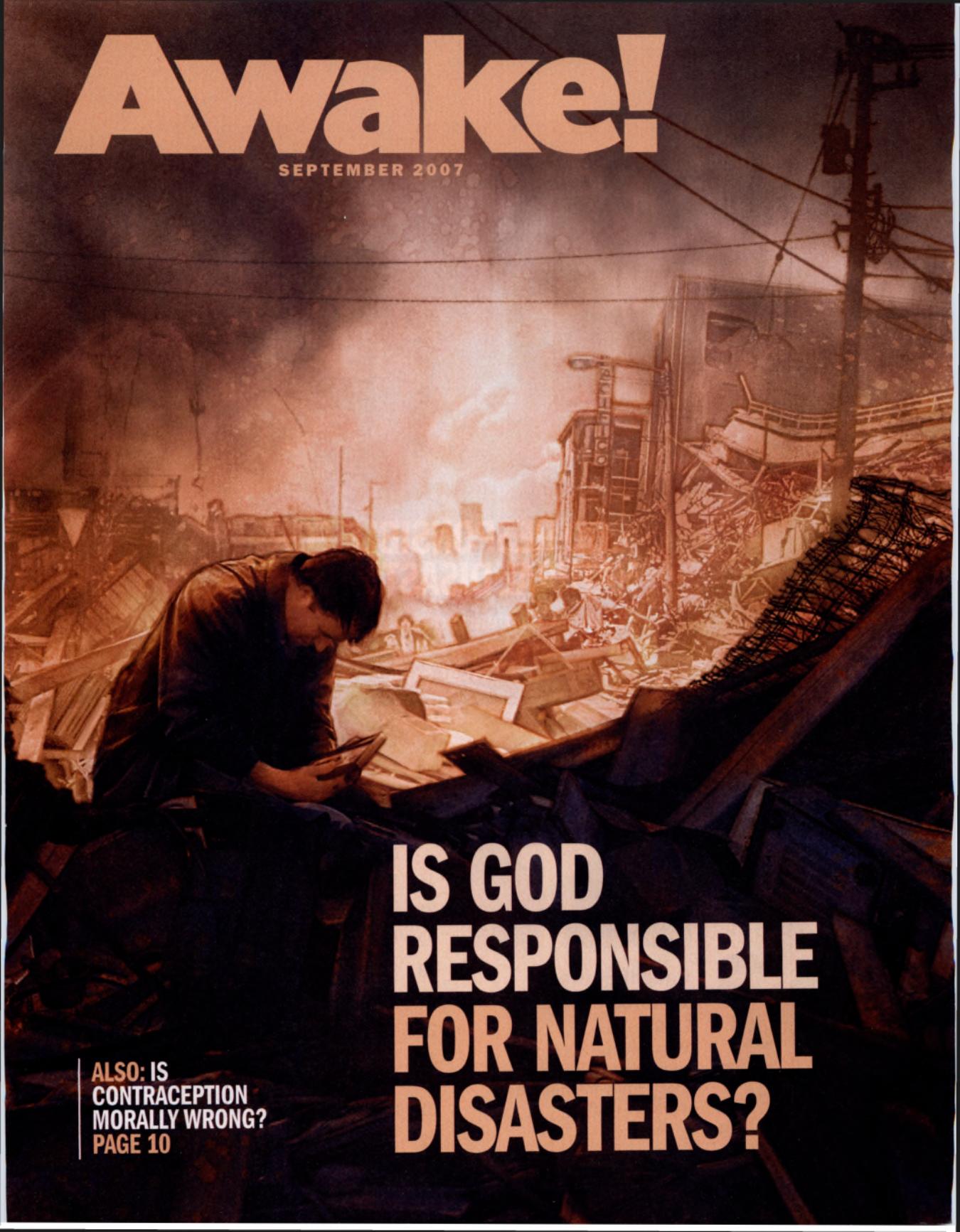


Awake!

SEPTEMBER 2007

A somber illustration of a man sitting amidst the ruins of a city. He is hunched over, looking down at a small object in his hands. The background is filled with smoke, debris, and damaged structures under a dark, cloudy sky.

IS GOD
RESPONSIBLE
FOR NATURAL
DISASTERS?

ALSO: IS
CONTRACEPTION
MORALLY WRONG?
PAGE 10

IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS? 3-9

Many people think that earthquakes, extreme weather, and other natural disasters are acts of God. The Bible, however, provides a different explanation.

Is Contraception Morally Wrong? 10

Does the Bible provide any guidance for married couples on the subject of birth control?



Caught Between Cultures—What Can I Do? 18

What are the challenges young people face when their family migrates to a foreign land?



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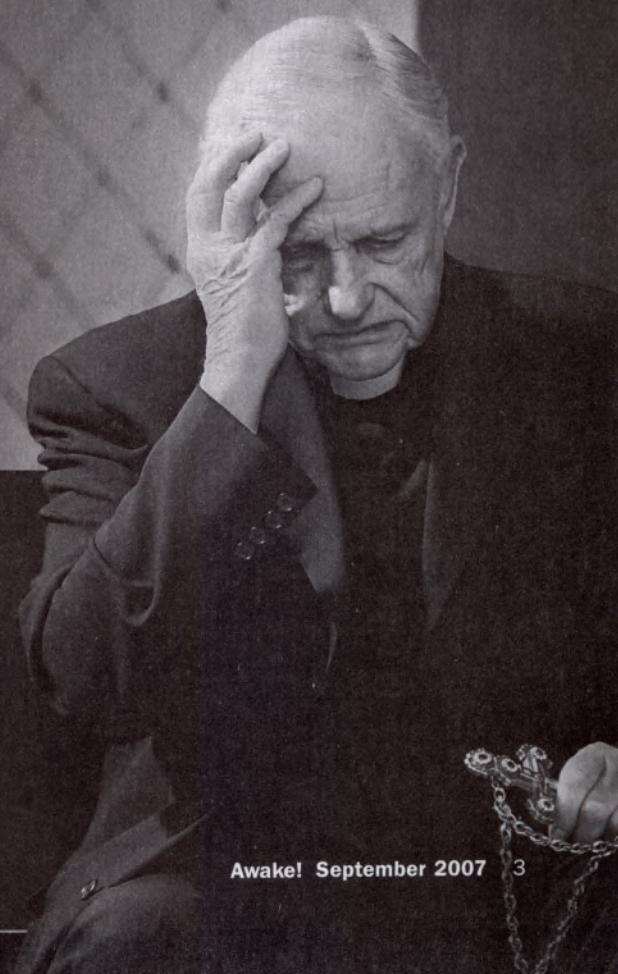
THERE were bodies everywhere, and we could not recognize where our house used to be," said a Sri Lankan man after a tsunami destroyed his village in December 2004. In an article on the disaster, a religion editor said that he sometimes finds himself "praying through clenched teeth."

Many view natural disasters as divine punishment. One columnist described a devastating hurricane as "the fist of God." In the United States, some religious leaders described events like Hurricane Katrina as "God's wrath" on "sin cities." In Sri Lanka, militant Buddhists blamed Christians for the tsunami, deepening the religious divide. The trustee of a Hindu temple felt that the god Shiva was angry because people were not living the right way. A Buddhist religious leader in the United States said concerning natural disasters: "We don't know why these things happen. We don't even know why we're here."

When you see images of wrecked homes, lost lives, and broken hearts, do you sometimes wonder, 'Why does God permit so much suffering?' Or do you think, 'God must have good reasons for allowing such things to happen but has not disclosed those reasons'? The following articles examine this issue. They also discuss some practical steps that people can take to reduce the risk of injury and death should a natural disaster threaten or occur.

*Many religious leaders
do not know why God
permits natural disasters*

BROKEN HEARTS, SHATTERED FAITH





GOD is love," states the Bible. (1 John 4:8) He is also just and merciful. "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he."—Deuteronomy 32:4.

As Creator, Jehovah God has the ability to foresee all potential causes of harm, and he has the power to intercede. In view of these facts and the qualities attributed to God in the Bible, many rightly ask, "Why does God allow natural disasters to occur?"* As millions of sincere inquirers have found, God himself has provided a most reasonable answer in his written Word. (2 Timothy 3:16) Please consider the following.

They Rejected God's Love

The Bible tells us that God gave our original parents all they needed to enjoy a happy and safe life. Furthermore, as they and their offspring obeyed God's command to "be

* Earthquakes, extreme weather, volcanic eruptions, and so on are not disasters in themselves. They only become such when they adversely affect human life and property.

fruitful and become many and fill the earth," the growing human family could count on God's ongoing care.—Genesis 1:28.

Sadly, though, Adam and Eve deliberately turned their backs on their Creator by willfully disobeying him and choosing a course of independence from him. (Genesis 1:28; 3:1-6) By far the majority of their descendants have followed in their footsteps. (Genesis 6:5, 6, 11, 12) In short, humankind as a whole have chosen to be masters of themselves and of their home, the earth, without any guidance from God. Being a God of love who respects the principle of free will, Jehovah does not force his sovereignty on humans, even though their course may lead to harm.*

Nevertheless, Jehovah did not abandon the human family. To this day "he makes his sunrise upon wicked people and good and makes

* For a more detailed discussion of God's temporary permission of suffering and evil, please see the series of articles entitled "Why?"—Answering the Hardest of Questions," in the November 2006 issue of this magazine, as well as chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

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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it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45) Additionally, God gave mankind the ability to learn about the earth and its cycles, and to varying degrees this knowledge has enabled humans to predict extreme weather and other potential dangers, such as volcanic eruptions.

Humans have also discovered which parts of the earth are more prone to seismic or atmospheric extremes. In some lands this knowledge has helped to save lives through education as well as the development of better construction methods and warning systems. Still, the number of natural disasters reported annually has been rising steadily. The reasons for this are many and complex.

Living in High-Risk Areas

The severity of a disaster does not always relate to the power of the natural forces involved. The concentration of humans in the affected area is often of greater consequence. According to a report published by the World Bank, in more than 160 countries, over a quarter of the population live in areas of high mortality risk from natural disasters. "As you put more and more people in [harm's] way, you make a disaster out of something that before was just a natural event," says scientist Klaus Jacob of Columbia University in the United States.

Other exacerbating factors are rapid, unplanned urbanization, deforestation, and the extensive use of concrete to cover ground that would normally absorb runoff. Particu-

larly the latter two can cause destructive mud slides and excessive flooding.

The human factor can also turn an earthquake into a major disaster, for it is not the shock wave of energy that causes most deaths and injuries but collapsing buildings. For good reason seismologists have the saying: "Earthquakes don't kill people. Buildings kill people."

Political incompetence can add to the death toll. In one South American land, earthquakes have demolished the capital city three times in the past 400 years. And since the last quake, which took place in 1967, the population has doubled to five million. "But building codes that could protect the population are either lacking or not enforced," says *New Scientist* magazine.

That last statement well applies to the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A., which was built in a low-lying, flood-prone area. Despite the existence of levees and pumps, the disaster that many had feared finally occurred in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina struck. "Long-standing warnings" were either ignored or "met with a halfhearted response," said a report in *USA Today*.

A similar halfhearted response has been manifested toward global warming, which many scientists believe may intensify weather-related disasters and raise sea levels. Clearly, political, social, and economic factors—things that are not of God's making—must be taken into account. These human factors call to mind the Biblical truth

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,[#] Danish,⁺ Dutch,⁺ English,^{+○} Estonian, Finnish,^{+○} French,^{#+} Georgian, German,^{#+} Greek, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,^{#+} Japanese,^{#+} Korean,^{#+} Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Norwegian,⁺ Polish,^{#+} Portuguese,^{#+○} Romanian, Russian,^{#+○} Serbian, Sesotho, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,^{#+○} Swahili, Swedish,⁺ Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Xhosa, Zulu

[#] Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

[○] MP3 CD-ROM also available.

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that man is unable “even to direct his step.” (Jeremiah 10:23) Another human element is the attitude of people toward warnings—natural and official.

Learn to Recognize Warning Signs

At the outset it must be acknowledged that natural disasters can strike without warning. “Time and unforeseen occurrence befall [us] all,” says Ecclesiastes 9:11. Often, though, there is some indication—natural or official—that trouble is looming. Hence, when people know the signs, they can improve their prospects of survival.

When a tsunami struck the Indonesian island of Simeulue in 2004, seven people out of a population of many thousands died. Knowing that abnormally receding tides can precede tsunamis, most people fled when the sea retreated. Likewise, people have escaped violent storms and volcanic eruptions by heeding warnings. Because nature’s warnings sometimes precede official warnings, it is wise to be familiar with both, especially if you live in a disaster-prone area.

Sadly, however, there is a “tendency for people to deny danger even when it is obvious,” said a volcanologist. This is particularly true where false alarms are common or where a previous disaster occurred a long time ago. And sometimes people just do not want to abandon their possessions, even when disaster is staring them in the face.

In many regions people are simply too poor to move to a safer area. But instead of reflecting badly on our Creator, the realities of poverty point to human failings. Governments, for example, often pour vast sums of money into armaments but do little to help the needy.

Nevertheless, a measure of help is available to most people, no matter what their situation may be. How is that so? In that God, by means of his written Word, the Holy Bible, has given us many fine principles, which when applied can save lives.

Principles That Save Lives

■ **Do not put God to the test.** “You must not put Jehovah your God to the test,” says Deuteronomy 6:16. True Christians do not have a superstitious outlook on life, thinking that God will always protect them from physical harm. Hence, when danger threatens, they heed the inspired advice: “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.

■ **Value life more than material possessions.** “Even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15) Yes, material things have their place, but they are of no value to the dead. Therefore, those who love life and who cherish the privilege of serving God do not take needless risks in order to protect property.—Psalm 115:17.

In 2004, Tadashi, who lives in Japan, evacuated his home immediately after an earthquake hit and before official direction was given. His life meant more to him than his home and belongings. Akira, who lives in the same area, wrote that “the real degree of damage depends, not on the material loss, but on one’s viewpoint. I viewed this disaster as a good opportunity to simplify my life.”

■ **Listen to governmental warnings.** “Be in subjection to the superior authorities.” (Romans 13:1) When an official order is given to evacuate or to follow some other safety procedure, it is wise to take heed. Tadashi stayed away from the danger zone in obedience to an evacuation order and thus avoided injury or death from aftershocks.

When there are no official warnings of a threatening disaster, people have to decide personally when and how to respond, taking into account all the available facts. In some areas local governments may provide helpful guidelines on disaster survival. If such information is available in your area, are you fa-

miliar with it? And have you discussed it with your family? (See the accompanying box.) In many parts of the world, under the direction of the local branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses, congregations of Witnesses have in place emergency procedures to follow should a disaster threaten or occur, and these procedures have proved to be extremely helpful.

■ **Show Christian love.** "I am giving you a new commandment," said Jesus, "that you love one another . . . as I have loved you." (John 13:34) People who show self-sacrificing, Christlike love do all that is humanly possible to help one another prepare for or survive a natural disaster. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, congregation elders work tirelessly to make contact with all members of the congregation to ensure that they are safe or can get to a safe place. Also, the elders check to be sure that each one has life's necessities, such as clean drinking water, food, clothing, and essential medication. Meanwhile, Witness families in safe areas open their homes to fellow Witnesses among the evacuees. Such love truly is "a perfect bond of union."—Colossians 3:14.

Will natural disasters get worse, as some predict? Perhaps, but only for a time. Why? Because mankind's tragic era of independence from God is about to end. Thereafter, the entire earth and all its inhabitants will be fully under the loving sovereignty of Jehovah, with wonderful results, as we shall now see.



ARE YOU EQUIPPED TO FLEE?

The New York City Office of Emergency Management recommends that households plan for evacuation by assembling a "go bag"—a durable, accessible, easy-to-transport bag containing important emergency items. The following may be included:^{*}

- Copies of important documents in a waterproof container
- An extra set of car and house keys
- Credit or debit cards and cash
- Bottled water and nonperishable food
- Flashlight(s), AM/FM radio, cell phone (if you have one), extra batteries
- Medication for at least one week, a list of dosages, prescription slips, and doctors' names and phone numbers. (Be sure to replace medications before their expiration date)
- First-aid kit
- Sturdy, comfortable shoes and rainwear
- Contact and meeting place information for your household, as well as a regional map
- Child-care supplies

* Although based on the official list, the above includes minor changes. Not every item listed may be suitable in your case or in your part of the world, and some items may have to be added. For example, seniors and the disabled have their own special needs.

DISASTERS ARE NEARING THEIR END



EARTHQUAKES, wars, famines, and disease—these are some of the things that Jesus foretold would mark “the conclusion of the system of things” in which we now live. (Matthew 24:3, 7, 8; Luke 21:7, 10, 11) Of course, those events are not acts of God. Neither Jesus nor his Father, Jehovah God, is responsible for them.

But God will be responsible for what the foretold events presage, namely, the coming of God’s Kingdom—a heavenly government in the hands of Jesus Christ—and the

destruction of all who reject Jehovah’s sovereignty. (Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14) Thereafter, earth will be made into a haven of peace, where there will be no fear of natural disasters. In a complete sense, God’s promise will be fulfilled: “My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting places.”—Isaiah 32:18.

Listen to God and Live!

As explained in the preceding article in this series, acting on warnings can be lifesaving.

COMFORT FOR MOURNERS

Have you lost loved ones in death, perhaps because of a natural disaster or some other tragedy? Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus’ close friend Lazarus suffered an untimely death. Upon learning about this, Jesus went to Lazarus’ village, Bethany, and raised him from the “sleep” of death.—John 11:1-44.

Jesus performed this miracle not just to show love for Lazarus and his family but also to add weight to Jesus’ promise to resurrect “all those in the memorial tombs” during his Kingdom rule. (John 5:28, 29) Yes, in the coming Paradise, Jesus will undo all the harm that began with the rebellion in Eden.*—1 John 3:8.

* For Scriptural advice on how to cope with the loss of a loved one in death as well as a more detailed discussion of the resurrection promise, please see the brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



That principle applies even more to divine warnings recorded in the Bible. "As for the one listening to me," God promises, "he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity."—Proverbs 1:33.

Jehovah's Witnesses strive to listen to God by reading his inspired Word regularly and applying its teachings. They invite you to do the same. Yes, all who obediently listen to Jehovah have no need to dread the future and the calamity that will befall the wicked. Instead, they can look forward to gaining everlasting life in Paradise on earth, where they will "find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:10, 11.

AN EARTHQUAKE CHANGED MY DIRECTION IN LIFE

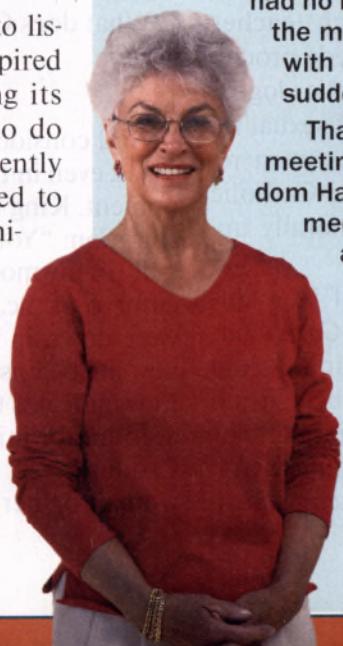
In 1971, I was a young mother and an aspiring opera soprano. I had moved from my native Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, in 1957 to be near Hollywood, California, U.S.A., hoping to pursue my first love, music.

For nine summers, Mother, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, traveled from Canada to visit me. She used those occasions to talk to me about the Bible, convinced that it offered the best advice on happiness and family life. I loved Mother and respectfully listened to her. However, each time she left, I discarded the literature she had given me, confident that my life was headed in the right direction.

Then, early on a Tuesday morning in February 1971, a 6.6 magnitude earthquake jarred me awake. The noise was deafening, and the shaking violent. Terrified, I rushed to my son and was relieved to find him safe in his crib. When the shaking stopped, broken glass and the contents of cupboards littered the floor, and the water that had been in the swimming pool was all over the yard. Even though my family was safe, I could not go back to sleep.

Mother had spoken of "the last days," a feature of which is "great earthquakes." (2 Timothy 3:1; Luke 21:7-11) That summer she returned for her annual visit but without Bible literature. Having witnessed to me for nine years without results, she assumed that I had no interest. How wrong she was! From the moment she arrived, I barraged her with questions. Singing and fame had suddenly become much less important.

That very week I attended Christian meetings with Mother at the local Kingdom Hall, and thereafter I rarely missed a meeting. She arranged for me to have a home Bible study. I was baptized in 1973, and today I spend an average of 70 hours each month proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom to others. (Matthew 24:14) Yes, instead of shattering my faith in God, an earthquake helped me to build faith.—As told by Colleen Esparza.



Is Contraception Morally Wrong?



WHAT do you think? Is it wrong for married people to use contraception? Your answer may well depend on your religious convictions. The Catholic Church teaches that every action designed to impede procreation "is intrinsically evil." Catholic dogma promotes the idea that each act of sexual intercourse between marriage mates must remain open to pregnancy. For the Catholic Church, then, contraception is "morally unacceptable."

Many people find this point of view difficult to accept. A *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article on the subject noted that "more than three-quarters of Catholics in the United States say the church should allow the use of artificial birth control. . . . And millions ignore the ban every day." One of them, Linda,

a mother of three, freely admits to using contraceptives but says: "I don't really believe in my conscience that I'm sinning."

What does God's Word have to say on this issue?

Life Is Precious

God considers the life of a child to be precious, even in the very earliest stages of development. King David of Israel wrote under inspiration: "You kept me screened off in the belly of my mother. . . . Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing." (Psalm 139:13, 16) A new life begins at conception, and the Mosaic Law indicates that a person could be called to account for injuring an unborn child. In fact, Exodus 21:22, 23 specifies that if a pregnant woman or her unborn child suffered a fatal

accident as a result of a struggle between two men, the matter had to be brought before the appointed judges. They were to weigh the circumstances and the degree of deliberateness, but the penalty could be "soul for soul," or life for life.

Those principles are relevant to contraception in that some methods of birth control appear to be abortive. These methods of contraception are not in harmony with the divine principle of respect for life. Most contraceptives, though, are not abortive. What about the use of such methods of birth control?

Nowhere does the Bible command Christians to procreate. God told the first human couple and Noah's family: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth." But this command was not repeated to Christians. (Genesis 1:28; 9:1) Hence, married couples may decide for themselves whether they will raise a family, how many children they will have, and when they will have them. The Scriptures, likewise, do not condemn birth control. From a Biblical point of view, then, whether a husband and wife choose to use some nonabortive method of contraception is really a personal decision. Why, though, does the Catholic Church condemn contraception?

Human Wisdom Versus Divine Wisdom

Catholic sources explain that it was in the second century C.E. that professed Christians first adopted a Stoic rule according to which the sole lawful purpose for marital intercourse was procreation. The reasoning behind this position was thus philosophical rather than Biblical. It was based, not on divine wisdom, but on human wisdom. This philosophy persisted down through the centuries and was elaborated on by various Cath-

olic theologians.* The logical outgrowth of this teaching, however, was the idea that sexual pleasure as an end in itself is sinful and, consequently, that sexual relations that exclude the possibility of procreation are immoral. But this is not what the Scriptures teach.

Using poetic language, the Bible book of Proverbs describes the joy that can result from appropriate sexual intimacies between husband and wife: "Drink water out of your own cistern, and tricklings out of the midst of your own well. . . . Let your water source

God told the first human couple and Noah's family: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth." But this command was not repeated to Christians

prove to be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth, a lovable hind and a charming mountain goat. Let her own breasts intoxicate you at all times. With her love may you be in an ecstasy constantly."—Proverbs 5:15, 18, 19.

Sexual relations between husband and wife are a God-given gift. But procreation is not their sole purpose. Sexual relations also allow a married couple to express tenderness and affection for each other. So if a couple should decide to exclude the possibility of a pregnancy by using some form of contraception, that is their choice to make, and no one should judge them.—Romans 14:4, 10-13.

* It was only in the 13th century that Gregory IX enacted what the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* calls "the first universal legislation by a pope against contraception."

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Is there anything sinful about sexual relations between husband and wife?—*Proverbs 5:15, 18, 19.*
- What should Christians bear in mind if they use contraceptives?—*Exodus 21:22, 23.*
- How should others view married couples who use contraceptives?—*Romans 14:4, 10-13.*

Baptisteries

SILENT WITNESSES TO A LOST PRACTICE

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN FRANCE

BAPTIZED by Immersion in the Cathedral," read a headline in a French newspaper in 2001. However, the picture published along with the article showed a new convert to Catholicism standing in a large baptismal pool with water up to his knees and a Catholic bishop pouring water onto the convert's head. This scene, repeated in many places around the world, reflects the trend in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council to baptize new converts by partial immersion. The questions arise: Whereas most Catholics were baptized as babies with a few drops of water, what form of baptism corresponds to the model set by John the Baptizer and Jesus' apostles? How should Christians be baptized today? The history of baptisteries will help to answer those questions.*

Origins and Meaning of Baptism

Originally, Christian baptism was practiced by total immersion. The Bible account of the Ethiopian official baptized by Philip helps us to appreciate that fact. After learning of

the identity of the Christ, the official, seeing a body of water, said: "What hinders my being immersed?" (Acts 8:26-39, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Here the Greek root for "immersed" is *ba-pti'zo*—meaning "to plunge," "to immerse"—from which the English word "baptize" is derived. This refers to *complete* immersion. The fact that baptism is likened to burial emphasizes this point. (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) Interestingly, several French translators of the Bible (for example, Chouraqui and Pernot) call John the *Baptizer* John the *Immerser*.—See the footnote for Matthew 3:1 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

In the very first centuries of Christianity, total immersion was performed wherever there was enough water—in rivers, in the sea, or in private baths. As the number of converts grew, however, baptisteries were constructed in many places in the Roman world, from Dalmatia to Palestine and from Greece to Egypt. One of the oldest baptisteries yet excavated is in Syria, on the shores of the Euphrates River, and dates from about 230 C.E.

When the "Christian" faith became a recognized religion in the Roman Empire in the fourth century C.E., millions of people became "Christians" and had to be baptized. So baptisteries built for that purpose were openly established everywhere. By the sixth century, in Rome alone some 25 baptisteries had been built, including one at the basilica of St. John Lateran. In Gaul every diocese likely had its own baptistery. These numbered up to 150, according to one source. There were

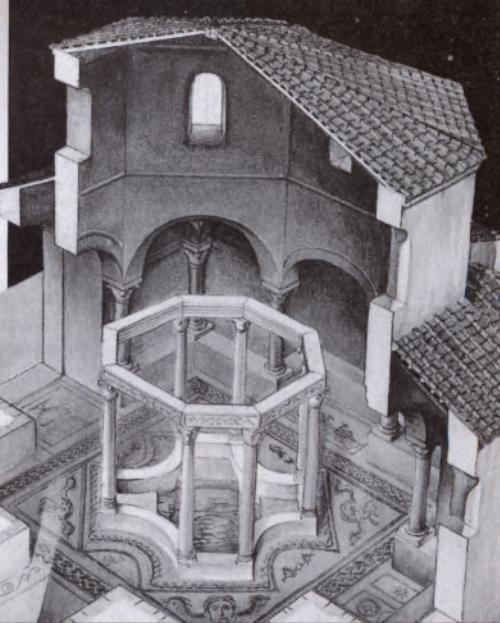
* The term "baptistery" usually refers to a church building or part of a church, where baptism ceremonies are performed.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Keep Your Children Safe!
- Alluring Roses From Africa
- What Happens at Death?



**The St. John
Baptistery
of Poitiers,
France**



**Reconstruction of the fifth-century baptistery
of Mariana, on Corsica**

probably hundreds more in the countryside, located near small churches, tombs, or monasteries.

Architecture and Water Supply

Baptisteries were often circular or polygonal monuments, either built as a special and separate edifice or connected to an existing church. Excavations show that these buildings were small (generally less than 2,000 square feet) but beautifully adorned with colonnades, marble, mosaics, and frescoes, sometimes representing Bible scenes. Some baptisteries, such as the one in Mariana, Corsica, even had an elegant baldachin, or canopy, above the pool. The name baptistery was also applied to the pool itself, which could be square, round, hexagonal, oblong, cruciform, or octagonal. As shown by their width and depth, early baptisteries were evidently designed for adult baptism. They were generally large enough to allow at least two people to fit in them. In Lyon, east central France, for example, the pool measured ten feet in width. Many pools had steps—usually seven of them—leading down into the water.

The water supply was of course a major concern for designers. Many baptisteries were built near a natural spring or in the ruins of thermal baths, such as the one in Nice, southern France. Water was often channeled

in and out of the pools through pipes. In other cases rainwater was transported by hand from a nearby cistern.

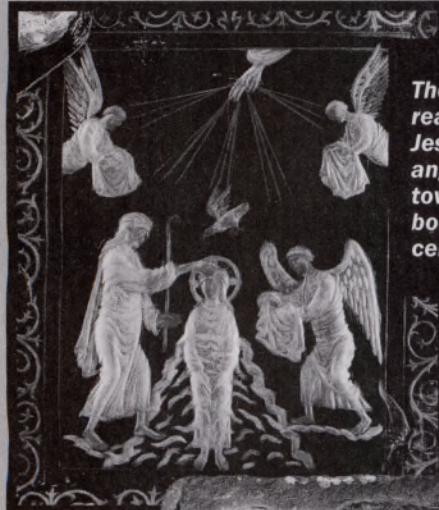
The St. John Baptistery of Poitiers, in western France, built about 350 C.E., is a good illustration of what a fourth-century “Christian” baptistery looked like. Inside a rectangular room, surrounded by several annexes, was a large octagonal pool with three steps. The pool is four and a half feet deep and seven feet wide at its broadest point. It was connected to an aqueduct bringing water to the city from a nearby spring.

Total or Partial Immersion?

Was baptism by total immersion practiced in such baptisteries? Some Catholic historians answer no, claiming that partial baptism by sprinkling (pouring water onto the head) was mentioned as a possible arrangement early in the history of the Catholic Church. They also observe that many pools were no more than three feet deep and were thus not deep enough for an adult to be submerged. A Catholic encyclopedia says that in Poitiers

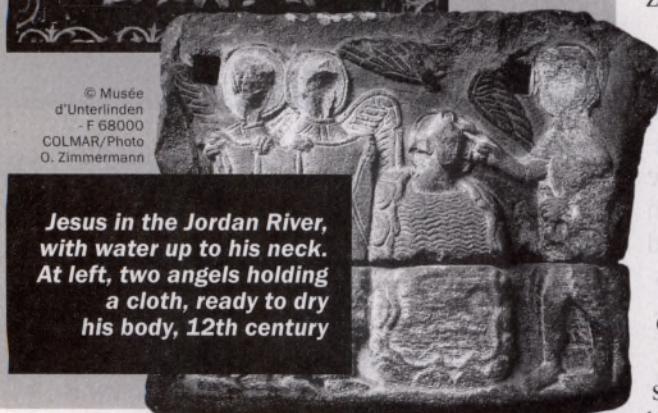
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DEPICTIONS OF CHRIST'S BAPTISM



The Jordan River reaches up to Jesus' torso, and angels bring towels to dry his body, ninth century

Cristal de roche carolingien - Le baptême du Christ
© Musée des Antiquités, Rouen, France/Yohann Deslandes



Jesus in the Jordan River, with water up to his neck. At left, two angels holding a cloth, ready to dry his body, 12th century

"the celebrant [priest] could put his feet on the third step without getting them wet."

However, even late artistic depictions of baptism present total immersion as the norm, the candidate being represented with water up to his chest or even up to his neck before baptism. (See pictures above.) Was total immersion possible even if the water level only reached the waist of a medium-size adult? A reference work suggests that the drainage system could have been temporarily stopped up until the kneeling or crouching baptism candidate could be immersed.* Pierre Jounel, a

* Many of Jehovah's Witnesses in modern times have been baptized by total immersion in small swimming pools or even bathtubs.

professor of Catholic liturgy in Paris, comments: The candidate "stood up to his waist in water. By putting a hand on his head, the priest or the deacon made him bow in the water so as to be entirely immersed."

Whittling Away

Eventually, the simple baptismal ceremony of apostolic times changed into a complicated ritual, with special garments and gestures, exorcism prayers, blessing of water, recitation of the creed, and anointing. Partial immersion continued to spread. Baptistry pools were reduced in size, some of them being modified to half or less of their original width and depth. For instance, in Cazères, southern France, the original 3.5-foot-

deep pool was only about 1.5 feet deep by the sixth century. Later, about the 12th century, partial immersion disappeared from Roman Catholicism and was replaced by sprinkling. According to the French academic Pierre Chaunu, this was due to "the generalization of child baptism in countries with an inclement climate, since it was not possible to plunge a newborn into cold water."

These developments led to building ever smaller baptism facilities. In his study on the history of baptism, historian Frédéric Buhler states: "Archaeology, written documents, and the visual arts show that, generally speaking, baptizing went from the total immersion of adults during the first centuries of the Christian era to the sprinkling of infants, with the intermediate stages of partial immersion of adults and total immersion of children."

Today the practice of partial immersion for adults seems to be gaining popularity, with modern baptisteries being larger than before. And in line with what Buhler has called the nostalgia of immersion, modern Catholic Church liturgy recommends, more than ever, baptism by total immersion. Interestingly, the Bible all along has pointed to total immersion as the proper method for Christian baptism.

ESCAPE TO Vanuatu

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN NEW CALEDONIA

Feeling stressed? Need to get away? Then imagine unwinding on a sun-drenched tropical island. Picture yourself swimming in turquoise-colored waters, meandering through lush rain forests, or mingling with exotic indigenous tribes. Does such a paradise still exist on earth? Why, yes! In the remote islands of Vanuatu.



LOCATED roughly halfway between Australia and Fiji, Vanuatu is a Y-shaped chain of about 80 small islands in the southwest Pacific. According to geologists, massive tectonic plates in the earth's crust collided at this point to form lofty mountains that are mainly underwater. The peaks of the tallest of these rose above the ocean surface, creating Vanuatu's rugged islands. Today, the geologic crunch and grind triggers numerous earth tremors and fuels nine active volcanoes. Daring sightseers can even view molten lava at close range.

Luxuriant rain forests abound in these islands. This is the realm of the mighty banyan tree, whose leafy crown can spread over vast areas. More than 150 species of orchids and 250 types of ferns adorn the thick undergrowth. Superb beaches and jagged cliffs frame pristine waters teeming with colorful fish and corals. Ecotourists travel from around the globe to swim alongside gentle but playful dugongs at Epi Island.*

Cannibals and Cargo Cults

European explorers first arrived in Vanu-

atu in 1606.* Fierce tribes inhabited the islands, and cannibalism was widely practiced. At the time, forests of sandalwood, an aromatic wood prized in Asia, carpeted the landscape. Smelling profit, European traders systematically plundered the trees. They then turned their hands to blackbirding.

Blackbirding involved recruiting indigenous islanders to work on sugar and cotton plantations in Samoa, Fiji, and Australia. In theory, workers signed on freely for a term of three years. In practice, though, most were kidnapped. At the height of the trade, in the late 1800's, more than half the adult male population of some islands of Vanuatu worked abroad. Most never returned. Nearly 10,000 Pacific Islanders died in Australia alone, mostly from disease.

European diseases also wreaked havoc on the islands of Vanuatu. The islanders had little or no resistance to measles, cholera, smallpox, and other illnesses. "The common cold proved capable of wiping out whole populations," says one source.

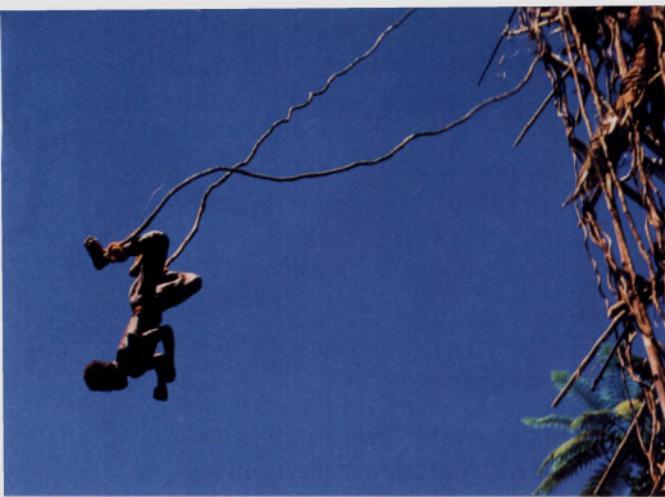
Christendom's missionaries arrived in Vanuatu in 1839 and were promptly invited to

* Dugongs are herbivorous marine mammals that can grow to 11 feet in length and weigh over 900 pounds.

* Vanuatu was called the New Hebrides prior to national independence in 1980.

▲ © Kirklandphotos.com

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Land divers engage in this extremely dangerous practice as part of a fertility rite

© Kirklandphotos.com

dinner—they were reportedly eaten as the main course! Many of their successors suffered the same grim fate. In time, however, Protestant and Catholic churches gained a firm foothold throughout the islands. Today over 80 percent of Vanuatu's residents claim church membership. Even so, notes author Paul Raffaele, "many inhabitants still revere village sorcerers, who use spirit-possessed stones in magic rituals that can lure a new lover, fatten a pig or kill an enemy."

Vanuatu is also home to one of the world's most resilient cargo cults. During World War II, half a million U.S. soldiers passed through Vanuatu en route to Pacific battlefields. Islanders marveled at the vast wealth, or "cargo," the soldiers brought with them. When the war ended, the Americans simply packed up and left. Millions of dollars of surplus equipment and supplies were dumped at sea. Religious groups, called cargo cults, built piers and landing strips and carried out drills with mock military equipment to entice the visitors back. Even today, hundreds of villagers on Tanna Island still pray to John Frum—"a ghostly American messiah" who, they claim, will one day return, bringing them an abundance of rich cargo.

Cultural Diversity

The languages and customs of this island

nation are amazingly diverse. Says one guidebook: "Vanuatu claims the highest concentration of different languages per head of population of any country in the world." At least 105 languages and numerous dialects are spoken throughout the archipelago. Bislama—the national lingua franca—English, and French are all official languages.

Throughout the islands, though, one thing remains the same: Rituals govern every aspect of life. An ancient fertility rite on Pentecost Island even inspired the global craze of bungee jumping. Every year at the annual yam harvest, men and boys dive from wooden towers that are 60 to 100 feet high. Only long vines tied to their ankles save them from certain death. By brushing the ground with their heads, the land divers hope to "fertilize" the earth for the next year's crop.

On Malekula Island it is only in recent years that some villages have opened up to outsiders. The tribes known as the Big Nambas and Small Nambas live here. Once fierce cannibals, they reportedly ate their last victim in 1974. Similarly, their custom of tightly wrapping the heads of male babies to form "attractive" elongated skulls also ended years ago. Today the Nambas are exceptionally friendly and enjoy sharing their cultural heritage with visitors.

People in Paradise

Most visitors escape to Vanuatu for a brief vacation. But Jehovah's Witnesses arrived there some 70 years ago to help people spiritually. The efforts of the Witnesses in this "distant part of the earth" have borne fine fruit. (Acts 1:8) (See the box "From Kava Addict to Christian.") In 2006 the five congregations of Witnesses in the country spent over 80,000 hours sharing the Bible's message of a coming earthly paradise. (Isaiah 65:17-25) Happily, that future Paradise will bring permanent relief from the pressures and worries of modern life!—Revelation 21:4.

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THE HAPPY ISLES

In 2006, Vanuatu topped the global Happy Planet Index. This index, produced by the New Economics Foundation, a British think tank, rated 178 countries for national happiness, longevity, and environmental impact. "[Vanuatu] came out [on] top because its people are happy, live to nearly 70 and do little to damage the planet," said the *Vanuatu Daily Post* newspaper.

Traditional dress ▶



FROM KAVA ADDICT TO CHRISTIAN

Willie, a native of Pentecost Island, drank kava heavily from his youth onward. That potent sedative drink is brewed from the crushed roots of the pepper plant shrub. Every night he staggered home from the kava bar drunk. His debts accumulated. Often he became violent and beat his wife, Ida. Then a workmate, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, encouraged Willie to study the Bible. Willie agreed. Ida objected to the study at first. But as her husband's conduct improved, she changed her mind and began to study too. Together they made good spiritual progress. In time, Willie conquered his vices. He and Ida were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in 1999.



Caught between cultures What can I do?

"My family is Italian, and they openly express affection and warmth. We now live in Britain. Here people seem very orderly and polite. I feel out of place in both cultures—too Italian to be British and too British to be Italian."—Giosuè, England.

"At school my teacher told me to look at him when he spoke. But when I looked my Dad in the eye when he spoke, he said that I was being rude. I felt caught between two cultures."—Patrick, an Algerian immigrant living in France.

Is either your father or mother an immigrant?
 Yes No

Is the language or culture that surrounds you at school different from that in your home?
 Yes No

MILLIONS migrate each year, and many of them face major challenges. Suddenly they are surrounded by people whose language, culture, and clothing are different from theirs. As a result, immigrants often become the target of ridicule—a fact that a girl named Noor discovered. Along with her family, she emigrated from Jordan to North America. "Our clothes were different, so people made fun of us," she says. "And we certainly didn't understand American humor."

A youth named Nadia faced a different challenge. "I was born in Germany," she explains. "Since my parents are Italian, I spoke German with an accent, and the kids at school called me a 'stupid foreigner.' But when I visit Italy, I find that I speak Italian with a German accent. So I feel that I have no true identity. Wherever I go, I'm a foreigner."

What other challenges do the children of immigrant parents face? And how can they make the most of their circumstances?

Culture Gaps and Language Barriers

Even at home, youths with immigrant parents may see a culture gap develop. How? Children often adapt to a new culture more quickly than their parents. For example, Ana was eight when she immigrated to England with her family. "For my brother and me, adapting to London was almost automatic," she says. "But it was challenging for my parents, who had lived for so long on the small Portuguese island of Madeira." Voeun, who was three when her Cambodian parents arrived in Australia, says: "My parents have not adapted very well. In fact, Dad would often get upset and angry because I didn't understand his attitude and way of thinking."

This culture gap can be like a moat that separates youths from their parents. Then, like a castle wall built along a moat, a language barrier may further divide families. The foundation of the barrier is laid when children learn the new language more quickly than their parents. The barrier rises as the children begin to forget their mother tongue and meaningful communication becomes more and more difficult.

Ian, now 14, saw such a barrier develop between himself and his parents after his family immigrated to New York from Ecuador. "Now I speak more English than Spanish," he says. "My teachers at school speak English, my friends speak English, and I speak English with my brother. English is filling my head and pushing the Spanish out."

Can you relate to Ian? If your family migrated while you were very young, you may not have realized that your mother tongue could benefit you later in life. So you may have let it slip from your memory. Noor, quoted earlier, says: "My father tried hard to insist that we speak his language at home, but we didn't want to speak Arabic. To us, learning Arabic seemed like extra baggage to carry. Our friends spoke English. The TV pro-

grams we watched were all in English. Why did we need Arabic?"

As you grow a little older, though, you might start to appreciate the benefits of speaking your mother tongue well. However, you may find it difficult to remember the words that used to come so easily. "I get the two languages confused," says Michael, 13, whose parents immigrated to England from China. Ornelle, 15, who moved from Congo (Kinshasa) to London, says: "I try to tell my mother something in Lingala, but I can't because I'm more used to speaking English." Lee, who was born in Australia to Cambodian parents, regrets not being fluent in her parents' tongue. She explains: "When I talk to my parents and want to elaborate on how I feel about certain matters, I find that I just can't speak their language well enough."

Reasons to Bridge the Gap

If you've partly lost your first language, don't despair. You can rebuild your language skills. But first you must clearly see the benefits of doing so. What are some of the benefits? "I learned my parents' language because I wanted to be close to them emotionally and, above all, spiritually," says Giòsuè, quoted earlier. "Learning their language has allowed me to understand how they feel. And it has helped them to understand me."

Many young Christians are mastering their parents' language because they want to tell other immigrants the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) "Being able to explain the Scriptures in two languages is great!" says Salomão, who immigrated to London when he was five. "I had almost forgotten my first language, but now that I am in a Portuguese congregation, I can speak both English and Portuguese fluently." Oleg, 15, who now lives in France, says: "It makes me happy to be able to help others. I can explain the Bible to people who speak Russian, French, or Moldovan." Noor saw the need for evangelizers in the Arabic



Speaking your parents' language can strengthen family bonds

erbs 15:23) Preeti, who was born in England of Indian parents, explains: "Because I understand two cultures, I feel more comfortable in the ministry. I understand people from both ways of life—what they believe and what their attitudes are."

"God Is Not Partial!"

If you feel that you are caught between cultures, don't be discouraged.

Your situation is similar to that of several Bible characters. Joseph, for instance, was taken from his native Hebrew culture when he was a boy and spent the rest of his life in Egypt. Still, he evidently never forgot his native language. (Genesis 45:1-4) As a result, he was able to come to the aid of his family.—Genesis 39:1; 45:5.

Timothy, who traveled extensively with the apostle Paul, had a Greek father and a Jewish mother. (Acts 16:1-3) Rather than let his mixed background become a hindrance to him, he was no doubt able to use his understanding of cultural differences to help others as he engaged in his missionary work.—Philippians 2:19-22.

Can you also view your circumstances as an advantage rather than a liability? Remember, "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Jehovah loves you for who you are, not for where you come from. Can you, like the youths quoted here, use your knowledge and experience to help others of your ethnic background to learn about our impartial, loving God, Jehovah? Doing so can make you genuinely happy!—Acts 20:35.

field. She says: "Now I am taking classes and trying to pick up what I lost. My attitude has changed. Now I want to be corrected. I want to learn."

What can you do to regain fluency in your parents' language? Some families have found that if they insist on speaking *only* their mother tongue while at home, then the children will learn both languages well.* You may also want to ask your parents to help you learn to write the language. Stelios, who grew up in Germany but whose first language is Greek, says: "My parents used to discuss a Bible text with me each day. They would read it out loud, and then I would write it down. Now I can read and write both Greek and German."

Certainly, if you are familiar with two cultures and can speak two or more languages, you have a real advantage. Your knowledge of two cultures increases your ability to understand people's feelings and to answer their questions about God. The Bible says: "A man has rejoicing in the answer of his mouth, and a word at its right time is O how good!" (Prov-

* For additional practical suggestions, see the article "Raising Children in a Foreign Land—The Challenges and the Rewards," published in the October 15, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*.

TO THINK ABOUT

- What cultural gaps or language barriers do you face?
- How can you overcome some of these challenges?

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

Counting Insects in the Amazon

Entomologists—zoologists who specialize in insects—have so far identified some 60,000 species of insects in the Amazon rain forest. According to *Folha Online*, the number of species that are yet to be identified is estimated at 180,000. Presently, there are 20 entomologists working in the area. Recent statistics reveal that these specialists identify and describe an average of 2.7 species per year. At this rate it would take some 90 generations of entomologists working 35 years each, or a total of about 3,300 years, to complete the identification process!

Energy Poverty

“An estimated 1.6 billion people—about a quarter of humanity—have no access to electricity, and 2.4 billion rely on charcoal, dung or wood as the principal sources of energy for cooking and heating,” states *Our Planet*, a magazine published by the United Nations Environment Programme. “The smoke from these traditional fuels kills about two and [a] half million women and children a year.”

Suffering Online

Online community Web sites allow people to establish relationships with a number of strangers via the Internet and reportedly to feel more popular. Such sites are also “a paradise for liars,” racists, busybodies, and the prejudiced, says *Folha Online*. Some site users fake their own profiles. Others bully those

▲ AP Photo/Thanassis Stavrakis



Ancient Astronomical Calculator

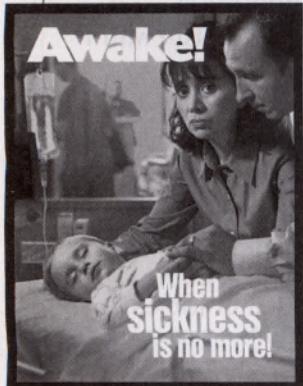
In 1901, sponge divers salvaged a corroded artifact from an ancient Roman shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera. The item has now been identified as an amazingly sophisticated, second-century-B.C.E. astronomical calculator. Scientists who recently studied the “Antikythera Mechanism” using high-resolution X-ray tomography found that it was composed of at least 30 bronze gear wheels, originally housed in a wooden case. The device could accurately track the positions of the sun and the moon and predict lunar and solar eclipses. According to *Nature* magazine, the mechanism is “technically more complex than any known device for at least a millennium afterwards.”

■ The year 2006 “will most likely go down as the sixth warmest year on record.” The ten warmest have all occurred within the past 12 years.—WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION.

■ Beijing’s Public Security Bureau has announced a “one dog” per household policy in an effort to curb rabies. Some 2,660 people died of rabies in China during 2004.—XINHUA ONLINE, CHINA.

■ Hotel guests who touch doorknobs, lamps, telephones, and TV remote controls in hotel rooms expose themselves to a “one-in-two chance of contracting a cold virus.”—MACLEAN’S, CANADA.

who are overweight, are short, have frizzy hair, and so on, causing them great emotional pain. According to Brazilian psychologist Ivelise Fortim, this occurs because “what happens on [Web sites] is more important to the victims than what happens in daily life.”



When Sickness Is No More! (January 2007) When you state that some people "waste money and time on treatments and remedies that are ineffective or even harmful," it seems the inference is to alternative forms of medicine, since the article raised questions as to effectiveness and safety issues of some alternative treatments. Is this meant to say that *Awake!* is endorsing conventional medicine as safer and more effective? According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, there is much evidence to believe otherwise.

G. C., United States

"Awake!" responds: *A number of widely accepted treatments that were at some point considered to be safe and effective have later been shown to be unsafe. This has happened both in the conventional field*

of medicine and in alternative health care. The wise course is to be reasonably informed as to the potential benefits and risks of the treatment you are considering, whether this be conventional or alternative, and to make sure that it does not conflict with Bible principles. This involves personal decisions. As we have stated many times before, "Awake!" does not endorse any particular treatment. And Christians avoid judging or criticizing the health-care choices others make. As the articles pointed out, in the final analysis, neither alternative nor modern medicine has the answer to all of mankind's ills. Only God's Kingdom will bring about a time when sickness will be no more.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

I Will 'Climb Up Just as a Stag Does'

(August 2006) Francesco Abbatemarco's patience and humility really made me think. Not only did he try to overcome his physical disability in order to serve Jehovah but he also worked hard to overcome his negative feelings as well. His experience has helped me to keep in mind that no matter what situations we face, we can serve Jehovah to the best of our ability. I was also encouraged to see how applying God's Word helped him to make dramatic changes in his life.

N. G., Cambodia

Francesco had so many obstacles to overcome. Yet, once he found the truth, he faced them eagerly and willingly. He is such a wonderful example of determination! I hope his story will motivate others the way it has me.

M. D., South Africa

I loved this article so much! I wish I could tell Francesco Abbatemarco in person how much it encouraged me to make a greater effort to do more in my service to Jehovah.

J. B., United States

Thank you, Francesco, for your wonderful example of zeal and endurance. I am sure that in the new system, you will leap up like a stag. Please know that you have brothers and sisters who really love you and who pray for you.

S. G., Russia

- 4, 5.
- 61-64 C.E. **8.** Lois.—**2 Timothy 1:5.** **9.** Titus.—Titus 1:6-16, 18, 20. **4.** Benjamin.—**1 Samuel 9:1, 2, 15, 16.** **5.** Jeremiah, 607 B.C.E. **6.** Paul, 65 C.E. **7.** Paul,
- 2.** Judah.—Luke 3:33, 34. **3.** Levi.—Exodus 49:2-28. **1.** Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, Benjamin,—Genesies 46:16-28. **2.** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar,

Free Delicacies From the Forest

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN FINLAND

IN THE Nordic countries of Europe, many families enjoy venturing into forests to pick wild berries. In Finland, for example, forest lovers are favored with the right of public access, which allows everyone to walk freely in nature—even when the land is privately owned—as long as they do not cause any damage or get too close to a home. The right of public access is not written in the law but is an old Scandinavian tradition. It permits one to pick wildflowers, mushrooms, and berries virtually everywhere they grow.

Finland is host to some 50 different species of forest berries, most of which are edible. The three most common are bilberries, cloudberry, and lingonberries.*—See the accompanying boxes.

Berries of various colors and flavors add variety to food and are very healthful. “Nordic berries that grow in the long daylight hours [of summer] are rich in color, aroma, minerals, and vitamins,” says the book *Luonnonmarjaopas* (A Guide to Wild Berries). In addition, the berries contain fiber, which can help to stabilize blood sugar levels and to lower cholesterol levels. Berries also contain flavonoids, phenolic compounds that are believed to promote good health.

Is picking berries in the woods worth the effort? “It really helps to save on expenses, as berries cost quite a bit in the store. And when you pick the berries yourself, you know that they are fresh,” says Jukka, an enthusiastic picker. His wife, Niina, points out a further advantage, “When we go berry picking, it gives us the opportunity to enjoy a nice family picnic in the woods.”

“But if you have children with you, it’s important that you keep close watch on them so that they don’t eat unfamiliar berries or wander away,” Niina adds. Caution is needed, as some berries are poisonous.

Like most Nordic people, Jukka and Niina especially enjoy the forest environment. “I love the forest,” says

* In this article, we use the term “berry” as it is commonly understood, meaning any small, fleshy fruit. Botanically the term “berry” designates simple, fleshy fruits that usually have many seeds. According to that definition, bananas and tomatoes are berries.



Niina. "It is a place of pleasant stillness and clean, fresh air. It refreshes my mind. Also, the children feel happy there." Jukka and Niina have found that the quietness of the forest is a pleasant setting for meditation and family discussions.

Berries taste best and have the highest nutritional value when they are fresh and newly picked. But fresh berries do not stay fresh long. For berries to be enjoyed during the winter, they must be preserved. In times past, people used to store berries in the cellar, but now they are generally kept in the freezer. Many berries are turned into jams and juices.

"What a delight it is, during the coldest spell of winter, to take out those jars of preserved summer, bringing the past summer back, evoking a longing for the one to come," aptly says a Swedish writer in the book *Svenska Bärboken* (The Swedish Berry Book). Berries are used in a variety of ways. At breakfast they go well with yogurt, granola, or porridge. Refreshing forest berries are used to make delicious desserts and pastries. And a puree or jelly made of berries is a colorful accompaniment to a variety of dishes.

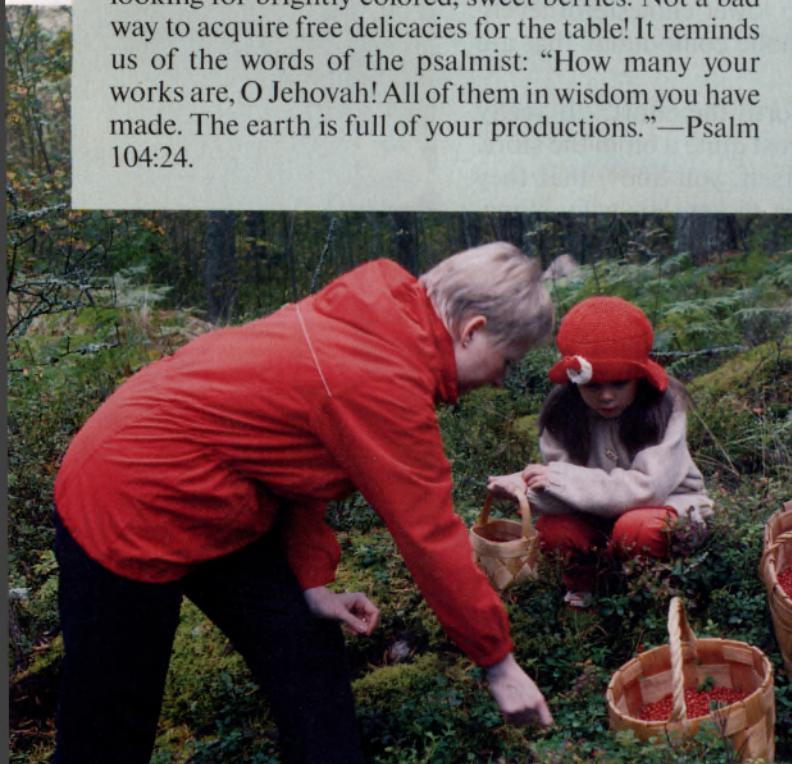
Many people buy berries from the local store. But imagine yourself in the forest on a clear day, breathing fresh air and enjoying peace and serenity while looking for brightly colored, sweet berries. Not a bad way to acquire free delicacies for the table! It reminds us of the words of the psalmist: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions."—Psalm 104:24.



BILBERRY

(*Vaccinium myrtillus*)

This popular sweet berry is also called whortleberry. Bilberries are often turned into sauce, pudding, jam, or juice. They are also used in various pastries, such as bilberry pie. Fresh bilberries are especially delicious with milk. But do not try to eat bilberry delicacies in secret, as the bilberry tends to dye one's mouth and lips blue. It is also called the gossip berry.





CLOUDBERRY

(*Rubus chamaemorus*)

▲ This berry thrives in remote places such as swamps. In Finland it is more common in the north. The cloudberry, brimming with vitamins A and C, is juicy and nutritious. It has between three and four times more vitamin C than an orange. Cloudberies are highly esteemed—sometimes called the gold of the swamps. These sweet berries add subtlety to various desserts, and they also yield a fine liqueur.



LINGONBERRY

(*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)

This berry, a close relative of the cranberry, is extremely popular in Finland and Sweden. Lingonberry puree or jelly makes a refreshing accompaniment on the dinner table. The bright-red berry is also used to make sauce, pudding, juice, and pastries.

Lingonberries keep well, as they contain natural acids that act as preservatives. The high acidity gives the berry a tangy flavor, which may take a little getting used to.



It's Not All Fun!

Picking wild berries can be a pleasant and rewarding experience.* But it is not always free of difficulties. Pasi and Tuire are a married couple from Lapland who pick berries both for use at home and for sale. When picking berries, they are sometimes surrounded by swarms of pesky insects, such as mosquitoes and gadflies. "It is really annoying. They even get into your mouth and eyes," shudders Tuire. Happily, though, you can protect yourself to some extent by wearing proper clothing and using insect repellents.

The trek into the wilderness can also prove difficult—especially when you are walking in a swampy area. What appears to be solid

ground can turn out to be a mudhole. Also, according to Pasi and Tuire, the actual picking of berries can be quite laborious. Bending and crouching for many hours may take a toll on your back and legs.

Finding the berries is not always easy either. "It takes a lot of persistent searching to find a good spot," says Pasi. "Many times the searching is more wearing on us than the actual picking," adds Tuire. Cleaning the berries after they are picked also calls for extra work.

Because of such challenges, some are inclined to leave the berries for the furry inhabitants of the forest. Still, many enthusiastic berry pickers, like Pasi and Tuire, continue to make their yearly trek into the forests and swamps. To them the joys of picking wild berries far outweigh the sacrifices.

* Not all berries are meant for human consumption. Some species are poisonous. Before picking wild berries, learn to identify the edible ones.

Can optimism improve your health?

"A cheerful heart is good medicine," a wise Israelite king wrote some 3,000 years ago. (*Proverbs 17:22, American Standard Version*) Today doctors are recognizing the wisdom of those inspired words. But a "cheerful heart" may not come naturally to many of us.

Few of us are able to escape the pressures of everyday life, which can lead to frustration and a pessimistic outlook. Nevertheless, recent studies indicate that despite the difficulties, optimism is worth cultivating.

Optimism is described as "a hopeful view or disposition; a tendency to expect a favourable outcome." When an optimist has a setback, how does he feel? He does not see the defeat as a permanent one. This does not

mean that he denies reality. Rather, he accepts and examines the matter. Then, as circumstances allow, he takes action to change or improve the situation.

A pessimistic person, on the other hand, often blames himself for adversity. He assumes that misfortune is permanent and that it comes from his own stupidity, incompetence, or poor image. As a result, he resigns himself to failure.

Does optimism affect our health and well-being? Yes. In a 30-year study of over 800 patients by the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, U.S.A., scientists found that optimists had better health and lived significantly longer than others. The researchers also noted that optimists coped better with stress and were less likely to develop depression.

Being optimistic, however, is far from easy in a world where problems seem to multiply. Not surprisingly, many find it hard to think positively. What can be done to tackle this problem? In the accompanying box, you will find some ideas that may help you.

- When you find yourself thinking that you won't enjoy something or you won't succeed in some project, reject the thought. Focus on the positive.
- Try to enjoy your work. Regardless of your job, look for aspects that you find satisfying.
- Look for friends who view life positively.
- Deal with the situations that you can control; try to accept those you cannot.
- Every day, write down three good things that happened to you.



* The above list is partly based on a publication prepared by the Mayo Clinic.

While a cheerful disposition will not cure everything, it can contribute toward a healthier and more satisfying life. The Bible says: "For the sorrowing every day is evil, for the joyous heart it is festival always." —*Proverbs 15:15, The Jerusalem Bible*.

Toothache

A HISTORY OF AGONY

In the marketplace of a medieval town square, a magnificently dressed charlatan boasts that he can extract teeth painlessly. His accomplice, pretending reluctance, steps forward, and the tooth puller fakes an extraction, holding up a bloodstained molar for all to see. Toothache sufferers are soon encouraged to part with their money and their teeth. Drums and trumpets drown out their screams so as not to dissuade others. Within days, dangerous cases of sepsis sometimes appear, but by then the charlatan is long gone.



FEW victims of toothache have to resort to the services of such rogues today. Modern dentists can cure toothache, and they can often prevent tooth loss. Even so, many people feel anxious about visiting a dentist. A look at how dentists first learned to relieve their patients of pain may help us to appreciate modern dentistry.

Tooth decay is said to be mankind's second most common disease, after the common cold. It is not merely a modern disease. The poetry of King Solomon reveals that in ancient Israel the discomfort of having few teeth was the expected lot of older people.—Ecclesiastes 12:3.

Even Royalty Suffered

Although Elizabeth I was queen of England, she could not escape toothache. A German visitor who observed her black teeth reported that it was "a defect that the English seem subject to, from their great use of sugar." In December 1578, a toothache tormented the queen day and night. Her physicians recommended that the diseased tooth be

pulled out, but she refused, possibly in fear of the pain it would cause. To encourage her, John Aylmer, bishop of London, had one of his own teeth, perhaps one that had decayed, extracted before her—a gallant act, since the old man had few teeth to spare!

At that time, commoners who needed a tooth pulled went to a barber or even a blacksmith. But when more people became able to afford sugar, toothache increased—as did the demand for skilled pullers. Thus, some physicians and surgeons began taking an interest in the treatment of diseased teeth. They had to teach themselves, however, since experts jealously guarded their trade secrets. There were also few books on the subject.

A century after the time of Elizabeth I, Louis XIV ruled as king of France. He was tormented by toothache for much of his life, and in 1685 he had all his upper left teeth extracted. Some claim that the king's dental infections explain his disastrous decision that year to sign away freedom of worship in France, an act that unleashed a wave of brutal

▲ Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine

An ivory denture belonging to George Washington, the first U.S. president



persecution against religious minorities.

The Birth of Modern Dentistry

The influence of Louis XIV's lavish lifestyle on Parisian society led to the birth of the dental profession. Success in court and society depended on a fashionable appearance. The demand for false teeth, worn more for appearance than for eating, produced a new group of surgeons—dentists working for an elite clientele. The leading dentist in Paris was Pierre Fauchard, who learned to practice surgery in the French navy. He criticized surgeons who left tooth-pulling to incompetent barbers and charlatans and was the first to call himself a dental surgeon.

Breaking the custom of guarding trade secrets, in 1728, Fauchard wrote a book in which he passed on all the procedures he knew. As a result, he came to be called "the Father of Dentistry." He was the first to seat patients in a dentist's chair rather than on the floor. Fauchard also developed five tools for extracting teeth, but he was much more than a tooth puller. He developed a dentist's drill and methods of filling cavities. He learned to fill a root canal and to attach an artificial tooth to the root. His dentures, carved from ivory, had a spring to keep the upper set in position. Fauchard established dentistry as a profession. His influence even extended across the Atlantic.

The First U.S. President's Torment

A century after Louis XIV, George Washington suffered toothache in America. He had a tooth pulled almost yearly starting when he was 22 years of age. Imagine the misery he must have endured while leading his Continental Army! By the time he became the first

president of the United States, in 1789, he was practically toothless.

Washington also suffered mental anguish because of the disfiguring effect of his tooth loss and his ill-fitting dentures. He was acutely conscious of his appearance as he struggled to establish a public image for the presidency of a new nation. In those days, dentures were not cast from impressions but were crafted from ivory, so they were difficult to keep in place. English gentlemen experienced the same difficulties as Washington. It has been said that their dry form of wit originated from the need to avoid laughing out loud and revealing their false teeth.

A legend that Washington wore wooden dentures is apparently untrue. He had dentures made of human teeth, ivory, and lead, but not wood. His dentists probably obtained teeth from grave robbers. Traders in teeth would also follow armies and pull the teeth from the dead and dying after a battle. Dentures were thus a rich man's luxury. Not until the 1850's, with the discovery of vulcanized rubber, which came to be used in making denture bases, did dentures become available to the common people. Although Washington's dentists were at the cutting edge of the profession, they still did not fully understand the cause of toothache.

The Truth About Toothache

Since ancient times, people had thought that worms caused toothache—a theory that persisted until the 1700's. In 1890, Willoughby Miller, an American dentist working in

Courtesy of The National Museum of Dentistry, Baltimore, MD



An artist's depiction of the first dental operation using nitrous oxide as an anesthetic, 1844

Germany at the University of Berlin, identified the cause of tooth decay, which is a major cause of toothache. A certain type of bacteria that thrive especially on sugar produce acid that attacks the teeth. But how can tooth decay be prevented? An answer came to light quite by accident.

For decades dentists in Colorado, U.S.A., had wondered why so many people there had mottled teeth. Finally, an excess of fluoride in the water supply was found to be the cause. But while studying that local problem, researchers stumbled across a fact of worldwide importance for the prevention of toothache: People raised where drinking water contains inadequate fluoride have more tooth decay. Fluoride, which many water supplies contain naturally, is an ingredient of tooth enamel. When people who lack fluoride in their water supply are provided with the ideal amount, the incidence of tooth decay drops by as much as 65 percent.

Thus the mystery was solved. Most toothache is produced by tooth decay. Sugar helps cause it. Fluoride helps prevent it. Of course, it has been well established that fluoride is no substitute for adequate brushing and flossing.

Searching for Painless Dentistry

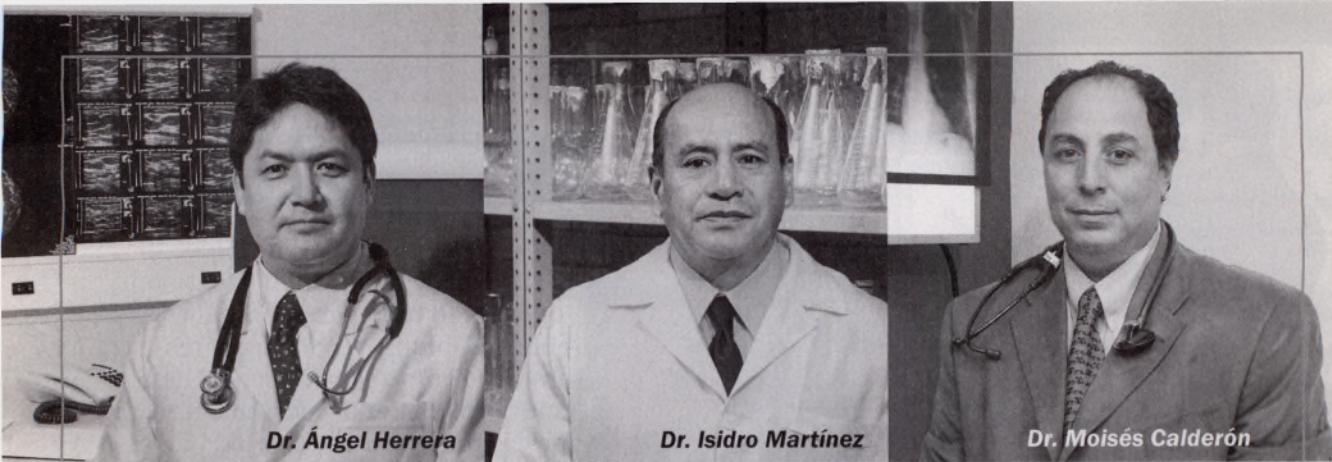
Before anesthetics were discovered, dental procedures caused agony to patients. Dentists gouged out sensitive, decayed teeth with sharp instruments and then pounded hot metal

into the cavity as a filling. Since they did not have any other treatment, they would cauterize a tooth that had infected pulp by pushing a red-hot iron rod into the root canal. Before special tools and anesthetics were developed, an extraction was also a grim experience. People submitted to such torture only because living with toothache was even worse. Although herbal preparations such as opium, Indian hemp, and mandrakes had been used for centuries, these merely dulled pain. Would dentists ever be able to perform painless surgery?

The anesthetic properties of nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, were observed soon after the English chemist Joseph Priestley first prepared it in 1772. But no one used it as an anesthetic until 1844. On December 10 of that year, Horace Wells, a dentist in Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A., attended a lecture at which people were entertained with laughing gas. Wells noticed that a person under its influence scraped his shin on a heavy bench and yet showed no signs of pain. Wells was a sympathetic man and felt deeply disturbed by the pain he inflicted on his patients. He immediately thought of using the gas as an anesthetic. But before giving it to others, he decided to try it on himself. The very next day, he sat down in his own operating chair and inhaled the gas until he lost consciousness. Then a colleague extracted his aching wisdom tooth. This was a historic event. At last, painless dentistry had arrived!*

Since then, the practice of dentistry has undergone many technological improvements. Hence, you will find that a visit to the dentist today will prove to be a much more pleasant experience.

* Today local anesthetics are used more extensively than nitrous oxide.



Dr. Ángel Herrera

Dr. Isidro Martínez

Dr. Moisés Calderón

"An Important Contribution to Medical Science"

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

Jehovah's Witnesses are known worldwide for choosing nonblood management of their medical conditions. Some people criticize this Bible-based stand. Yet, as recorded in the widely circulated newspaper *Reforma*, of Mexico City, Dr. Ángel Herrera, surgeon in chief at the National Institute of Oncology, said: "The Witnesses are not fools. Neither are they fanatics. . . . [They] have made an important contribution to medical science by making the medical profession consider the need to save blood."

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Herrera organized a team of anesthesiologists and surgeons to perform operations without using blood. Dr. Isidro Martínez, an anesthesiologist on that team, commented: "A correct anesthetic procedure allows for applying all the procedures for saving blood. So we can indeed help Jehovah's Witnesses, respecting their religious stand."

There are more than 30 alternatives to blood transfusion, reported *Reforma* in October 2006. They include cauterizing blood vessels, covering organs with a special gauze that releases chemicals that inhibit bleeding, and using blood-volume expanders.*

Dr. Moisés Calderón, chief heart surgeon at La Raza General Hospital in Mexico City, routinely performs surgery without administering blood. He stated in *Reforma*: "A transfusion is not a harmless procedure. There is the risk of transmitting viruses, bacteria, or parasites. Also, allergic reactions can develop that alter renal and pulmonary function." In view of those risks, Dr. Calderón said: "We operate on all patients as if they were Jehovah's Witnesses. We try to have as little bleeding as possible, recover the blood that is lost, and use medicines that help the patient to bleed less."

The newspaper quoted Acts 15:28, 29, a key scripture on which Jehovah's Witnesses base their stand. In this scripture the apostles issued the following edict: "The holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you, except these necessary things, to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication."

The Hospital Information Desk at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico reports that there are 75 Hospital Liaison Committees in that country with 950 volunteers who visit doctors to provide information on alternatives to blood. Some 2,000 doctors in Mexico are willing to treat Jehovah's Witnesses without using blood. The Witnesses greatly appreciate the cooperation of these doctors, who have also thus become better equipped to help non-Witness patients.

* Awake! does not endorse any particular form of nonblood management, recognizing that this is a matter for personal decision.



WHEN IN HISTORY?

Name the writer(s) of the Bible books below, and draw a line connecting the book to the approximate date it was completed.



5

Lamentations



6

2 Timothy



7

Titus

539 B.C.E.

607 B.C.E.

40 C.E.

61-64 C.E.

65 C.E.

FROM THIS ISSUE

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

Page 6 What is one reason why people die in natural disasters? (Ecclesiastes 9:____)

Page 10 How do we know that Jehovah views the life of a child as precious? (Psalm 139:____)

Page 20 Why does your background not matter to Jehovah? (Acts 10:____)

Page 26 Why is optimism worth cultivating? (Proverbs 17:____)

NAME THE 12 SONS OF JACOB

1. _____

.....

Draw a line connecting the son's name to that of his well-known offspring.

2. Jesus

.....

3. Moses

.....

4. King Saul

.....

■ For Discussion:

Why was Joseph mistreated by his brothers? How can you imitate Joseph if your brothers or sisters sometimes treat you badly?

(Answers on page 22)

WHO AM I?

8. Paul spoke well of my daughter and me for having faith without hypocrisy.

WHO AM I?

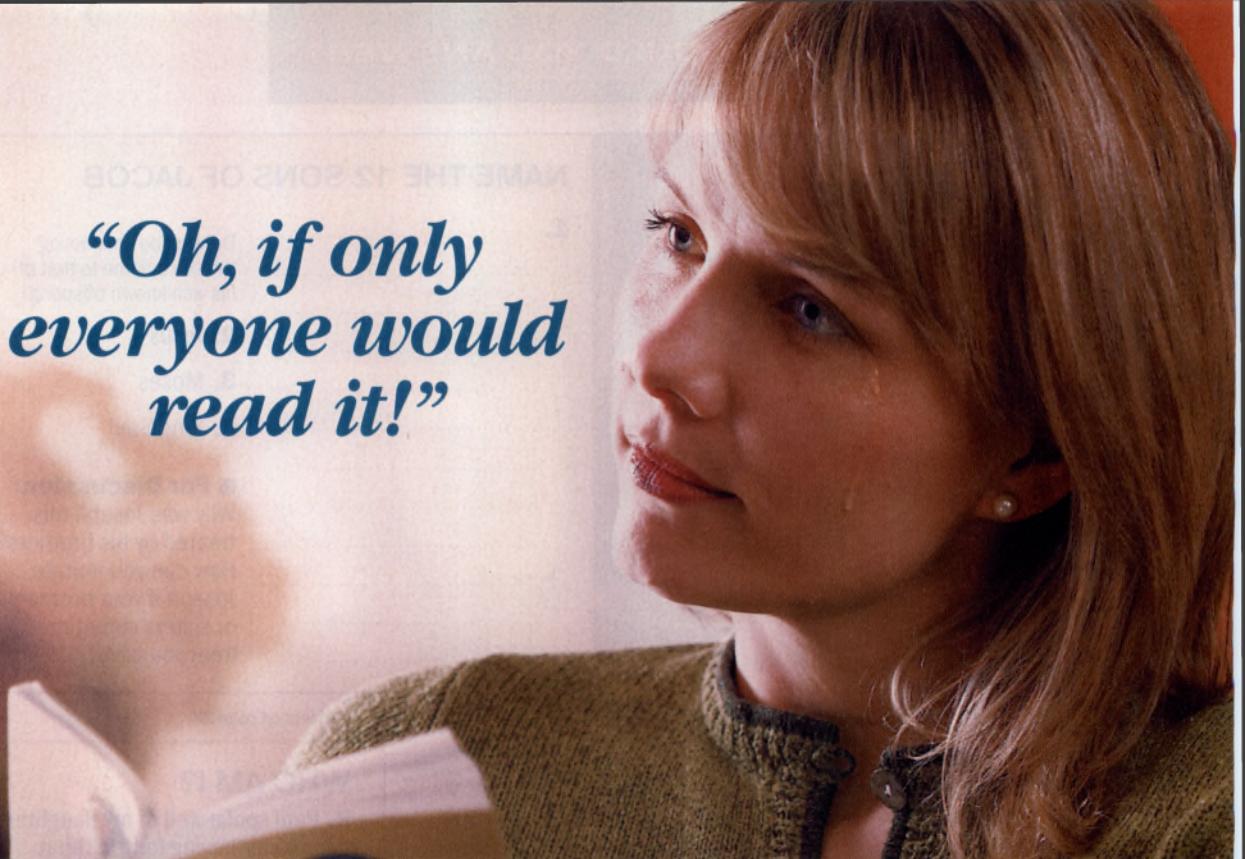
9. I was authorized to appoint older men in Crete.



Children's Picture Search

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

"Oh, if only everyone would read it!"



The writer was referring to the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*. She added, "Now that I see Jehovah's love in an even clearer way, I am going to demonstrate my love for others more." Another appreciative reader explained: "Words cannot adequately express how much I have enjoyed this publication and how beneficial it has been. . . . The more I read, the more encouraged I became."

Under its four major sections, *Draw Close to Jehovah* discusses God's primary attributes of power, justice, wisdom, and love. "This book has helped me see my heavenly Father's excellent qualities," explained a reader.

"It has helped me see that I have the potential to put into practice his qualities if I allow his holy spirit to operate in my life."

After studying chapter 26, "A God Who Is 'Ready to Forgive,'" Joanna, a young woman in Poland, said, "I treat the thoughts from the publication as a precious treasure the discovery of which has proved essential for my life."

