world have been brought here by scientists. The trees dot the park's area of some 500 acres. Since the reserve is in an arid region of the country, artesian wells with irrigation ditches have been dug to water the trees and shrubs. The original landscape and irrigation system were awarded a gold medal at the Paris World's Fair in 1889.

Animals From Six Continents

From the shady park, we travel to the sunny steppe, where herds of wild animals of some 50 different species roam the nearly

Where Six Continents Meet

6,000 acres of fenced plains. First, let us observe some animals from Africa.

The Cape buffalo is one of the most famous and dangerous representatives of the big-game animals. It is impressive not only because of its size—about five and a half feet at the shoulder—but also because of its massive, three-foot-long horns. Since the males are unpredictable and are known to attack, getting too close to them is not recommended.

Another animal that catches our attention is the eland, an antelope of southeast Africa. Because hunting is prohibited in the reserve, eland have lived here in peace since they were first brought to this area in 1892. They pasture within view of visitors, of whom they have no fear. Some of the eland are even domesticated and can be milked just as one would milk ordinary dairy cattle. Their nourishing milk, with its high fat content, is used for medical purposes, such as treating stomach ulcers.

The emu, a large flightless bird, comes from Australia. It is the second-largest of all birds—only the ostrich is bigger. Some emus reach a height of six feet and weigh 130 pounds. Though a net fence separates these birds from other animals, their area is large enough for them to run about freely.

A fascinating feature of the emu is that the unhatched baby birds react when they hear the sound of the male emu. For example, it is claimed that when a recording of the male emu's call is played shortly before the eggs hatch, the movements of the chicks inside cause the eggs to sway back and forth. Yet, the chicks inside their shell do not react to the call of the female. Why not?

Although the female lays the eggs, the male emu broods them. He cares for them for about 50 days until they hatch, and then he cares for the chicks afterward. So even while they are still in the egg, the unhatched chicks already know who is taking care of them. By the way, these are no ordinary eggs—they are dark green and huge—weighing nearly two pounds each!

The reserve contains herds of Przewalski's horses. In 1899 they were brought here from the Mongolian prairies. It is believed that as a result of hunting and loss of pasture, Przewalski's horses became extinct in the wild in the 1960's.

Presently, approximately 1,100 Przewalski's horses live in captivity in various zoos and parks, including about a hundred here in the Askaniya-Nova Reserve. Scientists are endeavoring to reintroduce these animals into the wild. Thus, 21 Przewalski's horses were shipped back to Mongolia in 1992/93.

The most numerous of the species in this reserve is the spotted deer from China and Japan. Because of its spotted back, this graceful creature is also called flower deer. It is a beautiful animal, having a slim build and stately antlers, which are proudly displayed on its small head.

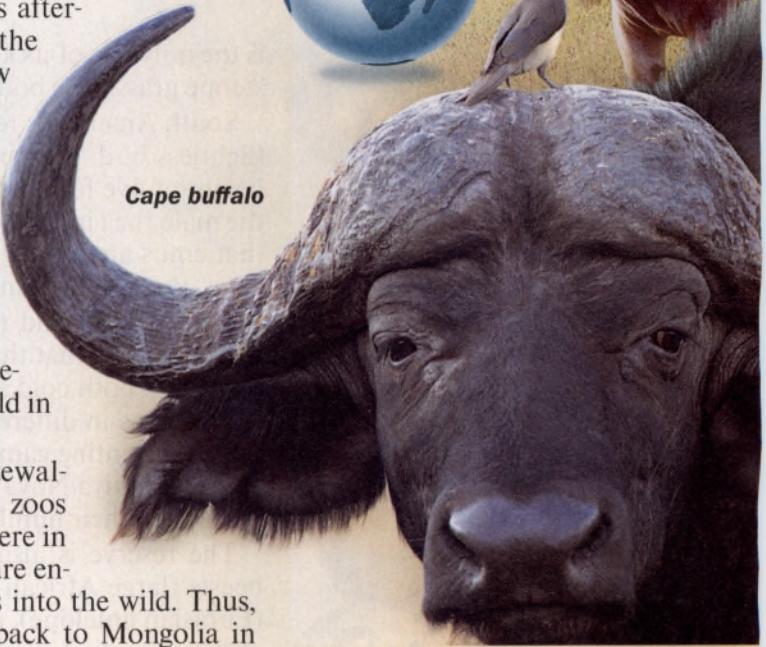
Gayals, huge semidomesticated Indian oxen, can also be seen peacefully pasturing in the steppe. In India these animals wander on their own in the forest during the day, and return to the village at night. Though in Askaniya-Nova they have neither forest nor village, the oxen seem comfortable on the local grassland with neighboring herds of animals.

The American bison, or buffalo, is impressive because of its power and size. About 150 years ago, millions of these giants roamed the North American prairies, but they were hunted to near extinction. This local herd of American bison

Eland

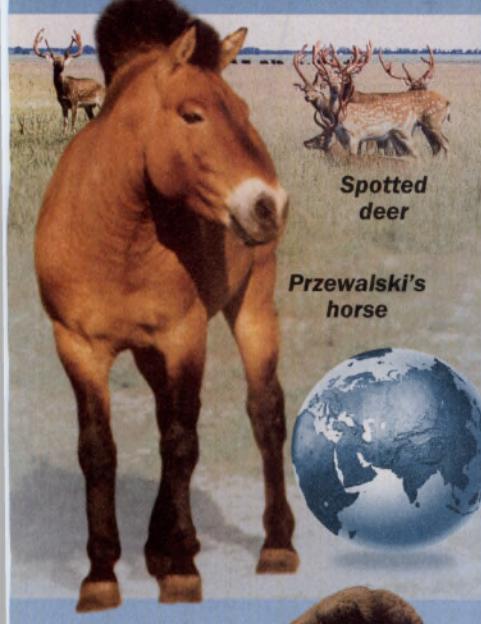


Cape buffalo



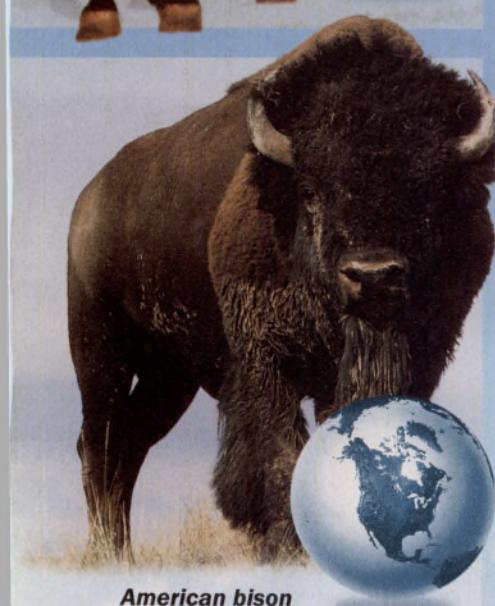
Emu





Spotted deer

Przewalski's horse



American bison

Deer: Biosphere Reserve
"Askaniya-Nova," Ukraine; globes:
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*The reserve is also home to
a great variety of birds*

is the only one of its kind in Europe. They feel at home on the steppe grasslands both in summer and winter.

South America is represented by the rhea (or nandu), a big flightless bird. It is similar to the Australian emu, reaching a height of five feet and a weight of 110 pounds. Like the emu, the male rhea incubates the eggs. A characteristic difference is that emus are monogamous, whereas rheas are polygamous. Thus, three to five female rheas may lay their eggs in one nest.

The red deer and roe deer come from Europe. These are hardy animals that thrive on the steppe grass and can readily withstand both cold and heat. These deer are used to replenish reserves in different parts of Europe as well as areas set aside for hunting game animals. Shetland ponies arrived here at the Askaniya-Nova Reserve from Northern Europe in 1960. Since then their numbers have increased considerably.

The reserve is also home to herds of zebras, blue wildebeests (large African antelope), Asian wild asses, and saigas (Eurasian antelope), as well as a huge variety of birds. Some of the animals stay outdoors in the steppe all year, while others are taken to the farms, where they are sheltered during winter.

Maintaining This Natural Reserve

Today Askaniya-Nova is a study center for the Ukrainian scientific research institute.



The personnel of the institute do extensive work in preserving the steppe in its natural state and in helping the animals to acclimatize to their new environment. Scientists are also working to improve the quality of the existing collection of exotic and rare animals.

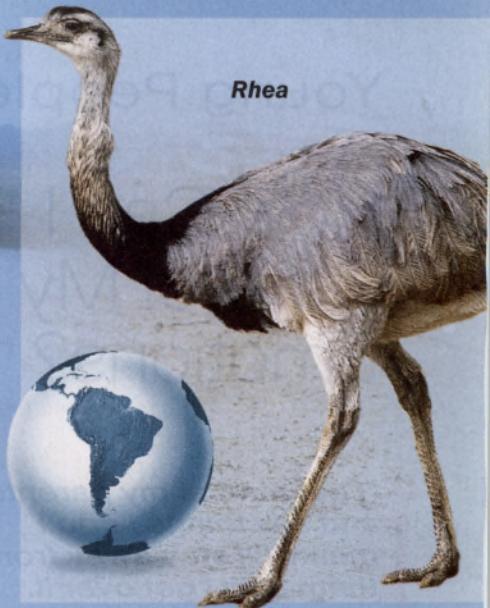
Natural reserves can be found in different parts of the earth. You may find them on North and South American prairies and pampas, African savannas, Australian grasslands, and Asian and European steppes. Each has its own peculiar characteristics and variety of plants and animals. The international aspect of the Askaniya-Nova Reserve shows how animals from various corners of the earth can adapt to their surroundings and coexist peacefully.

With great anticipation, many people await the time prophesied in the Bible when God's Kingdom will bring peace not only among humans but also among

the many varieties of animals on the earth.—Isaiah 11:6-9; Hosea 2:18; Acts 10:34-35.

Botanical park

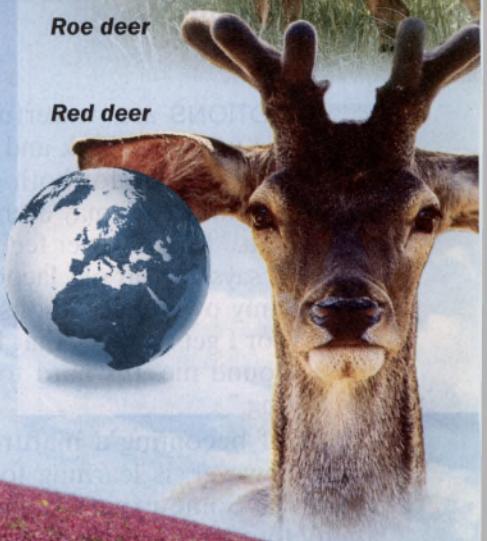
Birds: Biosphere Reserve "Askaniya-Nova," Ukraine; flowers and park: Olha Dvorna/Biosphere Reserve "Askaniya-Nova," Ukraine; globes: Mountain High Maps® Copyright © 1997 Digital Wisdom, Inc.



Rhea



Roe deer



Red deer

Young People Ask . . .

How Can I Control My Emotions?

"I get mad at my parents and say things I don't mean. I'll stay away from them until I get over it.

—Kate, aged 13.

"Insecurity is my biggest struggle. Sometimes I feel I'm dying inside."

—Ivan, aged 19.

EMOTIONS are powerful. They affect the way you think and act. They can motivate you for both good and bad. At times, they may even seem to overwhelm you. "I hardly ever feel that I'm good enough," says 20-year-old Jacob. "Often, I fail to meet my own expectations. Sometimes I just cry, or I get so angry that I take it out on those around me. It's hard to control what I'm feeling."

Part of becoming a mature, responsible adult, however, is learning to control one's emotions. Some experts now feel that the ability to manage emotions and to deal with people is more valuable than intelligence. In any event, the Bible places a high value on controlling one's feelings. For example, Proverbs 25:28 says: "If you cannot control your anger, you are as helpless as a city without walls, open to attack." (*Today's English*

Version) What makes it so hard to control one's feelings?

A Challenge for Youths

People of all ages and backgrounds struggle with controlling their emotions. However, the struggle can be particularly challenging during one's transition from adolescence to adulthood. Says the book *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* by Ruth Bell: "Most teenagers feel a jumble of crazy, beautiful, frightening, mixed-up emotions. A lot of people have several different feelings at the same time about the same things. . . . One minute you may feel a particular way, and then a minute later you may find yourself feeling the opposite way."

As a young person, you are also inexperienced. (Proverbs 1:4) So, as you encounter new situations and challenges for the first time, it is only natural to feel a bit insecure



and perhaps overwhelmed. Fortunately, your Creator well understands your feelings. He knows even your “disquieting thoughts.” (Psalm 139:23) In his Word he has set forth some principles that can help.

A Key to Controlling Emotions

One key to controlling your emotions is learning to control your thoughts. Negative thoughts can sap you of the energy you need to take action. (Proverbs 24:10) But how can you learn to think positively and thus be helped to control your emotions?

One way is to refuse to dwell on negative things that make you feel depressed or insecure. By following the Bible advice to focus on things that are “serious” and “righteous,” you can replace negative thoughts with positive ones. (Philippians 4:8) Doing this may not be easy, but with effort it can be done.

Consider a young woman named Jasmine. “I feel so overwhelmed by all that I’m faced with,” she once lamented. “New job, new responsibilities. My emotions are spent. I find it difficult to breathe.” It is not surprising for a youth to feel that way on occasion, and it can cause one to feel insecure, unsure of oneself. The Bible tells us about a young man named Timothy, who was superbly qualified for the responsibilities he was given. Yet, it appears that he battled feelings of inadequacy. —1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 1:6, 7.

It may well be that you feel insecure when you are confronted with a new or unfamiliar task. ‘I’ll *never* be able to do this,’ you may tell yourself. But you can control such feelings of insecurity by refusing to dwell on negative thoughts. Focus on learning to do the task competently. Ask questions, and follow instructions.—Proverbs 1:5, 7.

The more competent you become at a task, the less insecure you will feel. Do not dwell on your weaknesses, allowing them to paralyze you and prevent you from applying yourself to making improvement. One time when the apostle Paul was criticized, he replied: “Even

if I am unskilled in speech, I certainly am not in knowledge.” (2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6) Similarly, you can build your confidence by acknowledging your strengths and turning to God for help to cope with your weaknesses. God really can help you, as he did people in the past.—Exodus 4:10.

Another way you can help to control your emotions is to set modest, realistic goals and accept your limitations. Also avoid unfairly

One key to controlling your emotions is learning to control your thoughts

comparing yourself with others. At Galatians 6:4, the Bible gives good advice when it says: “Let each one prove what his own work is, and then he will have cause for exultation in regard to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person.”

Slowing Down Anger

Managing anger can be another difficult challenge. Like Kate, mentioned at the outset, anger prompts many young ones to say and do things that are hurtful or destructive.

Granted, it is normal to feel anger at times. But remember the first murderer, Cain. When he became “hot with great anger,” God warned him that such anger could lead to his committing serious sin. He asked Cain: “Will you, for your part, get the mastery over [sin]?” (Genesis 4:5-7) Cain failed to heed this divine advice, but with God’s help you can control your anger and avoid sinning!

Again it comes down to controlling your thoughts. At Proverbs 19:11, the Bible says: “The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger, and it is beauty on his part to pass over transgression.” When someone upsets you, try to understand *why* he or she behaved that way. Was that person deliberately trying to hurt you? Could it be that he or she was acting impulsively or out of ignorance?

Making allowances for the mistakes of others reflects God's own mercy, and it can help slow down your feelings of anger.

What, though, if anger is justified? The Scriptures say: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26) If necessary, talk the matter out with the individual. (Matthew 5: 23, 24) Or perhaps the best thing to do is simply to let the matter drop—let go of the anger and move on with your life.

Interestingly, your friends can have an influence on how you deal with anger. The Bible thus directs: "Do not have companionship with anyone given to anger; and with a man having fits of rage you must not enter in, that you may not get familiar with his paths and certainly take a snare for your soul." —Proverbs 22:24, 25.

Being around people who make an effort to control their anger can help you to develop self-control yourself. The Christian congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are full of such mature individuals, many of whom are older and more experienced than you. Get to know some of them. Watch how they cope with problems. They may also be able to give you "skillful direction" when you face difficulties. (Proverbs 24:6) Jacob, quoted earlier, relates: "A mature friend who can remind me of God's Word is priceless. When I remember that Jehovah loves me despite my insecurities, I'm able to feel in control and remain calm."

Other Practical Steps

A popular exercise book says: "Countless studies have proven that how you move your body influences your mood through your biochemistry. Hormone and oxygen levels all change with the kind of movements you make." There is no question about it, physical exercise is beneficial. The Bible tells us: "Physical exercise has some value." (1 Timothy 4:8, *Today's English Version*) Why not establish a modest routine of regular exercise? It can have a good effect on the way you

feel. Maintaining a healthful diet can likewise bring benefits.

Consider, too, your choices of music and entertainment. A study published in *The Harvard Mental Health Letter* said: "Viewing violence . . . tends to stir angry and aggressive feelings. . . . People watching violent films thought more aggressive thoughts and showed a rise in blood pressure." So make wise decisions when it comes to what you listen to and watch.—Psalm 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Ultimately, the best way to learn to control your emotions is to develop a close friendship with your Creator. He invites each of us to speak to him in prayer, to pour out our feelings and emotions. "Do not be anxious over anything," encouraged the apostle Paul. "Let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers." Yes, you can develop the inner strength to face any situation in life. The apostle Paul added: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me." —Philippians 4:6, 7, 13.

Young Malika says: "I've learned to pray, pray, and pray. Knowing Jehovah cares helps me to feel calm and more in control of my emotions." With God's help, you too can learn to control your emotions.



Association with older ones can teach you how to handle your feelings

"Junk" DNA?

MANY researchers approach the study of biology, genetics, and related fields from the standpoint of the theory of evolution. Often, this view has led them to false conclusions. For example, early Darwinists classified certain organs, such as the appendix, the pituitary gland, and the tonsils, as vestigial. They considered them to be evolutionary leftovers because these organs seemed no longer to have any function. In time, however, the important role of these organs came to light. Evolutionists, therefore, had to discard their earlier views.

A similar development recently occurred in the field of genetics. Early research suggested that about 98 percent of the DNA in humans and other organisms had no function. Hence, many who were influenced by the theory of evolution assumed that this DNA was "evolutionary junk"—a view that quickly became orthodox.

Once again, however, an assumption rooted in Darwinism proved to be false. Recently, scientists have discovered that "junk" DNA plays a vital role in the body by yielding special forms of RNA (ribonucleic acid) that are vital for life. John S. Mattick, director of the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland in Australia, feels that the hasty acceptance of the "junk" DNA theory is "a classic story of orthodoxy derailing objective analysis of the facts, in this case for a



quarter of a century." This failure, he adds, "may well go down as one of the biggest mistakes in the history of molecular biology."

Is it not much wiser to view DNA as having an intelligent Designer? People with such a viewpoint realize that in time the reasons for puzzling aspects of God's handiwork usually come to light. And instead of disillusioning them, such findings fill them with even greater awe.—Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 3:11.

Conch *A taste of the islands*

"Four conch snacks!" "One grilled conch and two conch salads!"

These are typical expressions of hungry patrons ordering food at local carryout restaurants here in the Bahamas. The tantalizing aroma of fried conch mingles with the salt air, stimulating the appetite. But just what is conch?

THE conch is a single-shelled marine mollusk, or sea snail. There are a number of varieties of this mollusk, including the hawk-wing, milk, rooster-tail, fighting, and queen, or pink, conch. The variety that is especially enjoyed as food here is the queen conch. It bears the Latin name *Strombus gigas* and is principally found in warm waters from Florida to Brazil.

The queen conch has a large spiral-shaped shell with a wide flaring lip, the adult varying in length from eight to ten inches. Visitors usually pronounce it "konch" and are quite surprised to hear the locals say "konk." However, either way is acceptable.

Capture and Uses

As a youngster, Basil recalls going out on a boat with his father in search of conch. "My dad used a large cone-shaped bucket with glass at the wide end along with a long pole with two hooks at the end. He would dip the glass-bottomed bucket in the ocean so he could look down and locate the conch. As he held the bucket with one hand, he used the other to hook the conch with the pole and pull it into the boat."

The popular method today is for a diver simply to go down and bring the conch up by hand. When diving in deeper waters, he may use a snorkel or if he has a government permit, an air compressor.

To extract the conch, a hole is made at the base of the shell. A knife is then inserted

through the hole to nudge the conch to the entrance of the shell so that it can be pulled out. The conch has four main parts: the head, the internal organs, the mantle, and the muscular foot. Attached to the foot is a single brown horny plate, or operculum. A tough skin covers the foot, which is the part that is eaten. The skin and all inedible parts are cut away, leaving the sweet, white meat.

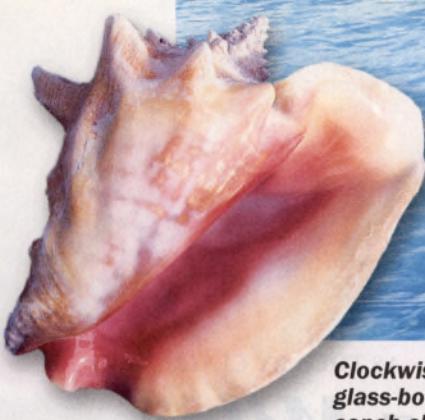
Conch is an excellent source of protein. It continues to be highly regarded for its therapeutic value. Many people recount experiences of remarkable improvement in their health after a diet rich in conch.

Today there is a thriving industry in conch-shell jewelry. The shell, with its pink flaring lip, is beautiful and very popular among shell collectors. However, the biggest use for conch is in pleasing the palate. Over the years, innovative cooks have come up with a variety of tasty ways to prepare this delicacy.

Mouth-Watering Treat

In the days before refrigeration was common here, conch was preserved by drying. First, it was tenderized by being beaten with a mallet. The meat was then hung in the sun for a few days or so to dry, or cure. Before it was cooked, the meat was soaked in water for a few hours to soften it. Many still enjoy the flavor of conch preserved in this way.

A favorite with locals and visitors alike is conch salad, which might be called conch



Clockwise: Queen conch shell; conch fisherman using a glass-bottomed bucket and a pole; extracting the conch; conch chowder; conch salad; conch fritters; grilled conch with plantains and cassava

sushi. Yes, the conch is eaten raw. The meat is cut out of the shell, and bite-size pieces are combined with celery, green bell peppers, hot peppers, onions, and tomatoes. Salt, fresh lemon, and orange juice are added. If you shudder at the thought of eating raw seafood, there are many recipes in which conch is cooked. A word of caution, though. When cooking conch, first tenderize it with a mallet. If you don't, the conch will be tough and rubbery.

Conch can be steamed, stewed, jerked, grilled, cracked, made into burgers, cooked in rice or soup—the list goes on and on. Conch fritters and chowder are often served as appetizers. Basic recipes for preparing these dishes have been passed down from one generation to the next. So when you visit the beautiful isles of the Bahamas, do not return home without sampling conch. It will give you a real taste of the islands.

■ Cracked Conch (*Shown at bottom*)

Sandra, a local wife and mother, describes how she prepares delicious cracked conch: "First, tenderize the conch thoroughly. Then coat it with flour that is seasoned with salt and pepper, and dip it in egg batter. Fry the conch in hot oil until golden brown. Drain it on paper towels, and add lemon juice."

Conch prepared this way is usually served with French fries and lots of catsup or with peas and rice. Cracked conch may also be eaten with tartar sauce. Frozen conch is often exported, so you may be able to find conch in your area. Why not try it? You just may like it.





Happy to “Go the Extra Mile”

AS TOLD BY CLAIRE VAVY

THE island of Madagascar, located about 250 miles from the East African country of Mozambique, is mountainous and has dense rain forests. I was born on the eastern side of the island in the small village of Betoko II. In 1987, when I was 15, I moved to the seacoast town of Mahanoro to attend school.

I lived in Mahanoro with my older brother Celestin, who had begun studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Two years later I became a Witness. I was determined to serve Jehovah God as fully as I could.

Efforts to Reach My Goals

One of my first goals was to help my family back in Betoko II, and I prayed regularly to Jehovah about my desire. However, I was able to return there only during school vacations. It was a difficult 65-mile journey. The first 25 miles could be traveled by motorized vehicle, but the remaining 40 miles was on a narrow mountain trail that could only be traversed by foot.

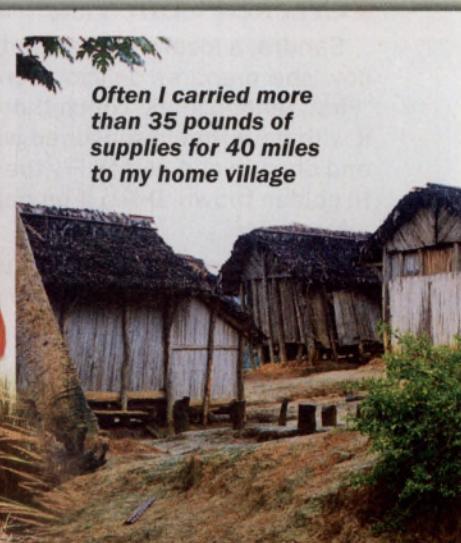
I had to climb many steep hills, and some sections of the rough path were as narrow as the length of my foot. If I started out early in the day and walked until dusk, I usually managed to cover about 25 miles. I would carry more than 35 pounds of supplies—some of it on my head, some on my back, and the rest in my arms.

Mainly I carried Bible literature, which I shared with my relatives and other interested ones. I came to be known along the route as “the one with much luggage.”

Initially, despite my enthusiasm, my family refused to listen to me about my newfound beliefs. Soon, though, they changed and asked so many questions that at times we would go to bed at two in the morning.

A Memorable Visit

On December 24, 1990, I arrived home in Betoko II on vacation. My family was happy to see me, believing that I had come to celebrate Christmas with them. Their joy turned to disappointment



Often I carried more than 35 pounds of supplies for 40 miles to my home village

when I explained why I could not join in their Christmas celebrations. They felt embarrassed about having to explain this to others in the village, as it was a very close-knit community. So I felt the need to take the initiative to do this myself. But how?

I was unsure, especially since I was so young. I wondered if it would be proper to explain my beliefs when the village gathered at church the next day. I offered a long, fervent prayer to Jehovah, begging for his direction. After that I asked my older brother Paul, who was a teacher in the church, "Do you think it would be all right to explain to those at church tomorrow why I don't celebrate Christmas?" He checked with others, and they agreed to the proposal.

The next day I was sent for when the church service was over. After praying to Jehovah again, I took along a supply of Bible literature. After introductions, I thanked all for their share in helping me to have a deep respect for the Bible. I explained that I had continued to study the Bible after moving to town. I said that I had discovered many Bible truths that we had not been taught previously.

I used the occasion to explain the Bible hope of living forever on a paradise earth

(Psalm 37:29; Revelation 21:3, 4), the reason why a few faithful ones from earth would be taken to heaven (John 14:2, 3; Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3), and the Bible teaching that the dead are unconscious in a sleeplike condition and therefore could not be suffering (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 11:11-14, 38-44). I also showed that early Christians did not celebrate Christmas and that the celebration was of pagan origin.

At the conclusion of the presentation, many in the group acknowledged the truthfulness of what I had said. Some even asked additional questions. Afterward I showed them the publications I had brought along and explained that they were Bible study aids produced by Jehovah's Witnesses. I said that I was willing to help any who would like to study the Bible. Many accepted copies of the Bible literature.

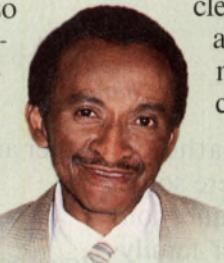
A Surprising Discovery

A woman whom I had not met before approached me and said, "My sister, who lives in another village, is one of your fellow religionists." Surprised, I asked, "Where?"

"In Andranomafana," she replied. The village is some 20 miles from Betoko II.

I told the woman that her sister probably belonged to a different religion, since the Witnesses in the area all know one another. The woman insisted, however, that her sister had taught her the same things that I had explained during my talk at the church. I requested the name and address of the woman's sister, as I was eager to set out for that village immediately. Mother, however, urged me to wait a day or so, as it was an arduous journey, all on foot. Two days later my brother Charles and I set out for Andranomafana.

As soon as we arrived, we asked some villagers, "Are there Jehovah's Witnesses here?" I was disappointed when they replied, "There



**My older brother
Paul**



are only Catholic, Pentecostal, and Independent churches in this village."

Then a woman spoke up and said, "If you are looking for Jehovah's Witnesses, it would probably be Marceline and her family that you are seeking." That was the very name I had been given!

Someone went to call Marceline. She soon arrived but seemed a bit fearful. The whole village gathered around, as they imagined that we were some sort of officials who had come to question her. I later learned that she and her family had been persecuted in the village for practicing her 'unorthodox religion.'

Marceline led us a bit away from the crowd, where we could talk. When I asked her if she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, she said that she was. At that, she went and got a copy of *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, a book that Jehovah's Witnesses used earlier as a Bible study aid, along with older issues of *The Watchtower*. All were tattered and torn.



My brother Charles

"Which magazine did you study last Sunday?" I asked.

"These are the only issues we have," she replied, "and we study them over and over again." Only then did I tell

Marceline that I too was a Witness. She was so happy! When I said I wanted to meet the man who was conducting their meetings, she explained that he lived in yet another area, still farther away.

Another Delightful Discovery

The following day Marceline and I set out together to visit the man. When we arrived, he was very surprised and happy to see us. It turned out that he was, in fact, a Witness who had come from the coastal town of Toamasina, more than 120 miles to the northeast. He and his family had been forced to return here years earlier after he unexpectedly lost his employment. Upon his return, he began preaching, conducting Bible studies, and holding meetings.

The Witness and his family were enthralled to see the latest *Watchtower* magazines that I had with me. I also showed them the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, which we were then using as our principal Bible-study aid. It was the first time

*With some members of my family.
All of these are now Jehovah's Witnesses*



they had seen it. The following Sunday I returned to Andranomafana to attend the meetings with them. I encouraged them to contact the branch office of the Witnesses in the capital city of Antananarivo, as the office was not aware of the existence of this little group.

Starting in January 1991, I traveled to Andranomafana from Mahanoro almost every month, taking them the latest copies of *The Watchtower* and other publications. It was a journey of some 80 miles each way, more than 55 miles of which I walked—going up and down steep, rugged hills, passing through dense forests and, when it rained, struggling through thick, slippery mud.

My luggage became heavier as the number of those who needed literature and magazines increased. At the end of each trip, however, a sense of deep satisfaction and happiness more than compensated for my fatigue and aching muscles. What a joy for me to see how thrilled the group was to receive each new publication and to witness their response to Bible truths!

Entering the Full-Time Ministry

On September 1, 1992, I was appointed a pioneer, as the Witnesses call their full-time ministers. I pioneered in Mahanoro but kept in contact with my relatives in Betoko II by letter. In time, they began to study with me by correspondence, and they asked if I would return to the village to help them. I was willing to do this, but I first wanted to be sure that they were serious about their decision to study the Bible and make spiritual progress. So for a while, I remained in Mahanoro pioneering.

In the latter part of 1993, I was privileged to attend a two-week school course for pioneers in Antananarivo. Afterward, I was invited to apply to be a special pioneer, which could involve being assigned anywhere in the country. I hesitated to accept the invitation, however, since I wanted to help my relatives in Betoko II, who lived far from the nearest

congregation. So I returned to my pioneer assignment in Mahanoro.

Eventually, when the traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses visited, I asked him about returning to help my relatives. By then a congregation had been formed in Andranomafana, and he suggested that I go there so that I could be with the congregation and preach in the territory of Betoko II. I began the assignment September 1, 1994. That same month my brother Paul, who had been a religious teacher, attended a district convention with me. Soon 30 were sharing in the preaching work in Andranomafana, and on Sunday an average of 65 attended our meetings.

The Walking Did Not Stop

Shortly after I returned to Betoko II, four of my fleshly brothers and sisters qualified to share in the ministry as Jehovah's Witnesses, and soon afterward they were baptized. After moving back to Betoko II, I traveled regularly to Anosibe An'ala to pick up literature and magazines, a walk of some 30 miles each way. While it was an exhausting trip, the joy I realized on seeing the spiritual growth in the area made it all worthwhile.

Today there is a thriving congregation in Betoko II, with an average meeting attendance of about 45 on Sunday. All of my close relatives in the area are now Witnesses, and most are regular pioneers. A younger brother is a special pioneer. On November 1, 2001, I too was appointed a special pioneer, and I was assigned to the village of Antanambao-Manampotsy. But I left Betoko II with a happy heart.

When I began to learn Bible truths in 1987, there were fewer than 3,000 Witnesses in Madagascar. Now there are over 14,000. Like so many of these, I am grateful for the privilege of being able to expend my energies to "go the extra mile" to help others. And I thank Jehovah that he has blessed my efforts in this regard.

Watching the World

Kidnapping in Mexico

One security firm judges that Mexico has the second-highest rate of kidnappings in Latin America, outranked only by Colombia, reported the international edition of *The Miami Herald*. "Unofficial estimates of the number of kidnappings [in 2003] range as high as 3,000." However, many kidnappings go unreported, as the victims' families prefer to negotiate privately. Also not included in the figure are the so-called express kidnappings, in which the victims are forced to withdraw cash from ATM machines and are then released. It is estimated that at least 16 of these kidnappings occur daily in Mexico City, but the number could be as high as 80, said the newspaper. Of concern is the fact that the kidnappings have become in-

creasingly more brutal, and more victims are being killed—even after the ransom is paid.

AIDS Cases Hit Record Highs

Five million people were infected with the AIDS virus in 2003, "the largest number in any single year since the epidemic began two decades ago," reports *The Wall Street Journal*. "Despite a huge global push to fight HIV in developing countries, the AIDS virus continues to infect a growing number of people and claim millions of lives each year." According to data published by UNAIDS, an AIDS program sponsored by the United Nations and other groups, about 3 million people die from AIDS each year and more than 20 million have died since the first diagnosis of the disease in

1981. Currently, the UN agency estimates that 38 million people are infected with HIV. Sub-Saharan Africa, with 25 million cases, is the hardest-hit region, followed by South and Southeast Asia with 6.5 million infected. "World-wide, nearly half of all new HIV cases are young people aged 15 to 24," says the paper.

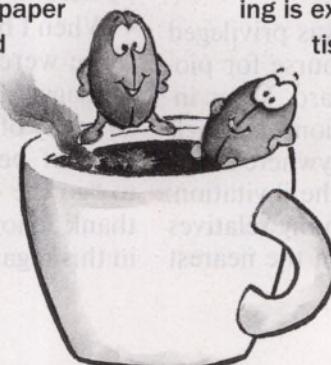
Bleary-Eyed Youngsters

"Sleep has begun to be considered a waste of time," reports the Spanish newspaper *ABC*. "Even the youngest children sleep fewer hours than is necessary for sound psychological and physical development." According to the Sleep Unit of Dexeus Hospital in Barcelona, lack of sleep in children leads to anxiety, irritability, poor academic achievement, and depression and may even stunt

Decaffeinated Coffee Beans

Brazilian scientists have discovered a new strain of *Coffea arabica*—the most popular variety of coffee plant—that has practically no caffeine, reports the Spanish newspaper *El País*. This naturally decaffeinated coffee grows in Ethiopia and represents a major find for the coffee industry. About 10 percent of coffee drinkers worldwide prefer their coffee without caffeine, and this percentage is growing. A typ-

ical coffee bean has some 12 milligrams of caffeine per gram, but the newly discovered variety has only 0.76 milligrams per gram. *El País* reports: "The industrial process of decaffeinating is expensive, and according to scientists, it destroys not only the caffeine but also some of the key ingredients that give the coffee its agreeable flavor." So the new plant will solve both problems created by the decaffeinating process.



How Spiders Defy Gravity

"The secret that allows spiders to cling to walls and ceilings has been revealed by scientists," says *The Times* of London. A spider has eight feet. At the end of every one is a clump of minute hairs, each of which is covered with even smaller hairs called setules. The adhesive force on the tips of the spider's 624,000 setules is so strong that a spider can carry about 170 times its own body weight while clinging to a wall or a ceiling. Using a scanning elec-

tron microscope, researchers in Germany and Switzerland studied the foot of the jumping spider. The findings, explains *The Times*, suggest that "it should be possible to use similar techniques to make new, super-strong adhesives and glues" that "would not be affected by moisture." The research team leader, Professor Antonia Kesel, added: "You could also imagine astronauts using spacesuits that help them stick to the walls of a spacecraft."

growth. Experts blame the use of computers, television, cell phones, and video games just before going to bed for the sleep deficit of many youngsters. These devices not only rob people of sleep time but also prevent the state of relaxation needed in order to fall asleep. "All the kids know that smoking is harmful, but nobody tells them of the need to get enough sleep," states psychologist Victoria de la Fuente. "If we do not act, they will become potential insomniacs when adults."

Height Limits for Trees

"Redwood trees are the tallest living things on Earth, but they are stretching up against a growth limit that probably cannot be overcome no matter how ideal the conditions," states the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* newspaper. A study of what is presently the world's tallest tree (370 feet, about the height of a 30-story building) and four of its peers suggests

that the maximum height that a redwood may reach is about 420 feet. As moisture evaporates from the leaves, water has to be pulled up from the roots and delivered to the top of the tree, working against gravity. Researchers estimate that this movement can take up to 24 days. As the water is drawn through tubes called xylem vessels, the tension increases until it becomes too great and the supply is cut off, limiting the tree height. The tallest recorded tree, a Douglas fir, reached a height of about 415 feet.

Muslim Prayer Phone

A new cell phone, tailor-made for Muslim buyers, is now on the market. According to the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, not only does the phone contain the whole Koran but it can also be programmed to call the faithful ones to prayer five times a day. It even points the direction to Mecca from more

than 5,000 cities worldwide. Dates can be displayed in the Western Gregorian calendar or in the Islamic Hijri calendar. While the phone comes at a rather hefty price, it boasts the approval of one of the leading centers of Islamic scholarship.

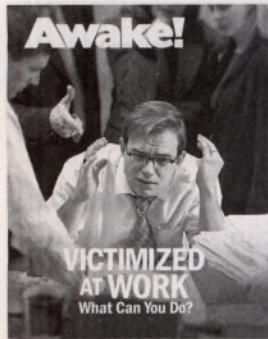
Earth Is Getting Darker

"Scientists have found that less sunlight has been reaching the earth's surface in recent decades," notes *Scientific American*. "The sun isn't going dark; rather clouds, air pollution and aerosols are getting in the way." From the late 1950's to the early 1990's, hundreds of instruments have recorded a decline of up to 10 percent in the amount of sunshine that reached the earth. The drop was even greater in Asia, Europe, and the United States. Hong Kong, for example, has experienced a 37 percent decrease in sunlight. The scientists agree that the matter is still not fully understood.

From Our Readers

Victimized at Work I was deeply touched by the series "Victimized at Work—What Can You Do?" (May 8, 2004) I have personally experienced everything it described. I suffered religious discrimination at the hospital where I worked, and it affected my emotional and spiritual health. I am happy to know that I am not the only one who has had this very unpleasant experience.

J. C., Puerto Rico



to apply your suggestions.

C. H., United States

Thank you for helping those of us who are being victimized and for assisting us in drawing closer to our compassionate God, who is aware of our plight.

L. W., United States

Our local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses featured this issue at places of business and encouraged owners to keep the article on file. Many expressed appreciation for the material.

V. S., United States

I had to quit my job because of verbal abuse. Please continue to publish articles that show us how to cope with problems.

T. Y., Japan

I offered the issue to my doctor, saying, "Perhaps one day you'll have a patient complaining of stomach problems because of mobbing." He said, "Not perhaps. I have a patient like that right now!" He promised to read the articles.

E. S., Germany

Since I don't have my own apartment, I am forced to live with my sister and endure her verbal abuse. It has driven me to despondency. However, this issue

of *Awake!* was just for me! Jehovah has truly comforted me.

S. A., Russia

Killer Plants Thank you for the article "Danger—Killer Plants!" (May 8, 2004) I have been collecting and cultivating carnivorous plants for over 12 years. You achieved a marvelous balance between scientific accuracy and simplicity of presentation.

T. K., Germany

I am 11 years old, and my teacher assigned us to write about the Venus flytrap. That very week, this article came out—just in time!

R. S., Russia

I used to cultivate carnivorous plants and was moved by the article. However, the title was a little hard for me to accept. These plants may be a danger to some insects, but they are also clean, fragile plants. Some are even endangered species.

H. K., Japan

"Awake!" responds: Thank you for the reminder. Although our title served to attract the attention of readers, the article itself taught readers to respect and care for these plants.

Faith Under Adversity I enjoyed the article "A Family's Faith Under Adversity." (May 8, 2004) I am ten years old and have Crohn's disease. I spent most of last winter in and out of the hospital until my problem was finally diagnosed. This article really helped me to be more confident and able to deal with my illness. I look forward to living in Paradise, where we won't have these problems anymore.

M. H., United States

She Learned It From **Awake!**

PERLA, an eight-year-old girl, is in the second grade in the Mexican state of Veracruz. One day her teacher asked if anyone knew how long a whale is. At first no one answered. Then Perla raised her hand and said, "The gray whale can be 45 feet long and weigh 16 tons."

Surprised, the teacher asked, "Where did you learn that?"

"From *Awake!* magazine," she replied. "If you allow me, I can show it to you." Customarily Perla carries recent issues of *Awake!* in her schoolbag to share with others. By coincidence she had the September 8, 2003, issue containing the article "An Intriguing Encounter with Gray Whales."

Perla's teacher was pleased to receive a copy of the magazine. Not only did she read it but she wanted to keep it. Other students also wanted a copy, so Perla obtained copies for nine of them.

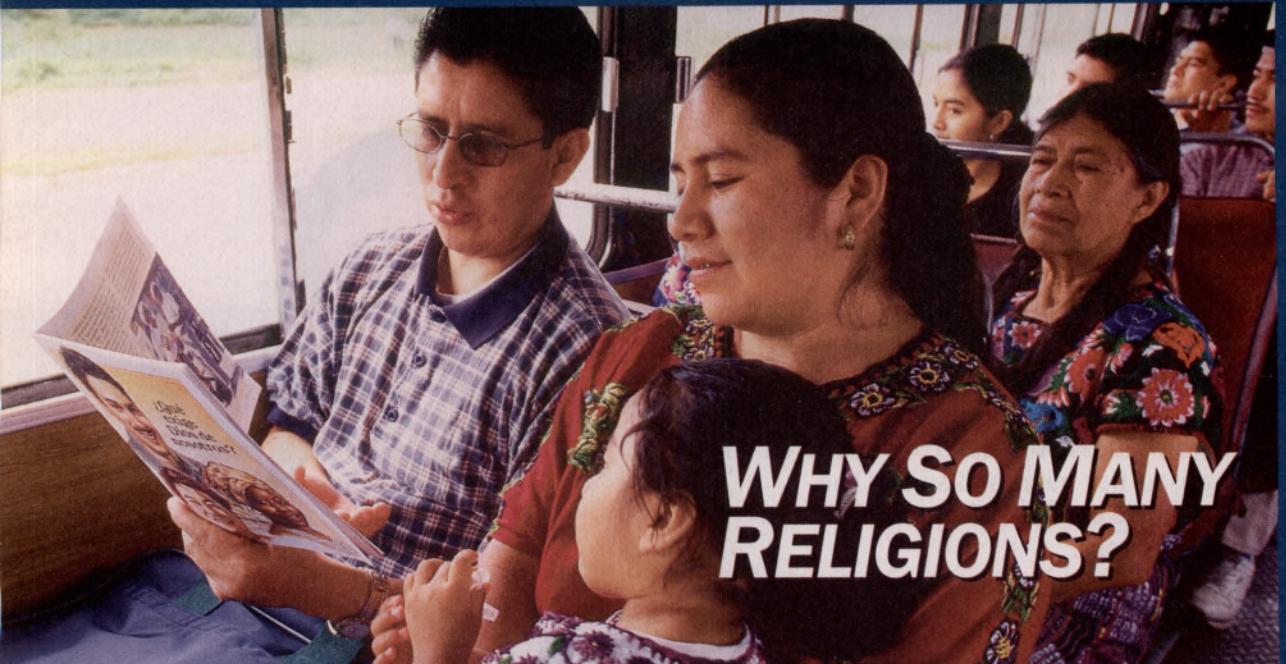


Perla has received much praise from her teacher, to whom she takes a copy of *Awake!* every two weeks.

Shortly after this experience, Perla attended a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. Before Perla left, her teacher said that she would be pleased to receive a gift from the convention. So Perla took her a copy of the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*, which was released that summer.

Later the teacher told some of her students, "Perla sets a good example, as she not only takes an interest in her schoolbooks but also studies other beneficial information and even shares it with us."





WHY SO MANY RELIGIONS?

A woman wrote to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Guatemala and described her discussion with a Witness during a bus trip. "We talked about why there are so many religions," the woman explained. She said the Witness then pulled out a copy of the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* and turned to the topic "How Can You Find the True Religion?" "The subject surprised me," the woman wrote. "It wasn't until then that I realized there must be only one group of true worshipers."

When she had the opportunity to read the brochure, she was deeply moved. So she explained: "I am writing to see if you can help me receive a Bible course using this brochure because I am sure that what it contains is the truth."

The 32-page brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* is the same size as this magazine. In addition to the topic mentioned above, the brochure answers such questions as:

- Who is God?
- What is God's purpose for our earth?
- What is God's Kingdom?
- How can you have a happy family life?

