

Awake!

JULY 22, 2004



PROTECT YOURSELF
FROM **Fraud**

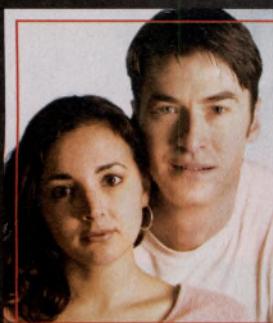
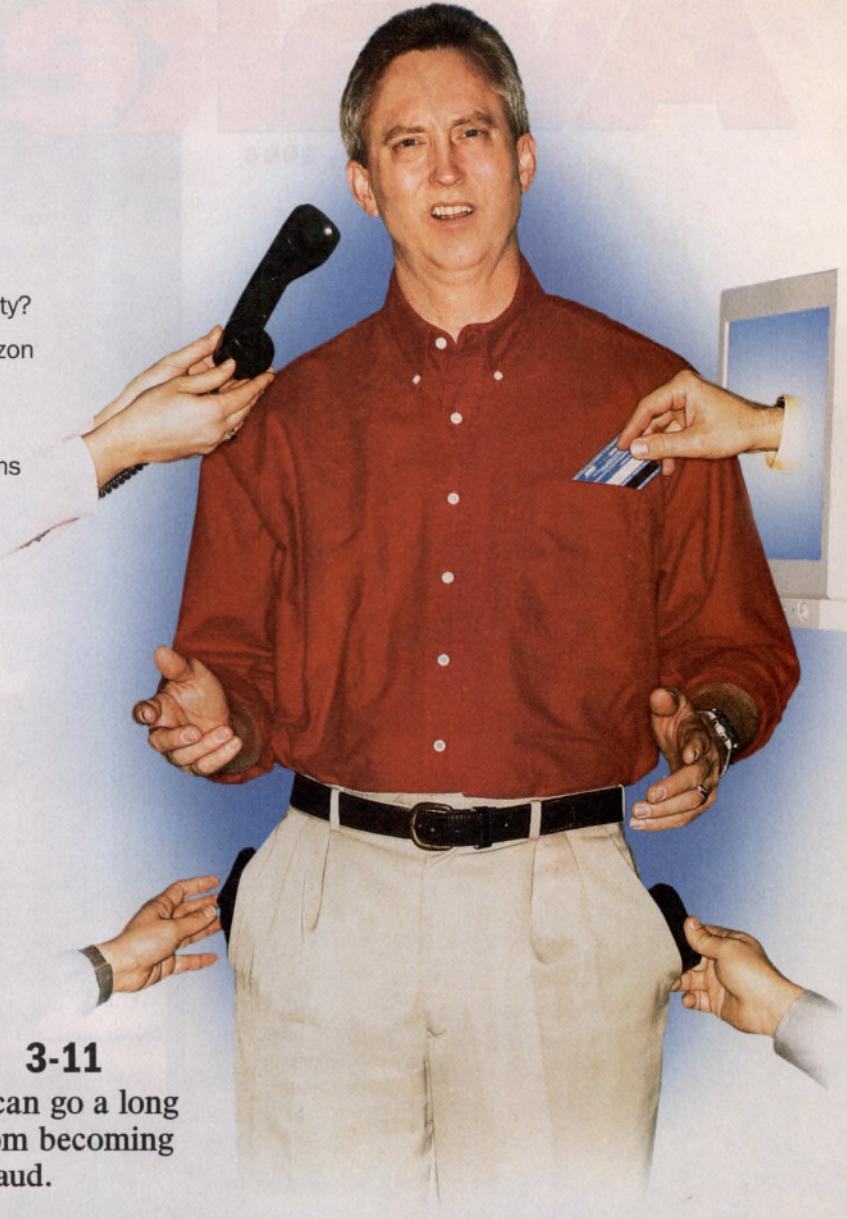
Awake!

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PROTECT YOURSELF FROM Fraud **3-11**

A few basic precautions can go a long way in protecting you from becoming an unwitting victim of fraud.

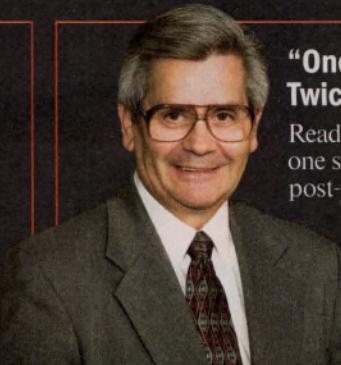


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Fraud

A GLOBAL PROBLEM

CHARISMATIC and soft-spoken, Wayne seemed to be exactly what Karen was looking for in a husband. "He was everything I had ever prayed and hoped for," said Karen. "Everyone who saw us thought we were just perfect together. He made out that he idolised the ground I walked on."

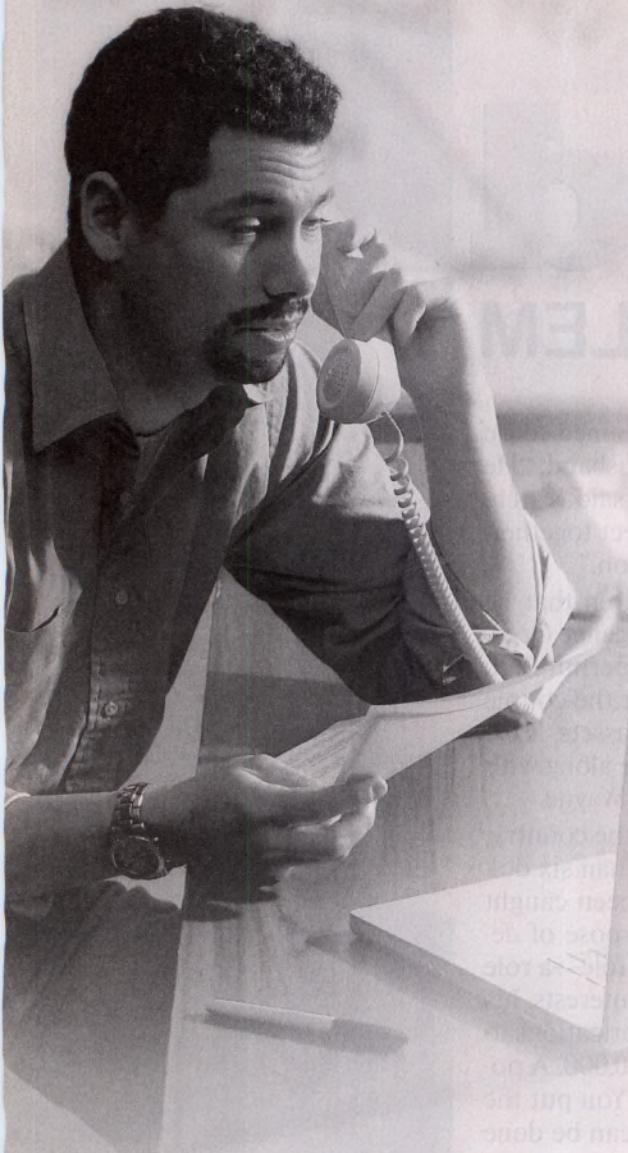
There was a problem, however. Wayne told Karen that he was third in charge of the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization. He wanted to resign, but they would not permit that. He knew too much. They would kill him! Together the couple worked out a plan. They would marry, pool their assets, leave Australia, and flee to Canada. Karen sold her home along with everything she owned and entrusted the money to Wayne.

The wedding took place as planned. Wayne fled the country, but Karen was left behind, abandoned, with less than six dollars in the bank. She soon learned that she had been caught in a web of elaborate lies woven for the sole purpose of defrauding her. Like an actor, Wayne had assumed a role—a role tailor-made to appeal to her. His background, his interests, his personality, and his professed love for her were fabrications to win her trust—a trust that cost her more than \$200,000. A police officer stated: "She's been emotionally raped. You put the money aside—it's just incredible how much hurt can be done to a person."

"My emotions are all over the place," said Karen. "The man he portrayed himself to be wasn't real."

Karen is but one of the countless victims of fraud worldwide. It is not known how much money is defrauded from others, though the figure is estimated to be hundreds of billions of dollars and is increasing each year. Besides financial loss, victims like Karen suffer great emotional pain in knowing that someone—often someone they trusted—took advantage of them.





Prevention Is the Best Policy

Fraud is defined as "a scheme or knowing deception to obtain money by means of false pretenses, representations, or promises." Sadly, most fraud goes unpunished because it is often difficult to prove that deliberate deception has actually taken place. Further, many swindlers understand and exploit legal loopholes—they know how to defraud people in ways that are difficult or impossible to prosecute. Moreover, to bring a criminal case against a swindler takes considerable time and money. Usually the ones who are convicted of their crimes are those who have stolen millions of dollars or who have done something shocking enough to merit widespread attention. Even when a swindler is caught and punished, probably he or she will have already spent or hidden the swindled money. Consequently, victims seldom receive compensation for the money they have lost.

In short, if you are swindled, you will likely have little or no recourse. Far better it is to avoid becoming a victim than to try to figure out how to get your money back after you have become one. A wise man wrote long ago: "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty." (Proverbs 22:3) The next article will explain ways in which you can protect yourself from fraud.

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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HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM **Fraud**

YOU may have heard the saying, "You can't cheat an honest man." Like many sayings, that one is untrue. Every day honest people are the victims of fraud; honesty alone doesn't protect them. Some of the cleverest minds in the world are devising and carrying out schemes to separate people from their money. More than a hundred years ago, one writer noted: "There are some frauds so well conducted, that it would be stupidity *not* to be deceived by them."

Deception has a long history, dating back to the garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:1-5) Old schemes have many variations, and new schemes are being concocted all the time. So how can you defend yourself? You need not try to learn all the ways in which criminals defraud people. A few basic precautions will go a long way in protecting you from becoming a victim.

Safeguard Personal Information

If a person steals your checkbook or credit cards, he can buy things with them. If he steals your bank account information, he may be able to order and write checks in your name. If he obtains enough personal information, he may assume your identity. Once your identity has been stolen, a criminal can withdraw money from your bank accounts, charge things



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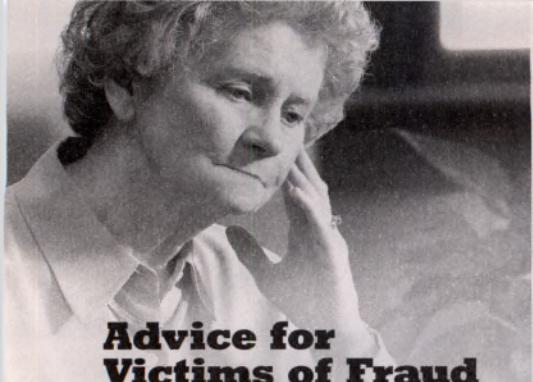
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^o CD (MP3 format) also available.

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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.



Advice for Victims of Fraud

Fraud victims typically feel overwhelmed by shame, guilt, embarrassment, and self-directed anger. Don't blame yourself. You are the victim; the blame rests on the person who conned you. If you have made a mistake, admit that to yourself, and then move on with your life. Do not conclude that you are stupid. Remember that swindlers successfully defraud highly intelligent people—heads of State, bank managers, executives, finance managers, attorneys, and others.

Fraud victims are robbed not only of money or possessions but also of self-confidence and self-esteem. When defrauded by a "friend," there is a betrayal of trust. It hurts to be swindled. Allow yourself time to grieve. It is often helpful to talk about the matter with someone you can confide in. Prayer too can bring much comfort. (Philippians 4:6-8) Recognize, though, that at some point you need to put the matter behind you. Why prolong the misery? Set positive goals, and work to achieve them.

Be wary of recovery scams. Swindlers will call a person who has been defrauded to offer help in recovering lost money. Their aim is to defraud the person again.

to your credit card accounts, and obtain loans in your name.* You may even find yourself arrested for a crime you did not commit!

To protect yourself from this type of fraud, be careful with all personal documents, including your bank statements and checkbooks, driver's license, and Social Security card or national identity card. Refuse to provide personal or financial information to others unless there is a legitimate reason why they should have it. This is especially so for credit card numbers and bank account information. The only time you should give anyone your credit card number is when you want to buy something with it.

Swindlers known as dumpster divers root through garbage in search of such information. Instead of simply throwing out paperwork that contains personal data, you are wise to burn or shred it. This includes used checks and bank and brokerage statements as well as old credit cards, driver's licenses, and passports. It is also wise to destroy unsolicited credit card applications that you receive in the mail, since these contain information about you that someone else might misuse.

Use Common Sense

At the heart of many frauds is the promise of unrealistically high returns from investments. A common get-rich-quick scam is the pyramid scheme. Though there are many variations of this scam, the usual design is for investors to recruit other investors, for which the recruiters receive a commission.[#] Chain letters work in the same way by asking you to send money to people at the top of a list. The assurance is that you will receive thousands of dollars when your name reaches the top.

Pyramid schemes always collapse because it is impossible to keep on recruiting new members. Consider the math. If five people launch a pyramid and each one recruits five more, the number of new recruits becomes 25. If they, in turn, each recruit 5, that would mean 125 more. When recruitment reaches the ninth level, there will be close to two million people who would have to recruit more than nine million others! Promoters of pyramid schemes well know that there is a saturation point. When they suspect that point is near, they take the

* See *Awake!* of March 22, 2001, pages 19-21.

[#] A pyramid scheme is defined as a "multilevel marketing program in which people pay an entrance fee for the opportunity to recruit others to do the same." Such schemes usually have no products.

money and run. You will probably lose your money, and those whom you have recruited will now be trying to recover their lost money from you. Remember, for you to make money in a pyramid scheme, someone else has to lose money.

If an offer appears too good to be true, it usually is

Is someone offering you easy money or huge profits in return for an investment? A cautionary warning is this: If an offer appears too good to be true, it usually is. Don't be quick to believe advertising claims and testimonials, thinking, "This is different." Keep in mind that people are not in business to give away money or to share secrets to make you rich. If someone claims to have special knowledge that will make you a fortune, ask yourself: 'Why doesn't he use it to make himself wealthy? Why is he wasting time trying to sell it to me?'

What if you are told that you have won a contest or a prize? Don't get excited—it may be a scam, one that has victimized many. For example, a woman in England received a letter from Canada telling her that she had won a prize but that she needed to send a \$25 processing fee. After sending the money, she received a phone call from Canada telling her that she had won third prize in

Pyramid schemes always collapse

a drawing worth \$245,000 but that she would have to pay a percentage of that amount as a further processing fee. She sent \$2,450 and received nothing in return. If you have to pay for a "free gift" or a prize, it's a scam. Ask yourself, 'How likely is it that I have won a prize in a contest that I did not enter?'

Do Business Only With Reputable People

Do you believe that you can sense dishonesty in people? Be careful! Swindlers are called con, or confidence, artists because they know how to win the confidence of others. They are skilled at making their victims trust them. Sellers, both honest and dishonest, know that before you can sell a product, you have to sell yourself. Of course, this does not mean that you should mistrust everyone, but a healthy degree of suspicion is important in defending yourself from fraud. Rather than try to discern a person's integrity by trusting your instincts,

(Continued on page 9)





Spam Scams

SIX COMMON E-MAIL SCAMS

1. Pyramid schemes: These often masquerade as opportunities to make a lot of money with little work and cash outlay. One scheme offers you a computer or some other electronic item if you pay to join a club and then recruit other participants. Another variation is the chain letter. Chain letters are almost always illegal. Most of those who invest in them lose their money.

2. Work-at-home schemes:

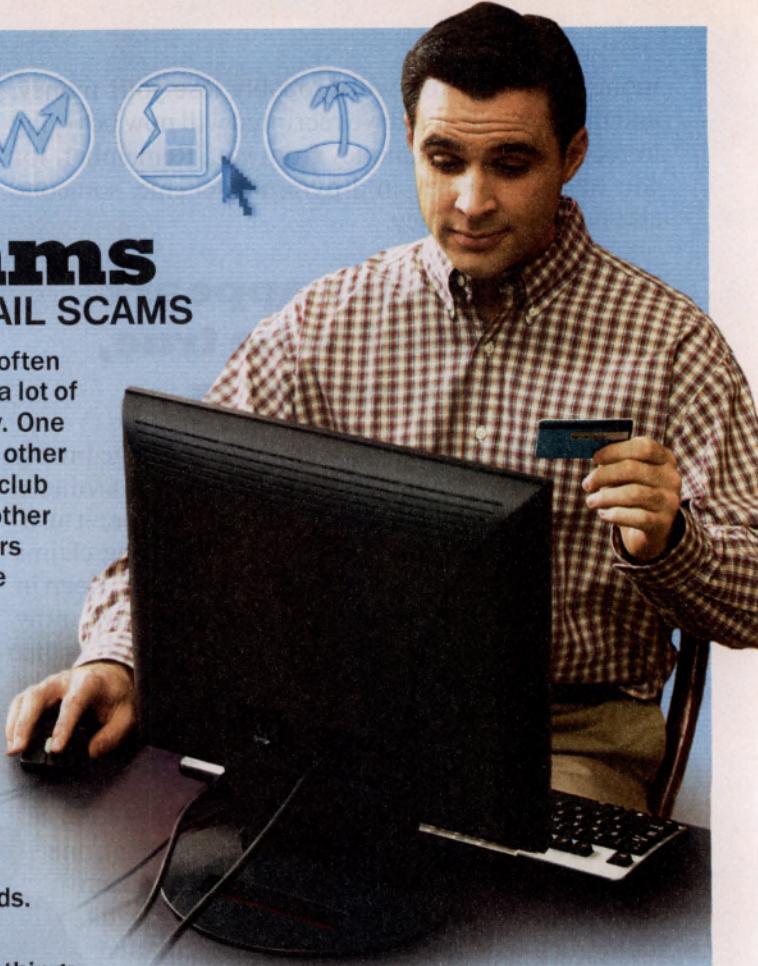
In one form of this scam, you are offered the opportunity to assemble such things as jewelry, toys, or craft kits. You invest money in the materials and time in assembling the product, only to find that your work cannot be sold to the promoters because it does not meet their standards.

3. Health and diet scams:

Flooding the Internet are offers of such things as pills that help you lose weight without exercising or dieting, cures for impotence, and creams to counter hair loss. These offers are sometimes accompanied by testimonials from satisfied customers. Common phrases that appear in these ads include expressions such as "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "secret formula," and "ancient ingredient." The truth is, most of these products don't work.

4. Investment opportunities:

These schemes typically offer high rates of return with little or no risk. A common version involves investment in an offshore bank. Investors are lured by assurances that those handling their money have high-level financial connections and possess inside information.



5. Credit repair: These scams offer to remove negative information from your credit file so you can qualify for a credit card, an auto loan, or a job. Despite the assurances, promoters can't do what they promise.

6. Vacation prize promotions:

You receive an E-mail congratulating you on winning a vacation opportunity for a rock-bottom price. Some say that you have been specially selected. Keep in mind that the same notice may have gone out to millions of others and that the accommodation you receive will offer far less than what was advertised.

Source: U.S. Federal Trade Commission

(Continued from page 7)

watch for two telltale signs that characterize many frauds: First, does an offer appear too good to be true, and second, is the seller trying to rush you into making a decision?

Too-good-to-be-true offers abound on the Internet. Though the Internet offers much of value, it also enables criminals to defraud victims quickly and anonymously. Do you have an E-mail account? If so, you may find yourself on the receiving end of spam—unsolicited commercial E-mail. Though spam offers an endless array of goods and services, many of these are fraudulent. If you respond to an unsolicited E-mail by sending money for some product or service, you will probably receive nothing in return. If you do receive something, it will almost certainly not be worth the money you have invested in it. The best advice is, Never buy anything from a spammer.

This applies equally to those who phone to sell you something. Although many telephone sales calls are made by legitimate businesses, telemarketing scams cheat people out of billions of dollars every year. There is no way to know whether a sales pitch is legitimate if you simply talk with someone who calls you on the phone. A swindler may even pose as a representative of a bank or a credit card protection agency. You have good reason to be suspicious if someone calls you claiming to be from a bank or a company with whom you have an account and asks for information that they should already have. If that happens, you might ask for the person's phone number. Then call back after verifying that the number really is that of the bank or agency.

A good policy is not to give your credit card number or any other personal information to a stranger who calls you. If someone calls to sell you something that you do not want, you can politely say, "Sorry, I do not do business over the phone with people I do not know." Then hang up. There is no reason for you to engage in an unwanted conversation with a stranger who may be trying to defraud you.

Deal only with reputable businesses and people. There are many legitimate companies with whom you can safely do business over the phone or on the Internet. If possible, check out the salesperson, the company, and the investment through some independent agency. Ask for information about the investment, and read it carefully to make sure that it is legitimate. Do not be rushed or pressured into making a quick decision.

Put It in Writing

Not all fraud starts out as fraud. An honest business can go sour. When that happens, those running it may panic

Any contract that you sign should document all the terms of the investment and the promises made



and resort to fraudulent measures to recover their losses. Doubtless you have heard stories of business executives who lied about revenue and profits and then when the business collapsed ran away with what was left of the money.

To protect yourself from both fraud and misunderstandings, you should get the details in writing before making any major investment. Any contract that you sign should document all the terms of the investment and the promises made. Recognize, too, that no matter how sound an investment may appear, no one can guarantee that things will go as planned. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) After all, there is

really no such thing as a risk-free investment. Thus, an agreement should specify in writing what the duties and responsibilities of each person will be should the business fail.

By being aware of and applying the basic principles we have briefly considered, you make yourself less vulnerable to being a victim of fraud. An ancient Bible proverb provides valuable advice. It states: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) A swindler chooses easy targets, those inclined to believe his every word. Sadly, there are many people who take no precautions against fraud.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND Morality?



WE LIVE in a world where ethics are changing. Dishonest practices that were condemned in the past are often winked at today. Thieves and swindlers are frequently glorified and romanticized in the media.

In turn, many people fit the description found in the Bible: "Whenever you saw a thief, you were even pleased with him." —Psalm 50:18.

Yet, swindlers are hardly to be admired. One author observed: "What [sets] con artists apart is the natural ability, often discovered at a very

True Christians follow Bible principles, such as "You must love your neighbor as yourself"

If everyone lived by the moral standards of God's Word, the world would be a much better place in which to live



young age, to manipulate the people around them. Added to this is the fact that such manipulation leaves them without any feeling of guilt or remorse. On the contrary, it leaves them with an intense feeling of satisfaction—a particular glow that encourages them to continue manipulating to get whatever they want, regardless of the cost to the giver."

Of course, the public feels sympathy for the widow who is defrauded of her life's savings, but few tears are shed when someone embezzles money from a big business or defrauds an insurance company. Many reason that businesses are rich anyway. But such fraud is not merely the problem of the businesses themselves; they pass their losses on to the consumer. In the United States, for example, the average family pays over \$1,000 a year in additional insurance premiums to cover the cost of fraud.

Also, many people take advantage of opportunities to buy low-priced counterfeit imitations of brand-name products, such as clothing, watches, perfume, cosmetics, and handbags. They may realize that the counterfeit goods cost businesses hundreds of billions of dollars each year, but they think that it does not affect them. Ultimately, however, consumers must pay more for legitimate goods and services. In addition, buying fake goods puts money in the pockets of criminals.

An author who is in the business of combating fraud wrote: "I'm convinced that the main reason we have so much fraud today is because we live in an extremely unethical society. There's been a sharp slippage in ethics that has inspired a culture of fraud. . . . We

live in a society that doesn't teach ethics at home. We live in a society that doesn't teach ethics in school, because teachers would be accused of teaching morality."

In contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses do teach and endeavor to live by the moral standards of God's Word. They are guided by principles such as the following:

- "You must love your neighbor as yourself."—*Matthew 22:39*.
- "Do not defraud."—*Mark 10:19*.
- "Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need."—*Ephesians 4:28*.
- "We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—*Hebrews 13:18*.

Though the Witnesses are not smug or self-righteous, they believe that if everyone applied these principles, the world would be a much better place in which to live. They also believe in God's promise that one day it will be.—2 Peter 3:13.

In Our Next Issue

- Young or Old—You Can Find Pleasure in Learning
- Does God Really Care About Children?
- Glossy Magazines—"Pick Me Up and Buy Me!"

What's Wrong With Premarital Sex?



"I sometimes wonder if premarital sex is really that bad, especially when I feel strange for still being a virgin."—Jordon.*

"I feel pressure to experiment with sex. I think we all have the natural inclination to," says Kelly. "Everywhere you turn," she continues, "it's all about sex!"

CAN you relate to the way Jordon and Kelly feel? After all, traditional customs and values that once discouraged premarital sex are all but gone. (Hebrews 13:4) A survey in one Asian country revealed that the majority of 15- to 24-year-old males felt that premarital intercourse was not only accepted but *expected* of them. Little wonder that throughout the world most young people have had sex before they reach 19 years of age.

Then there are youths who refrain from intercourse but who engage in so-called sexual alternatives, such as fondling one another's sexual organs (sometimes called mutual masturbation). A disturbing report in *The New York Times* reveals that "oral sex has become a commonplace initiation into sexual activity, widely perceived by many young people as less intimate, and less risky, than intercourse . . . [and] as a means of avoiding pregnancy and of preserving their virginity."

Just how should a Christian view premarital sex? And what about so-called alternatives

to intercourse? Are they acceptable to God? Are they safe? And do they really preserve one's virginity?

What Fornication Includes

An authoritative answer to these questions can come only from our Creator—Jehovah God. And in his Word he tells us to "flee from fornication." (1 Corinthians 6:18) Just what does that mean? The Greek word translated "fornication" is not restricted to sexual intercourse but includes a variety of lewd acts. So if two unmarried people engage in oral sex or in fondling each others' reproductive organs, *they are guilty of fornication*.

But could they still be considered virgins—that is, in God's eyes? In the Bible the word "virgin" is used as a symbol of moral purity. (2 Corinthians 11:2-6) But it is also used in a physical sense. The Bible tells of a young woman named Rebekah. It says that she was "a virgin, and no man had had sexual intercourse with her." (Genesis 24:16) Interestingly, in the original Hebrew, the word for "intercourse" evidently included other acts besides normal man/woman intercourse. (Genesis

* Some of the names have been changed.

19:5) So, according to the Bible, if a youth engaged in any form of fornication, he or she could hardly be considered a virgin.

The Bible exhorts Christians to flee not only from fornication itself but also from all forms of unclean conduct that could lead to it.* (Colossians 3:5) Others may ridicule you for taking such a stand. “‘You don’t know what you’re missing!’ is what I heard all through high school,” says a Christian youth named Kelly. However, premarital sex is nothing more than the “*temporary enjoyment of sin*.” (Hebrews 11:25) It can cause lasting physical, emotional, and spiritual harm.

Serious Threats

The Bible tells us that King Solomon once observed a young man being seduced into premarital sex. Solomon compared the young man to “a bull that comes even to the slaughter.” A bull that is to be butchered seems to have no idea what is about to happen to it. Young ones who engage in premarital sex often behave similarly—they seem to show little or no awareness that there are serious *consequences* to their actions! Solomon said of that young man: “He has not known that it in-

* For a discussion of fornication, uncleanness, and loose conduct, see the article “Young People Ask . . . How Far Is ‘Too Far?’” appearing in the October 22, 1993, issue of *Awake!*

volves his very soul.” (Proverbs 7:22, 23) Yes, your “soul”—your life—is at stake.

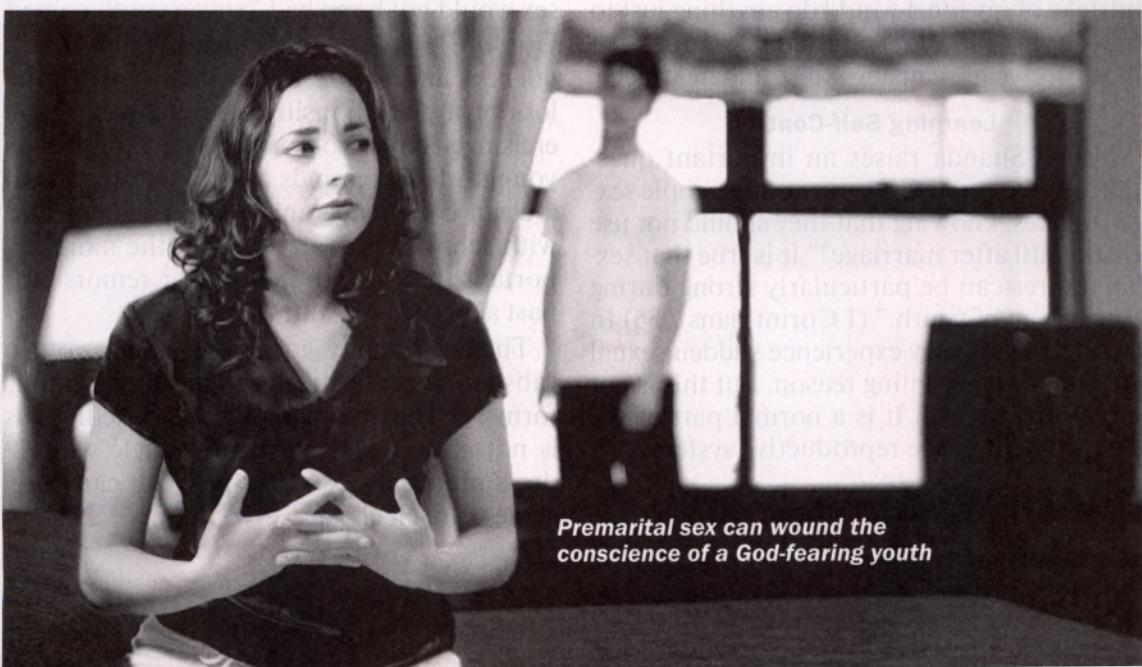
For example, each year millions of youths contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD). “When I found out I had herpes, I wanted to run away,” says Lydia. She laments,

If a youth engaged in any form of fornication, could he or she be considered a virgin in God's eyes?

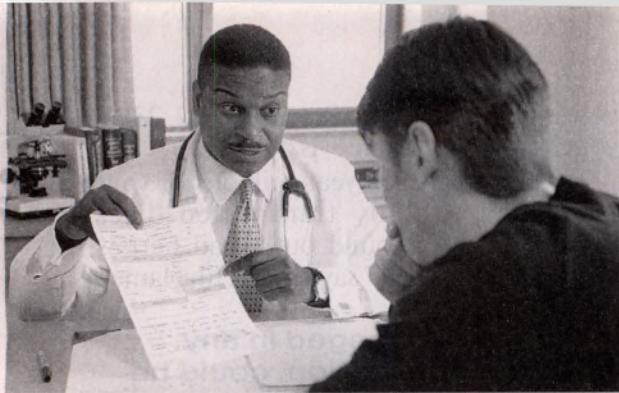
“It is a painful disease that will never go away.” Over half of all new HIV infections worldwide (6,000 a day) occur among those who are between 15 and 24 years of age.

Females are particularly vulnerable to a host of problems related to premarital sex. In fact, the threat of STDs (as well as HIV) is higher for females than for males. If a young girl becomes pregnant, she places herself and her unborn child at further risk. Why? Because a young girl’s body may not have developed to the point of being able to handle childbirth safely.

Even if a teen mother escapes severe health consequences, she must still face the serious responsibilities that parenthood brings. Many girls find that fending for themselves



Premarital sex can wound the conscience of a God-fearing youth



Those engaging in premarital sex risk contracting a sexually transmitted disease

and for a newborn infant is far more difficult than they had imagined.

Then there are the spiritual and emotional aftereffects. King David's sexual sin endangered his friendship with God and nearly led to his spiritual ruin. (Psalm 51) And while David recovered spiritually, he suffered the consequences of his sin for the rest of his life.

Young ones today can suffer similarly. For example, when she was only 17 years old, Cherie became physically intimate with a boy. She thought he loved her. Years later, she still regrets her actions. She laments: "I took Bible truths for granted and suffered the consequences. I lost Jehovah's favor, and that was devastating." A youth named Trish similarly admits: "Premarital sex was the biggest mistake of my life. I would do anything just to be a virgin again." Yes, emotional wounds can linger for years, causing stress and heartache.

Learning Self-Control

Young Shanda raises an important question, "Why would God give young people sexual desires, knowing that they should not use them until after marriage?" It is true that sexual desires can be particularly strong during "the bloom of youth." (1 Corinthians 7:36) In fact, teenagers may experience sudden sexual arousal for no seeming reason. But this is not something wicked. It is a normal part of the development of the reproductive system.*

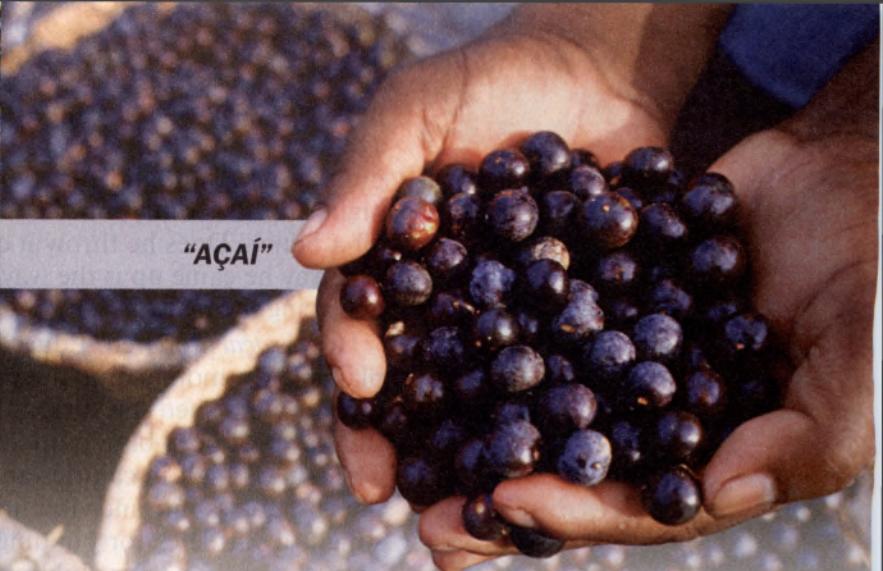
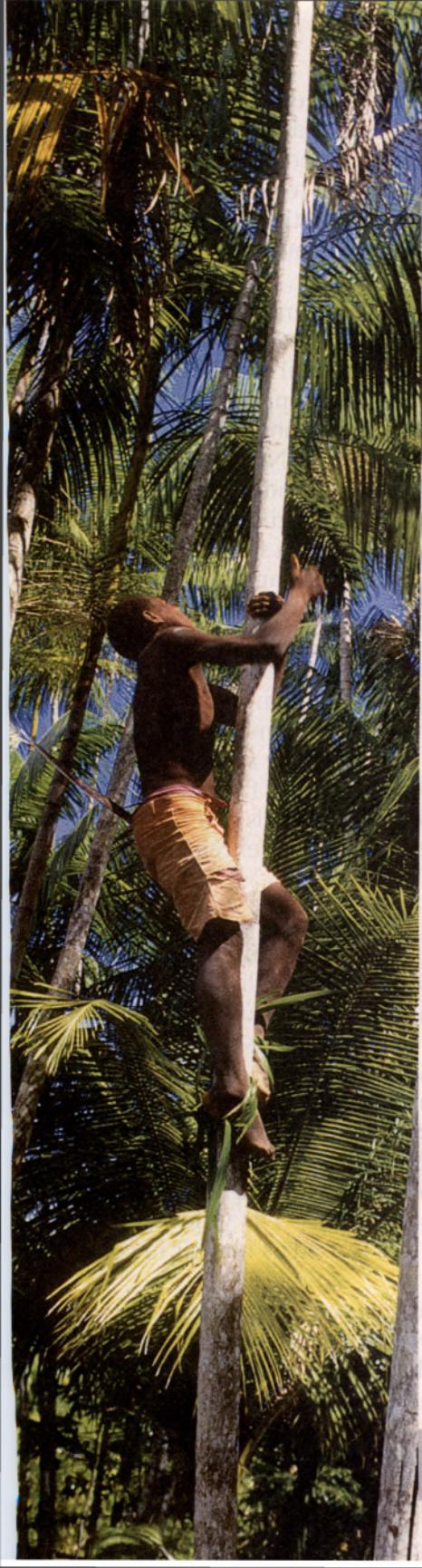
* See "Young People Ask . . . Why Is This Happening to My Body?" in our issue of February 8, 1990.

It is also true that Jehovah designed sexual relations to be pleasurable. This was in harmony with his original purpose for humans to populate the earth. (Genesis 1:28) Nevertheless, God never intended for us to misuse our procreative powers. "Each one of you should know how to get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor," says the Bible. (1 Thessalonians 4:4) To act upon every sexual desire would be, in a sense, as foolish as hitting someone each time you felt anger.

Sexual relations are a gift from God, a gift that is to be enjoyed at the appropriate time—when one is married. How does God feel when we try to enjoy sex outside of marriage? Well, imagine that you have purchased a gift for a friend. Before you can give it to that friend, he or she steals it! Wouldn't you be upset? Imagine, then, how God feels when a person engages in premarital sex, abusing the gift that God has provided.

What should you do about your sexual feelings? Put simply, learn to control them. Remind yourself that "Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness." (Psalm 84:11) "When I find myself thinking that premarital sex would not be so bad," says a youth named Gordon, "I reflect on the bad *spiritual* consequences and realize that no sin is worth the loss of my relationship with Jehovah." Exercising self-control may not be easy. But as young Adrian reminds us, "it leaves you with a clean conscience and a good relationship with Jehovah, free to focus on the more important things, with no guilt or remorse for past actions."—Psalm 16:11.

There are many good reasons for you to "abstain from fornication" in all its various forms. (1 Thessalonians 4:3) Admittedly, this is not always easy. A future article will address practical ways in which you can "preserve yourself chaste."—1 Timothy 5:22.



"AÇAÍ"

Exotic Fruits From the Amazon

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRAZIL

AÇAÍ, BACURI, AND CUPUAÇU. Do you know what these words mean? You may, if you live in Brazil. They are the names of three exotic fruits from the Amazon region. Brazilians particularly enjoy the unique flavors of these fruits in frozen desserts. But they are used in other ways too. Let us get acquainted with these remarkable fruits from the jungle.

The Nutritious Açaí

The açaí tree (*Euterpe oleracea*), a slender tropical palm, thrives in humid floodplains and swamps and especially in the mouths of the Amazon and Tocantins rivers in the state of Pará. Along Brazil's Atlantic Coast, it grows from Pará State to Bahia State. When you are in açaí territory, likely your feet are standing in water and your forehead is perspiring. The açaí palm's thin but sturdy trunk rises to a height of up to 75 feet, with a crown of leaves at its top.

From August to December, the palm is heavy with six to eight bunches of açaí, each holding from 700 to 900 cherry-sized fruits. But how does one get the açaí down from way up there? Some climbers weave fibers from shorter açaí trees into a strap. The climber puts his feet into the strap and

An "açaí" harvester on his way up

◀ Lena Trindade/BrazilPhotos
André Valentim/Tyba/BrazilPhotos ▲

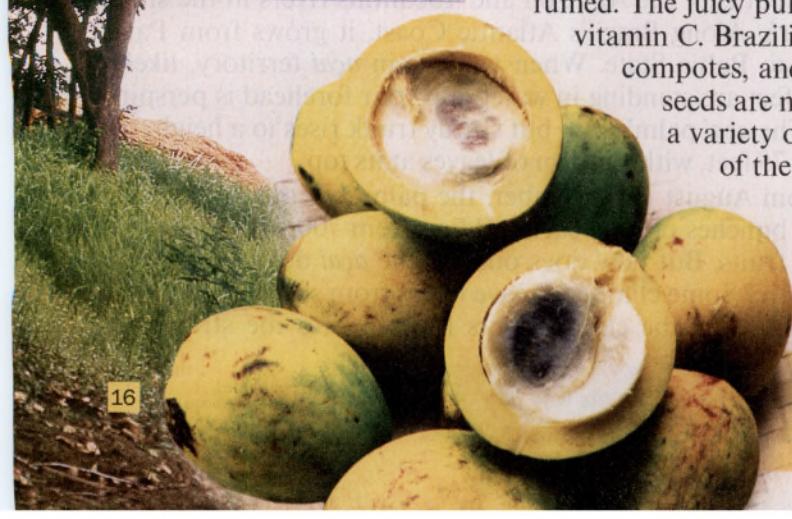


presses it against the trunk. With his feet braced securely against the tree trunk, he places his hands above his head, pulls himself up, and plants his strapped feet higher and higher up the trunk until he reaches the top. There, he lops off a bunch. Does he throw it down? No, that would ruin it. The way he came up is the way he goes down, only this time balancing the fruit.

How is *açaí* prepared? Eduardo, a young man from Pará, explains: "My mother put the *açaí* fruit in a cooking pot of warm water. Then she stirred the fruit until the skin and the thin layer of deep-blue pulp separated from the big seeds." The fruit is high in calories and rich in iron, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and vitamins B₁ and B₂. No wonder *açaí* is sought by athletes for building strength and by mothers as nourishment for their children! Many Brazilians like drinking *açaí* mixed with water, sugar, and cassava starch. Eduardo likes *açaí* as a condiment on dried shrimps and manioc. *Açaí* is also crushed in hot water and passed through a sieve, producing a thick aromatic liquid that is served as juice. That, though, is not the last use of *açaí*.

More can be done with the *açaí* palm. Palmito, or cabbage palm, a soft, white substance found in the terminal bud of the tree, is a favorite delicacy used in salads. The roots are made into medicines for killing parasites, and the fibers are fashioned into brooms. The leaves feed the animals or are used to make paper, and the tree trunk also provides excellent wood for construction.

The Bacuri and the Cupuaçu



The *bacuri* (*Platonia insignis*) is an ornamental tree, standing 60 to 100 feet high. Its canopy is shaped like an upside-down cone. The fruit is about the size of an orange and is oval in shape, with a thick, lemon-yellow skin. Wrapped around seeds, the white, sticky pulp is sweet-sour and perfumed. The juicy pulp brims with phosphorus, iron, and vitamin C. Brazilians blend *bacuri* into syrups, jellies, compotes, and beverages. The oily, reddish-black seeds are not thrown away but are used to treat a variety of skin conditions. The yellow wood of the *bacuri* tree is used as lumber in construction.

The *cupuaçu* (*Theobroma grandiflorum*) is a relative of the more familiar cacao plant (*Theobroma*

Bacuri fruit: Geysen Magno/Ag. Lumiar

cacao). The fat in *cupuaçu* seeds is similar to cacao butter, or cocoa butter, which is used to make chocolate. Although the *cupuaçu* grows naturally in the steamy environment of the Amazon basin, it is cultivated throughout Brazil. The tree has adapted especially well in the coastal state of Espírito Santo.

First the *cupuaçu* tree grows a chestnut-brown bark, which is strong enough for timber. Then, in its eighth year, the tree bears clusters of flowers and fruits. From its long branches covered with rust-colored leaves hang fuzzy, brown oval-shaped fruits. Each

fruit weighs between two and three pounds. At first, you might turn your nose up at its strong smell. But the white, fragrant, acidic pulp is excellent for making sorbet and other desserts.

If you ever visit Brazil, get acquainted with its many unique fruit flavors. Ice cream shops in Brazil's bigger cities are adding more and more tropical flavors to their list. Granted, ordering sorbet with names such as *jaca*, *umbu*, *biribá*, *buriti*, *mangaba*, *murici*, *sapotí*, *cajarana*, *graviola*, *maracujá*, or *jabuticaba* may twist your tongue. But their flavors will please your palate!

Background: Silvestre Silva/Reflexo

Delicious "cupuaçu"
ice cream, with the
tree in the background

"CUPUAÇU"





The Most Endangered Feline on Earth

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN

The eyesight and reflexes of the lynx have long been proverbial. When a person has a clear view of matters, Spaniards say he has "the eyes of a lynx." Unfortunately, the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) is now known for something else that has nothing to do with its eyesight or its shrewdness. It has been rated "the most endangered cat species in the world."*

Years ago the Iberian lynx was found throughout Portugal and Spain and probably even as far as the French Pyrenees. Nowadays, a few scattered groups survive in the southwest region of the Iberian Peninsula. Only about two of these groups have viable breeding populations, however, and the overall number of lynx has dropped alarmingly.

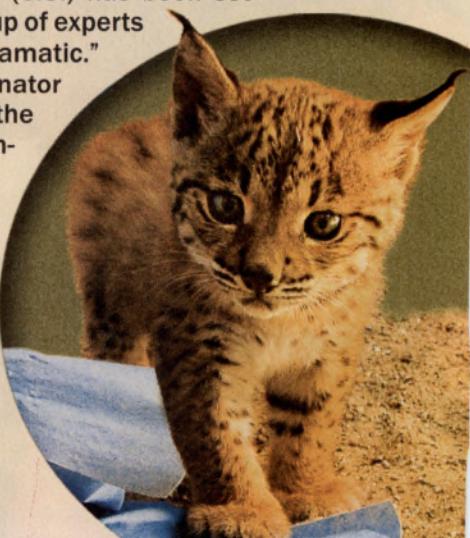
According to some estimates, the number of Iberian lynx has now plummeted to fewer than 200. What has caused this catastrophic decline? Some say that the main reason is the critical shortage of its principal prey, the rabbit, which has been decimated by several epidemics of myxomatosis. In addition, some lynx have fallen victim to the snares of poachers or have been killed on the highways. And suitable habitat has become more and more fragmented. A recent World Wildlife Fund report notes that these problems have led the dwindling population to become isolated in small pockets.

Although some 35 million dollars (U.S.) has been set aside to save the embattled lynx, a group of experts recently described the situation as "dramatic."

According to Nicolás Guzmán, the coordinator of the National Plan for the Conservation of the Iberian Lynx, among the fewer than 200 remaining animals in the wild, 'only between 22 and 32 are females capable of reproducing.' He added, 'The survival of the species will depend on them.' Sad to say, the story of the Iberian lynx reflects the situation of all too many of earth's beautiful creatures.

* The Iberian, or Spanish, lynx was classified as "critically endangered" in the Red List, a list of animals threatened with extinction prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

◀ Foto © Fernando Ortega
sos lynx ▶



"Once Stricken, Twice Afflicted"

AS TOLD BY JACK MEINTSMA

As a result of effective vaccines and diligent immunization programs, science has made great progress in its effort to eradicate polio, a debilitating childhood disease. However, even decades after recovering from polio, some survivors find themselves afflicted again, facing what is called post-polio syndrome (PPS).

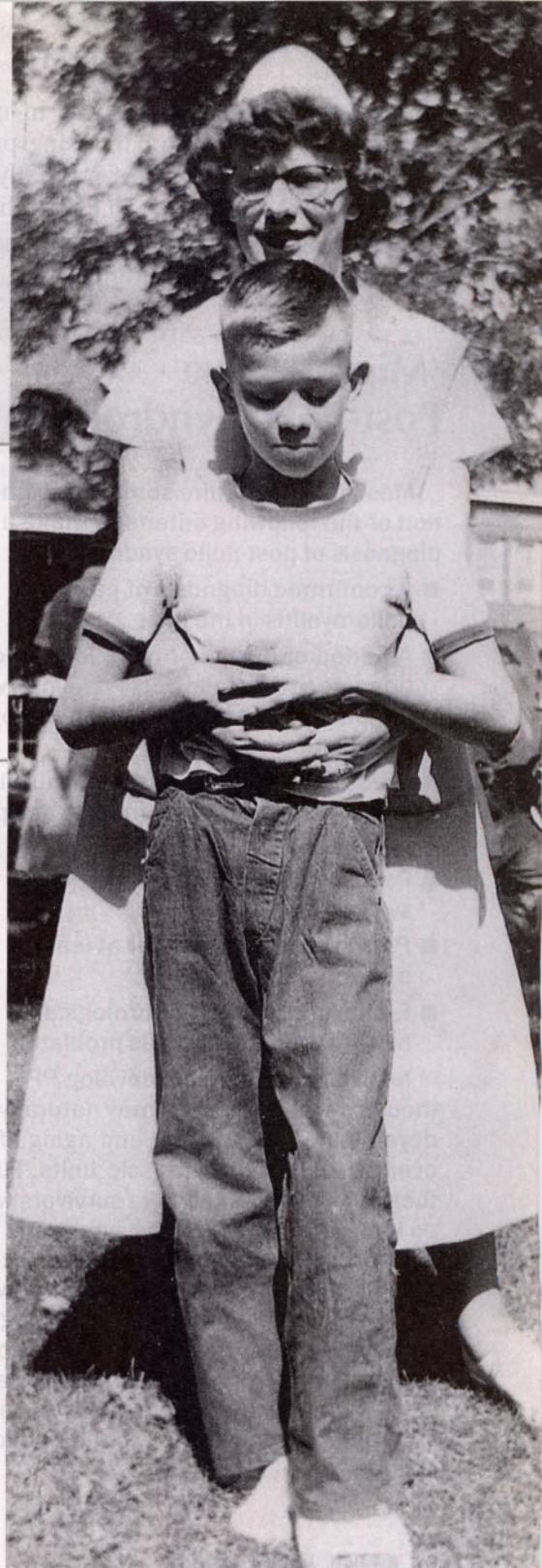
YOU may never have heard of PPS. Neither had I until it became very much a part of my life. But in order to understand the syndrome's effects on me, let me go back to a day in 1941, when I was about a year old.

My mother noticed that I was slumped over in my high chair. She rushed me to the doctor. After examining me, the doctor told my mother, "Your son has infantile paralysis."^{*} I was soon paralyzed from the waist down.

After six months on a waiting list, I was admitted to the hospital. Years of recurring illness followed. Through intense physical therapy, I gradually regained the use of my legs. At the age of 14, I was walking again. But other problems, such as incontinence, remained. Over the years, I went through several cycles of surgery, confinement to a wheelchair, and physical rehabilitation. Still, my left foot is three shoe sizes smaller than my right foot, and my left leg is an inch shorter than my

* Also called poliomyelitis, or polio.

A nurse helping me to recover after surgery when I was 11 years of age



right leg. It was not until I was in my early 20's that I got the embarrassing problem of incontinence under control. Finally, I was completely over polio—or so I thought!

Then, at age 45, I began to experience pain in my legs, followed by fatigue. Also, my leg

muscles moved involuntarily at night, making it very difficult for me to sleep. The symptoms did not let up; they only worsened. You can imagine my surprise when I was diagnosed with PPS—44 years after my mother recognized my initial illness.

What Is Polio?

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that enters the body through the mouth and multiplies in the intestines. After invading the nervous system, the virus can quickly cause total paralysis. As the virus passes along to the brain and then to the spinal cord, initial symptoms are fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs. Many of the nerves stop functioning, resulting in paralysis of some of the muscles in the arms, legs, and chest.

But the body's recuperative powers are amazing. Nerves that were not affected by the virus send out new "sprouts," as if running extra telephone lines, to reconnect the muscle cells that were orphaned when their previous nerves died. A single motor neuron in the spinal cord may also grow terminal axon sprouts, which may connect to many more muscle cells than it did originally, thus greatly increasing the neuron's capacity. A motor neuron that previously stimulated 1,000 muscle cells might eventually reconnect to between 5,000 and 10,000 cells. This is evidently what happened in my case, so that I am able to walk again.

However, it is presently thought that over a period of 15 to 40 years, these neural-muscle units may begin to show signs of fatigue because of being overworked. PPS is a condition that causes symptoms to reappear in individuals who had recovered from polio decades earlier. Many victims experience muscle weakness, fatigue, joint and muscle pain, cold intolerance, and breathing problems. Though accurate figures are hard to obtain, the World Health Organization estimates that there are 20 million polio survivors worldwide. Current

'Might I Have Post-Polio Syndrome?'

Most experts require some combination of the following criteria to make a diagnosis of post-polio syndrome:

- A confirmed diagnosis of paralytic poliomyelitis in the past
- A period of partial or complete functional recovery followed by an interval (at least 15 years) of stable neurological function
- Gradual or sudden onset of muscle weakness, fatigability, muscle atrophy, or muscle and joint pain
- Possible problems breathing or swallowing
- Persistent symptoms for at least a year
- Exclusion of other neurological, medical, and orthopedic problems

Not all polio survivors develop PPS, though as they age, they may naturally develop premature tiring and aging of overextended neural-muscle units. Furthermore, over half of polio survivors who go to their doctor with new symptoms do not have PPS. Notes one expert: "Sixty percent of polio survivors with new symptoms have a medical or neurological problem that is unrelated to polio, and that problem may be treatable. Half the remaining patients have increasing orthopedic issues related to their polio residua."

evidence indicates that 25 to 50 percent of them are affected by PPS.

What Can Be Done to Help?

Researchers suggest that the old, overworked motor neuron becomes so exhausted that some of its nerve endings die, leaving many muscle fibers orphaned once again. To slow this process, a polio survivor needs to reduce the demand on the affected muscles. Some therapists recommend assistive devices, such as canes, braces, crutches, wheelchairs, and scooters. In my case, it became necessary for me to wear braces on both of my legs and feet. I also have specially made shoes that support my ankles and help to keep me from falling.

Moderate exercise and muscle stretching may also be required, depending on one's condition. Swimming or warm-water pool therapies are excellent means of improving cardiovascular function without straining the muscles. It is important for the patient to cooperate with the doctor or the therapist in any exercise program.

In polio survivors, repeated demands on the neurons ultimately result in the failure of some muscle fibers to work properly. Survivors may thus experience a decrease in stamina or even suffer debilitating fatigue. Loss of stamina may also result from the stress of constant pain or of dealing with a returning disability. I have found that periods of rest during the day help me recover from fatigue. Many doctors caution their patients to pace their day-to-day activities rather than push themselves to the point of exhaustion.

In my case, constant joint and muscle pain has been one of the hardest things to deal with. Some may experience muscle pain particularly in those muscles that they have strained during their usual daily activities. Others experience a flulike aching in all their muscles, along with exhaustion.

Pain may lessen with anti-inflammatory or other types of medication. But despite medications, many polio survivors suffer from disabling chronic pain. Physical therapy along with heat and stretching may help. A sufferer who gave

Is There a Cure?

Just as there is no confirmed etiology, or cause—and thus no definitive laboratory test—there is really no cure at the present time for post-polio syndrome (PPS). There is, however, treatment revolving around a three-pronged rehabilitation approach. Says one expert: "More than 80% of patients with PPS will demonstrate benefit with rehabilitation techniques."

The three approaches are:

1. Life-style modifications

- energy conservation
- assistive devices
- nonfatiguing exercise
- staying warm

2. Medications and supplements

Though many medications, prescription as well as natural supplements, have been tried, none has been proved to help. There are many anecdotal reports of improvement, but further study is needed. Keep in mind that herbs can interact with prescription medicine, so always let your physician know what you are thinking of taking.

3. Quality of life

"The strongest medicine that a practitioner can provide to a patient with PPS is education and encouragement. . . . Patients who were better able to make lifestyle modifications (those with better problem-solving skills, more accessible environments, more access to information and support, and a readiness to compensate with assistive devices) adapted better in their daily occupations."—Dr. Susan Perlman.

What About Exercise?

Early on, recovering polio survivors were encouraged to exercise "until it hurts." Then in the 1980's, they were warned about the dangers of exercise, essentially about "using up" their viable muscle tissue.

Today experts recommend a path midway between those two extremes. Their message now is, 'Don't overdo it, but beware of inactivity.' The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability says: "New knowledge tells us that no matter what our level of disability is, we should be encouraged to value exercise, enterprising enough to come up with a highly customized plan and enduring enough to reap the rewards."

In summary, an individualized exercise plan should

- Be developed in conjunction with a knowledgeable physician or physical therapist
- Start at a slow or moderate pace and progress gradually
- Include warming up before and cooling down after
- Focus on stretching and general aerobic exercises
- Include warm-water pool exercise, if available

Says one expert in *The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter*: "Tiredness and pain persisting beyond an hour indicate that muscles have been overused." So listen to your body and avoid pain, fatigue, and weakness.

up her practice as an anesthesiologist told me, "I could get out of this wheelchair and struggle across the room, but the pain is so great, it isn't worth it." Now, even with medi-

cation that helps, I must frequently resort to my wheelchair.

Some polio survivors have lost the ability to shunt blood away from the skin, which the body normally does to conserve heat in the muscle tissues. Without this ability, an affected limb will radiate more heat and cool down. When the muscles are cold, poor communication from the motor neuron to the muscles results, and muscles do not work properly. Thus, it is important to keep the affected muscles warm by wearing extra clothing. Some use an electric blanket or a hot-water bottle during cold nights. Avoiding exposure to cold weather helps. I found it necessary to move to a warmer climate.

Breathing problems are common, especially among those with a history of bulbar polio, a form of polio that affects the spinal cord in the upper neck and thereby weakens the breathing muscles. In times past, this type of polio landed many people in an iron lung.

Today, a ventilator may be used to assist weakened lung muscles. In my case, it is very hard for me to breathe when I exert myself. Therefore, every day I use a small device to exercise my lung muscles.

Survivors need to be aware of another potential difficulty. It is not advisable for them to have surgery and then return home the same day. Dr. Richard L. Bruno, of the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, states: "NO POLIO SURVIVOR SHOULD HAVE SAME-DAY SURGERY FOR ANY REASON except for the most simple procedures that require only a local anesthetic." He adds that polio survivors require twice as long to recover from the effects of any anesthetic and may need additional pain medication. Their stay in the hospital will usually be lon-



What Are the Risk Factors?

Though every case is different, the following factors may increase the risk of a polio survivor developing post-polio syndrome:

- **Severity of initial polio infection.** Generally speaking, the more severe the initial polio, the higher the risk of PPS
- **Age at initial onset.** Those who got polio at a younger age are actually less likely to face PPS
- **Recovery.** Surprisingly, the greater and more complete the initial recovery, the greater the chance of eventually developing PPS
- **Physical activity.** If a polio survivor has been in the habit of exercising to exhaustion over the years, this may increase the risk of PPS

ger than that of other patients. If I had known that, I might have been spared a bout of pneumonia following a recent minor surgery. It is wise to discuss these concerns with the surgeon and the anesthesiologist before surgery.

My Life Today

When I was able to walk at the age of 14, I thought my problems were, for the most part, behind me. However, after many years I find myself experiencing the same problems all over again. For polio survivors like me who develop PPS, the situation is, as one writer put it, "once stricken, twice afflicted." Of course, it is only normal to get discouraged at times. Nevertheless, I can still get around and take care of myself. I have found that the best medicine for me is to have a positive attitude, to ad-

just to changing circumstances as they develop, and to appreciate what I can still do.

For example, when I started in the full-time Christian ministry about ten years ago, it was easier for me to get around than it is now. I was able to walk for a considerable distance before tiring or experiencing much pain. Now, however, I can only walk a very short distance. To conserve energy, I try to avoid climbing stairs and walking up hills. I use my wheelchair whenever possible. By adapting my ministry in various ways, I find it very enjoyable and even therapeutic.

Yes, PPS does affect my life. It is possible that my health will worsen. But I find great comfort in the Bible's promise of a new world in which all will be young again, with full health and mightiness. Over the years, I have often thought about the inspiring words of Isaiah 41:10: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you." With God's help, I am determined to keep going until PPS is a thing of the past.

Today, in the full-time Christian ministry with my wife



Nibbling Between the Thorns

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SOUTH AFRICA

COME with me on a visit to an area of South Africa called the Noorsveld. This semiarid region gets its name from the thorny types of succulent vegetation called noors plants, or euphorbias, which are plentiful there. As seen in the accompanying picture, farmers in the area raise livestock, such as these Angora goats, which are valued for their white fleece, called mohair. This is manufactured into a fine, yet tough, fabric used for a variety of items, from fashionable clothing to carpets. But how do such animals survive in this drought-prone region?

The clumps of noors stems where you see the goats walking are a key to their survival. This particular noors, *Euphorbia coerulescens*, provides over 40 percent of the goats' winter diet. However, the goats have to be careful not to injure themselves as they nibble between the vicious thorns. Feeding becomes easier as

This particular noors provides over 40 percent of the goats' winter diet



they learn to knock the thorns off with their horns.

After good rains, the goats eat the vegetation that grows around the clumps of noors. But this too is dangerous. In his book on the Noorsveld, farmer Jurgen Currie writes: "Should an Angora goat with its cute strands of curly hair venture to nibble at the soft plants that grow under and inside the Noors, it might just become entangled in the thorns." This can result in death. "If the summer sun is at its fiercest such a goat will last no longer than two hours," explains the Noorsveld farmer.

Periodically, the Noorsveld suffers from severe drought. At such times noors vegetation is lifesaving. With mobile cutting machines, farmers drive through fields of noors, chopping them into small pieces. Such portions are easier and safer for the goats to eat. Wild animals join in the feeding frenzy. "During droughts," explains Currie, "the kudu [large antelopes] gratefully avail themselves of this lifeline. You see them often next to the road

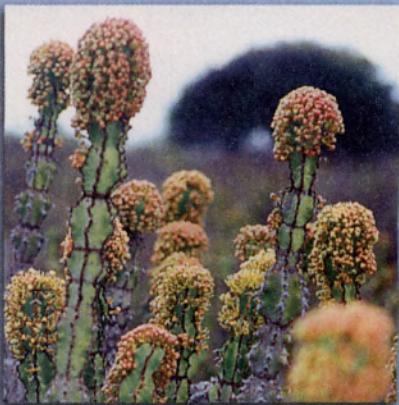




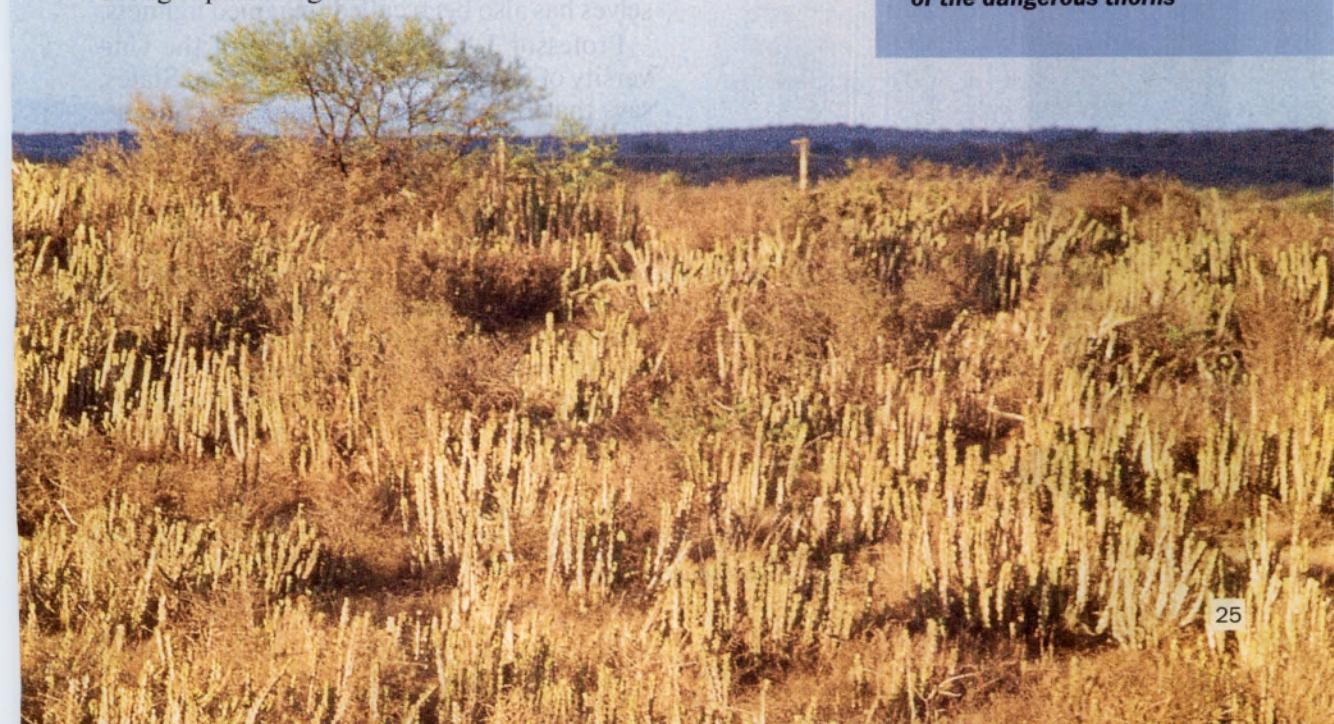
on the white patches where the Noors has been chopped, their fear of humans negated by their need for nourishment.”

Though smaller, another type of noors, *Euphorbia ferox*, is covered with so many vicious thorns that most animals cannot reach the edible stems. Because of their resistance to drought, these noors are also lifesaving. When rains fail to come, farmers and their laborers move from noors clump to noors clump burning off the thorns with blowtorches and other means. It is backbreaking work. “Once the thorns are burned off,” explains the book *Veld Plants of Southern Africa*, “stock eagerly graze the stems. . . . Springbok [another type of antelope] soon learn to eat the ‘burned noors’ and become very tame often grazing . . . in close proximity to the person doing the burning.”

As we watch the scene of the goats grazing among the noors, we cannot help but marvel at the variety of Jehovah’s creation. Although the noors plants look inhospitable and deadly, they are life sustaining for many animals in this drought-prone region.



Flowering noors and a close-up of the dangerous thorns



When Concern About Appearance Becomes an OBSESSION



WHEN most of us look at ourselves in a mirror, we see areas that we feel could be improved. So we rearrange our clothes or hair or apply a little makeup and then get on with our day. Such concern about our appearance is normal and proper. But for some people concern about their looks goes to extremes, giving rise to a condition that has been called body dysmorphic disorder, or BDD.

The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy defines BDD as "preoccupation with a defect in appearance, causing significant distress or interfering with social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning."^{*} Because sufferers may imagine a certain defect or exaggerate a minor flaw, their view of themselves has also been called imagined ugliness.

Professor J. Kevin Thompson of the University of South Florida, in the United States, says that BDD is probably rare, "perhaps affecting between 1.0-2.0% of the general population and 10-15% of psychiatric outpatients." However, he adds: "Some researchers believe that the prevalence is on the rise, as diagnostic methods become better at detecting the problem and as society becomes even more obsessed with appearance."

Although the condition can affect people of all ages, it usually begins in the teens. As far as adults are concerned, it appears to affect males and females equally. This is in sharp contrast with eating disorders, which are far more common among females.

* "Preoccupation with physical appearance is a common symptom of a number of psychiatric disorders," says *The Medical Journal of Australia*. These include depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa. Hence, BDD can be difficult to diagnose.

The morbid preoccupation with looks that is typical of people with BDD usually leads to compulsive checking in the mirror and, in some cases, even to social isolation. Worse still, the “distress and dysfunction associated with the disorder can lead to repeated hospitalization and suicidal behavior,” states the *Merck Manual*. It is not surprising that some sufferers seek cosmetic surgery. “I usually advise against it,” says Dr. Katharine Phillips, who has written a book on BDD. “Surgery is irreversible,” she explains, “and most people with BDD usually feel like it didn’t work anyway.”*

Occasionally, BDD surfaces at a very early age. The *George Street Journal** reports on a six-year-old boy “who believed his teeth were yellow, his stomach was ‘fat,’ and his hair looked wrong. None of his ‘defects’ were discernible to others. He would brush his hair for nearly an hour each morning, and if he could not get it to look ‘right’ he would dunk his head in water and restart his grooming routine, often causing him to be late for school.” One day, when he arrived at a doctor’s office, he even crouched to examine his image in the chrome on a chair.

Do Not Let the World Govern Your Attitude

Glossy magazines, newspapers, and television advertisements bombard people with images of the ideal body. The advertisers’ logic is simple: Present a certain image as the norm, and people will part with their hard-earned money to achieve that look. Add in a little peer pressure with perhaps a few thoughtless remarks from family or friends, and it is not surprising that some people become unbalanced about their appearance.[▲] Of course, an unbalanced attitude may be a far cry from an obsessive psychiatric disorder.

* Please see the article “Young People Ask . . . Should I Have Cosmetic Surgery?” in the August 22, 2002, issue of this journal. Of course, a person with a serious psychiatric disorder may need the help of a mental-health professional.

[▲] A publication of Brown University, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

[▲] For further information, please see the chapter “How Important Are Looks?” in the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

It is both abnormal and untrue to think that if you do not look beautiful or handsome, others will take no interest in you. People do not usually choose friends according to physical appearance. True, looks may be a factor at first, but personality, moral standards, and values are the true cement of friendship. In some ways each of us is like a book—it may have an attractive cover, but if the contents are dull, readers will soon put it down. However, regardless of the cover, if the book is interesting, people will hold on to it. So why not focus on your qualities as a person? That is what God’s Word, the Bible, encourages you to do.—Proverbs 11:22; Colossians 3:8; 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

And let’s face it, our appearance changes as we get older. If life, friendship, and happiness hinged on youthful good looks, what a sad future would lie before us all! Yet, our situation can be very different. How is that so?

Beauty That Will Last

Proverbs 16:31 states: “Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness.” In the eyes of Jehovah God—and in the eyes of all who share his viewpoint—people who grow old in God’s service do not become less attractive. In fact, because of their record of zeal and godly devotion, they achieve their crowning beauty in gray-headedness. Such precious individuals merit our love and deep respect.—Leviticus 19:32.

What is more, Jehovah, in the coming new world that he has promised, will reverse the effects that inherited sin has had on all his loyal ones, old and young. With every passing day, they will see and feel their body improve until they eventually reach the peak of physical perfection. (Job 33:25; Revelation 21:3, 4) What a thrilling prospect that is! Would you like to be among them? If so, then strive to focus on the beauty that really matters, and do not let the shallow, and often heartless, thinking of the world govern your attitude. You will be a much happier and more attractive person for it.—Proverbs 31:30.

Watching the World

New Species Found After Habitat Was Lost

When uninhabited Carrihal Island in Venezuela's Caroni River was cleared of forest to make way for a new dam, a previously unknown bird was discovered, reports the *Daily Journal* of Caracas. Bird specimens taken before the foliage was removed were later discovered to include a small, blue-flecked finch that dwelt in the islet's impenetrable bamboo thickets. Naturalists hope to find more members of the newly recognized species in other nearby habitats. Meantime, says researcher Robin Restall, "the discovery of the Carrihal Seedeater . . . is tempered with the knowledge that we have now destroyed the place where it hid from us for so long."

Keep Your Cutting Board Clean!

Which is safer—a wooden cutting board or a plastic one? "Either kind of board is okay so long as you keep it very clean," says the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*. "Whether you use wood or plastic for cutting raw meat and poultry, scrub the board well afterward with hot soapy water." If the board is deeply scarred or has fat on it, take extra care to get it completely clean. "You can also sanitize a board by rins-

Clouds and Elephants

How much does a cloud weigh?

One cumulus cloud can contain about 550 tons of water, reports ABC News.

"Or if you want to convert it to something that

might be a little more meaningful . . . , think of elephants," says meteorologist Peggy LeMone. If we assume that an elephant weighs about six tons, then the water in just one typical cumulus cloud would weigh as much as 100 elephants. All that water is suspended as tiny droplets that float on the warmer air rising from below. In contrast to a puffy cumulus cloud, a large storm cloud may hold water weighing as much as 200,000 elephants. What about a hurricane? LeMone estimated the weight of the water in one cubic meter of a hurricane cloud and multiplied that figure by the total volume of the hurricane. The result? A weight equivalent to forty million elephants.

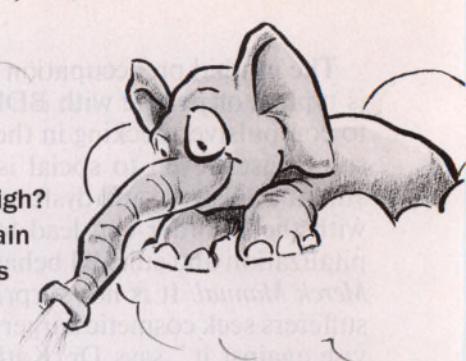
"That means the water in one hurricane weighs more than all the elephants on the planet," says the report, "perhaps even more than all the elephants that have ever lived."



ing it with a diluted bleach solution (1 teaspoon bleach in 1 quart of water)," states the *Wellness Letter*. Hands and knives should likewise be thoroughly cleaned and dried.

Preschoolers and Computers

Some researchers say that "prolonged use of computers in place of old-fashioned play" offers preschool children little benefit and "can lead to social withdrawal, attention problems, loss of cre-



ativity and even depression and anxiety," reports the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper. Computers transform a child's world "from one that is three-dimensional and experiential to one that is dominated by two-dimensional virtual reality," states psychologist Sharna Olfman. Researchers stress the importance of "parent-guided make-believing" with children to teach "vocabulary, colours, shapes, numbers, manners and knowledge about

everyday events." Psychologist Jane Healy says that old-fashioned play is especially important from birth to seven years of age. Such play can help teach children to pay attention, while computer-generated stimuli can have the opposite effect.

Television—A "Hard Drug"

"Children who watch TV for more than two hours a day achieve less at school," reports the Spanish newspaper *La Vanguardia*. Though he believes that TV can be a powerful educational tool, pediatrician Francisco Muñoz points out the bad effects of such TV use. Muñoz believes that the poorer performance levels of heavy TV watchers is a consequence of "a delay in reaching maturity and a reduced capacity for abstract thought." He also notes: "There exists a clear correlation between watching certain programs, advertisements, and music videos

and the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs among adolescents." While acknowledging that not all youngsters will act out the bad conduct they see on TV, child psychiatrist Paulino Castells has called television a "hard drug" because of "the destructive effect it has on the most fragile minds."

Noisy Classrooms

Echoes and background noise in classrooms make it difficult for students to hear in class, reports the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. "The more difficult it is for children to understand, the less able they are to retain anything," says psychologist Maria Klatte. In some schools in Germany, researchers measured sound levels ranging between 70 and 90 decibels (dB). "In workplaces where a lot of brain work goes on the limit is 55 dB," explains noise research-

er Gerhart Tiesler. "In industry, hearing protection is recommended at levels over 85 dB." Moreover, the longer that sounds reverberate in a room—whether speech, chair movement, or coughs—the harder it is to concentrate. Acoustic ceilings help to reduce noise and reverberation, sparing the nerves and voices of teachers and students, but many schools cannot afford to install them.

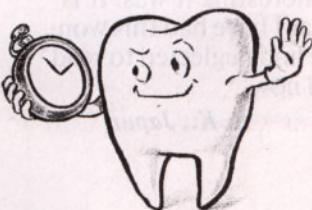
Supermarkets Displace Traditional Shops

"The proliferation of supermarkets across eastern and southern Africa is threatening local markets and, as a result, the livelihood of farmers in rural areas," notes the German science newsletter *wissenschaft-online*. Already 200 supermarkets and 10 hypermarkets account for 30 percent of retail food sales in Kenya—equivalent to that of 90,000 small shops. According to Kostas Stamoulis of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, rapid urbanization and globalization "mean that Africa will see far more dramatic changes in its food supply system than we have seen in developed countries." Experts hope that to avoid catastrophe, cooperatives can be set up to provide a market for local produce and that training can be provided to help farmers make the transition.

When to Brush Your Teeth

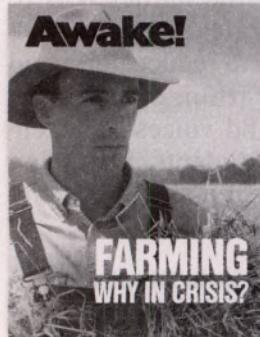
Brushing your teeth immediately after drinking acid beverages or eating acid food can harm the enamel, says the *Milenio* newspaper of Mexico City. Reporting on a study done at the German University of Göttingen, the newspaper warns that acid foods "temporarily weaken tooth enamel." Therefore, brushing one's teeth immediately after

lunch can be detrimental. Instead, "it is advisable to wait a few minutes so that the teeth recover their strength."



From Our Readers

Farming I am writing out of appreciation for the series "Farming—Why in Crisis?" (October 8, 2003) I live in an agricultural community. As a result of a poor economy and other factors, farmers are selling their land. It seems that new housing developments pop up every day, replacing farmlands. Sometimes I wonder if there will be any land left for cultivation. It is good to know that Jehovah will bring a permanent solution to the farming crisis.



V. A., United States

it was a photograph of a mosaic displayed at a nearby state park. I have lived near that park for more than a decade, and I had never seen the mosaics. So I went to see them and was very impressed. Now I have more appreciation for the art of mosaics.

E. D., United States

I have always wanted to know more about mosaics—especially since we traveled to the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia in 1993. In St. Petersburg and Moscow, we could admire many beautiful mosaics. Our thanks to the artists who have spent years of work on such pieces and to you for the informative article.

B. Z., Germany

Alternative Life-Styles Thank you for the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: Alternative Life-Styles—Does God Approve?" (October 8, 2003) I am 17 years old and was raised a Christian. However, I started experiencing homosexual desires when I was very young. I have a hard time understanding my desires, but it is good to know that Jehovah understands the struggle I have. To any others who are dealing with such feelings, I would say, Don't give up!

J. M., United States

Throughout my life I have been tormented with distorted sexual feelings. Your article addressed my situation. Being exposed to pornography at a very young age

and being sexually abused have had a devastating effect on me. Thank you for helping me to understand myself.

J.B.M., United States

When it comes to sexual preferences, it is wise to note the influence of such things as genes, hormones, upbringing, and many other factors. It is true that those who struggle with homosexual inclinations can find support in the Christian congregation.

D. L., Britain

"Awake!" responds: Our hearts go out to any who struggle with their sexual feelings. As our article acknowledged, the causes of such difficulties may be complex. But as long as one does not deliberately cultivate or act upon immoral impulses, one can remain clean in Jehovah's eyes. Be assured that Jehovah God is delighted when individuals make such efforts to remain morally clean.—Proverbs 27:11.

Windmills I enjoyed the article "Windmills—Reminders of a Bygone Era." (October 8, 2003) I learned that windmills were used not only for grinding grain into flour but also for a number of other purposes. I am a simple farm boy, and I'm unable to express my gratitude fully for all the information you provide.

S. A., Russia

Appreciates Awake! Thank you for the October 8, 2003, issue. This was the first time I had ever read the magazine all the way through. But I began to realize that I should take in all that Jehovah gives us. Anyway, I was surprised at how interesting it was! It is really a waste that I have had this wonderful magazine and neglected to read it completely till now!

R. K., Japan



Have You Ever Seen a STILT PALM?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN PERU

STILT PALMS are a common sight in some parts of the world. But why would a palm need stilts? Because the first root of a palm stops growing after it reaches a certain size, whereas the rest of the plant continues to grow. Therefore, the stem produces more roots, which reach for the ground and look like stilts.

Stilt palms are much more than simply interesting plants. They provide shelter to small animals that hide among the roots. Man also benefits from them. In some countries local inhabitants use the wood to build their houses, including the floor, and they use the leaves to thatch roofs, make brooms, and weave baskets. Some people who live far from tropical rain forests may have used an elegant walking stick or walked on a durable parquet floor made from the wood of stilt palms, which displays beautiful veins of dark color.

Like many palms, stilt palms are also a source of food. Most have an edible, tasty heart. Sadly, as the demand for this exotic specialty food has grown, some varieties of palm have been cut down solely for the soft, delicious heart, leaving the rest of the tree strewn on the ground.



Stilt palms are a source of many useful products

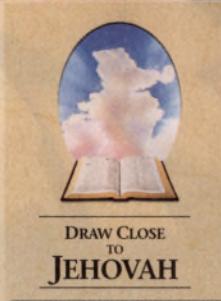
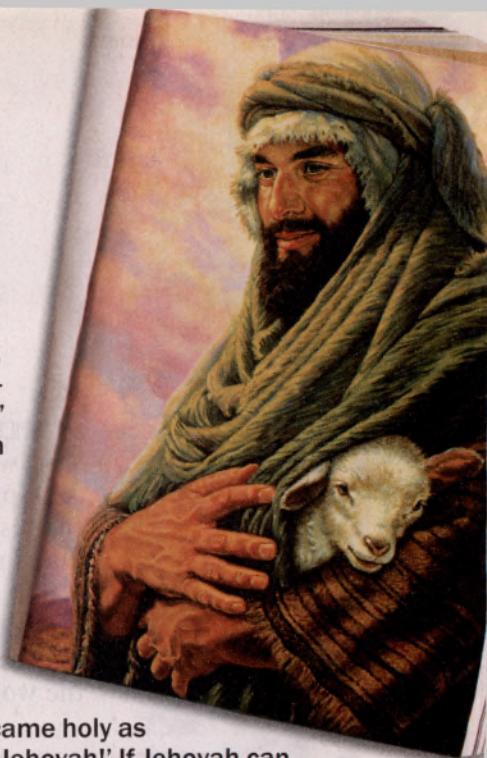


'IT HELPS ME TO BEAR UP UNDER TRIAL'

That is how one reader from Connecticut, U.S.A., described the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*. "I am studying a little of it every day," she stated. "On those days when depression makes it hard for me even to breathe, a short study helps me to bear up under the trial."

She continued: "The picture of the tender shepherd on page 69 warmed my heart. And I appreciated the point on page 28, in paragraph 8, about Moses' experience at the burning bush when

'even the surrounding ground became holy as a result of its connection with Jehovah!' If Jehovah can make even the dirt holy, then maybe there is a little hope for me. This thought has profoundly helped me because I deal with recurring depression."



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