

Awake!

DECEMBER 2008



Why are
we here?

ALSO: WHEN WAS JESUS
BORN? PAGE 10

Awake!

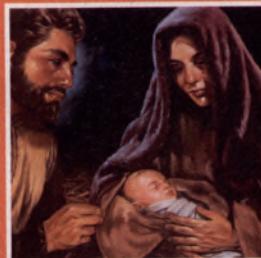
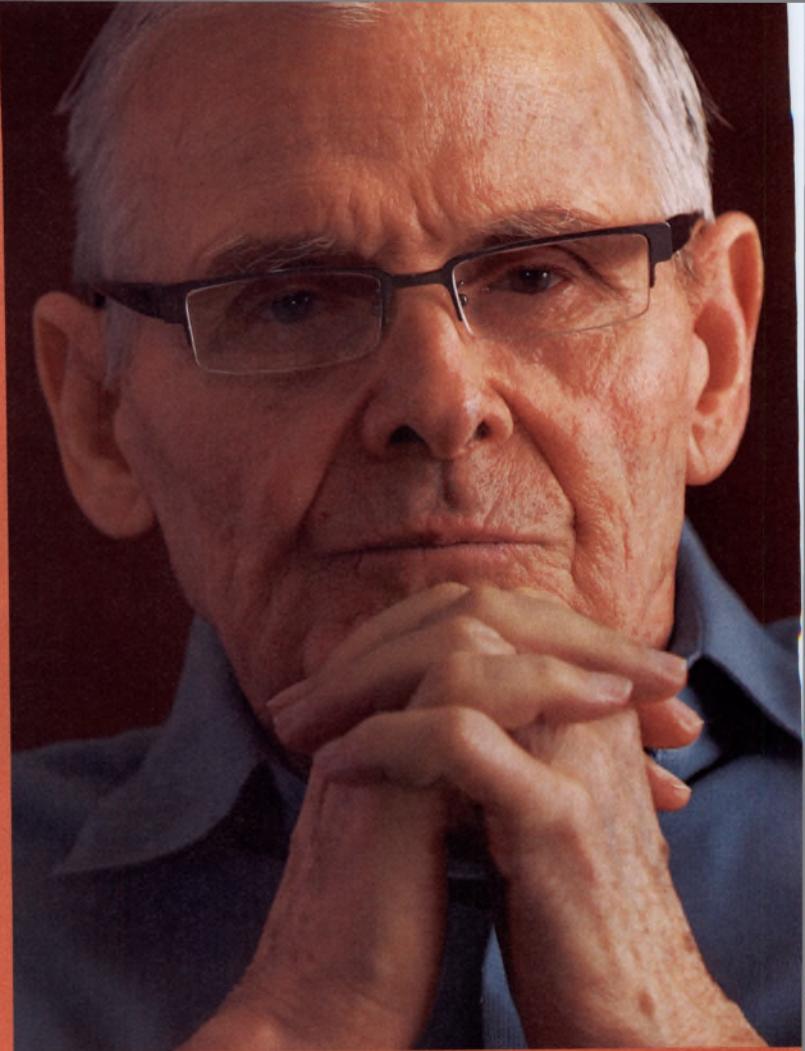
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Why are we here?

3-9

From time immemorial, people have wondered: 'Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?' Consider a discussion of this subject.

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Was Jesus born in December? Does it really matter whether he was or not?



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Learn about the challenges faced by one man who lived through two horrific wars that ravaged Korea and about a dramatic issue still facing many young Koreans.

Why are we here?

What is the meaning of life?

TO THE often-asked questions above, many would add another: Can we look forward to anything more than simply living out a brief span of 70 or 80 years and then dying? —Psalm 90:9, 10.

Perhaps at no other time do we raise such questions as intensely as when we sense how brief our life span really is. Of course, we do not need to be going through a life-threatening crisis to ask why we are here. Disillusionment can trigger the question as well. And some ask it as they reflect on their life pattern.

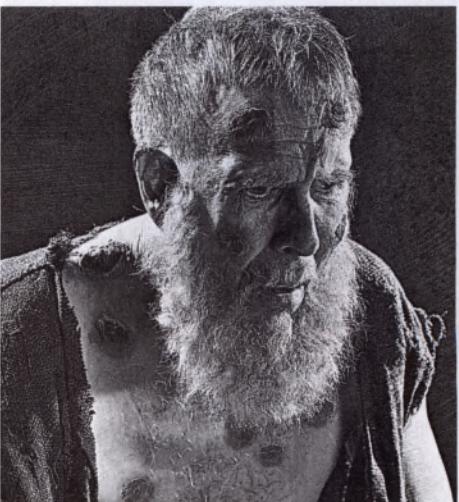
Dave had a well-paying job and a nice apartment, and he enjoyed spending time with his many friends. He relates: “I was walking home from a party late one night when the question hit me ‘Is this it?’—Will I only live a brief period of time and then die? Or is there something more?” What struck me was the hollowness of my life at the time.”

In his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl noted that some of his fellow Holocaust survivors faced such a question *after* their release from concentration camps. Upon returning home, some of them found

that their loved ones had perished. Frankl wrote: “Woe to him who, when the day of his dreams finally came, found it so different from all he had longed for!”

Those Who Raise the Question

The question of why we are here is common to all generations. The Bible describes people who questioned the purpose of their life. The man Job, after losing his wealth and his children and while enduring excruciating



Job questioned why he had been born

Looking for meaning in life simply by increasing our “busy-ness” will bring only emptiness, not true fulfillment

illness, asked: “Why from the womb did I not proceed to die? Why did I not come forth from the belly itself and then expire?”—Job 3:11.

The prophet Elijah felt similarly. While feeling alone as a worshipper of God, he lamented: “It is enough! Now, O Jehovah, take my soul away.” (1 Kings 19:4) Such a sentiment is all too familiar. Indeed, the Bible describes Elijah as “a man with feelings like ours.”—James 5:17.



A Successful Trip Through Life

Life is often compared to a journey. Just as you may begin a trip with no final destination in mind, you could live your life without identifying its real purpose. If you do so, you risk getting caught up in what well-known writer Stephen R. Covey calls “the busy-ness of life.” He wrote about those who “find themselves achieving victories that are empty, successes that have come at the expense of things they suddenly realize were far more valuable to them.”

Would you not agree that increasing our speed on a trip is pointless if we are not heading in the right direction? Likewise, looking for meaning in life by simply increasing our “busy-ness” will bring only emptiness, not true fulfillment.

The quest to understand why we are here transcends cultural and age differences. It stems from a profound need that we all have, a spiritual one that can remain unsatisfied even after our material needs have been met. Consider how some have tried to fill this need in their search for the purpose of life.

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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Where can you find answers?



ONE goal of religion is to teach the purpose of life. Many people, however, have found that their spiritual needs have been unfulfilled by the teachings of their religion. Denise, who was raised as a Catholic, recalls: "The Baltimore Catechism includes the question, 'Why did God make us?' with the answer, 'God made us to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in heaven.'

"That didn't provide a clear reason for why I am here," Denise continued. "If I'm only waiting to go to heaven, what am I supposed to be doing in the meantime?" Denise's experience is not unusual. One survey found that two thirds of those interviewed believe that most churches and synagogues are not

effective in helping people find a meaning in life.

As a result, many turn elsewhere to find answers—to science or various forms of philosophy identified by such labels as humanism, nihilism, and existentialism. Why do people keep seeking, although few seem to realize satisfaction?

Inherently Spiritual

Dr. Kevin S. Seybold calls it "the seemingly universal tendency of humans to worship something." In recent years a number of scientists have reached the conclusion that humans are, in fact, inherently inclined to look for a deeper meaning in life. Some actually believe that genetic and other physiological evidence

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points to a natural need for humans to connect with a higher power.

While the concept of spirituality is debated in academic circles, most people do not need a scientific consensus to believe that humans have a spiritual need. It is our spirituality that triggers in our mind what some call ultimate questions: Why are we here? What should we do with our lives? Are we accountable to an all-powerful Creator?

If you make time for careful observation of the natural world, you will find some of the answers to these questions. For instance, consider the mind-boggling complexities found in nature, from unicellular organisms to galactic clusters millions of light years away. Do they not tell us that there is an intelligent Designer, or Creator? The Bible says: “For [God’s] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.”—Romans 1:20.

Satisfy Your Spiritual Need

Regarding the way God made humans, the Bible says: “He has even put eternity into

their minds.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *Byington*) Our inborn desire is to live, not to die. Our inherent quest is to know the meaning of life, to want answers to questions.

Seeking answers is, in effect, part of being human. After noting man’s scientific and technological achievements, an editor of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote: “We are still left with questions of who we are and why we are and where we are going.” Wisely, we will look for answers from the best source. Pointing to that Source, the Bible says: “[God] has made us, and not we ourselves.”—Psalm 100:3.

Is it not reasonable that we look to the One responsible for such miracles of creation to satisfy our spiritual need? Jesus Christ recommended that we do just that. He recognized that only the Source of life—our Creator—can satisfy our spiritual need.—Psalm 36:5, 9; Matthew 5:3, 6.

Surely, having a reliable answer to the question Why are we here? is vital to having our spiritual need satisfied. Please consider the refreshing viewpoint of our Creator on this matter.

Why we are here

THE Bible reveals that our Creator, Jehovah God, never acts without purpose. Consider, as an example, his provision of earth’s water cycle, which makes life on earth possible. The Bible describes it in this poetic, yet accurate, way: “All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they re-

turn again.”—Ecclesiastes 1:7, *New International Version*.

The Bible compares the reliability of God’s promises to the cycle just described. As we know today, the sun’s power causes water to evaporate from the oceans, seas, and lakes, and later it is returned to earth as precipitation. Jehovah calls attention to this

The Bible compares the reliability of God's promises to the marvelous water cycle

cycle and explains: "So my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—Isaiah 55:10, 11.

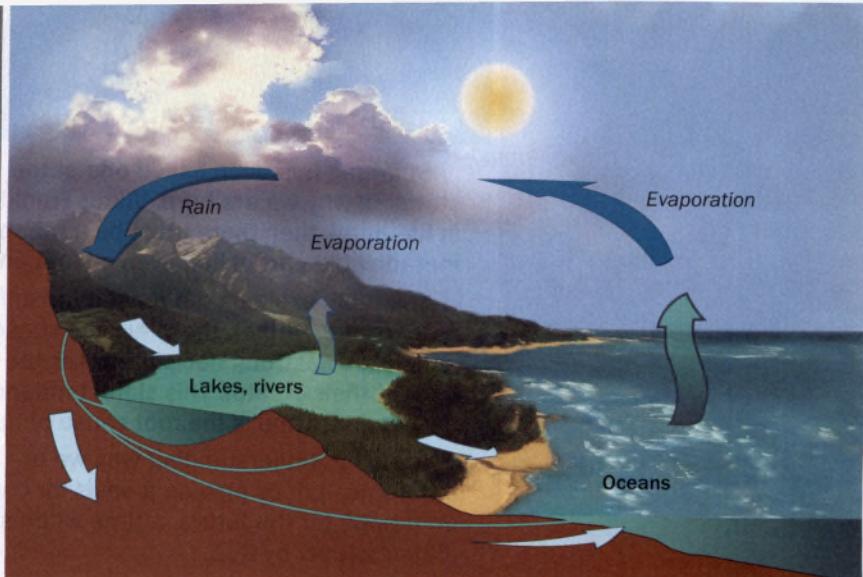
Clean water is returned to earth from the clouds to make life possible on earth. Similarly, the "word that goes forth from [God's] mouth" is able to sustain our spiritual lives. It is as Jesus Christ himself explained: "Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth."—Matthew 4:4.

Partaking of spiritual food from God makes it possible for us to conform our lives to his purpose. Yet, before we can do that, we need to understand what God's purpose is. Why, for example, did God create the earth? And how does his purpose regarding it affect us? Let us see.

God's Purpose for the Earth

Because God wants the best for humankind, he placed the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in Eden, a paradise garden. He then instructed them to have children, saying: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth."—Genesis 1:26-28; 2:8, 9, 15.

What conclusion can we draw from these instructions? Isn't it clear that God wanted



the whole earth to be cultivated into a paradise home for mankind? His Word says: "As regards the heavens, to Jehovah the heavens belong, but the earth he has given to the sons of men."—Psalm 115:16.

Yet, for humans to realize the fulfillment of God's purpose that they enjoy the earth forever, they would need to honor Jehovah by obeying him. But did Adam do that? No, he sinned by disobeying God. With what consequence? All of Adam's offspring, including all of us today, have inherited sin and death, just as the Bible says: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned."—Romans 5:12.

As a result, all humans are subject to death and earth has not yet been cultivated into an earth-wide paradise. Could it be, then, that God's purpose for earth has changed?

No, for recall that God said: "My word that goes forth from my mouth . . . will not return to me without results" but "will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." Moreover, God promised: "Everything that is my delight I shall do." (Isaiah 45:18; 46:10; 55:11) And it is God's delight—his purpose—that this earth become an earth-wide paradise populated with humans serving him forever in happiness, as he originally



THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Suffering has been called one of the greatest challenges to understanding why we are here. Viktor Frankl stated: "If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death."

The Bible explains the reason for suffering and death. God is not responsible. Rather, these are the consequences of the first human couple's disastrous decision to set the course of their lives independent of their Creator. This sinful tendency has been inherited by all their descendants and is the root cause of human suffering.

Although understanding why we are here does not solve all of life's problems, it does provide a basis for coping with them. Also, we are given a hope for the future, a time when suffering and death will be eradicated forever by God.

purposed.—Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 35:5, 6; 65:21-24; Revelation 21:3, 4.

God's Purpose Fulfilled—How?

Jehovah manifested his unsurpassed wisdom and love in making provision for humans to be rescued from inherited sin and its consequences—imperfection and ultimate death. He did this by making possible the birth of a son who would be free of the sin that all others have inherited from the first man, Adam. This provision is called a ransom, which was provided so that worthy humans could receive everlasting life. (Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) How was the ransom provided?

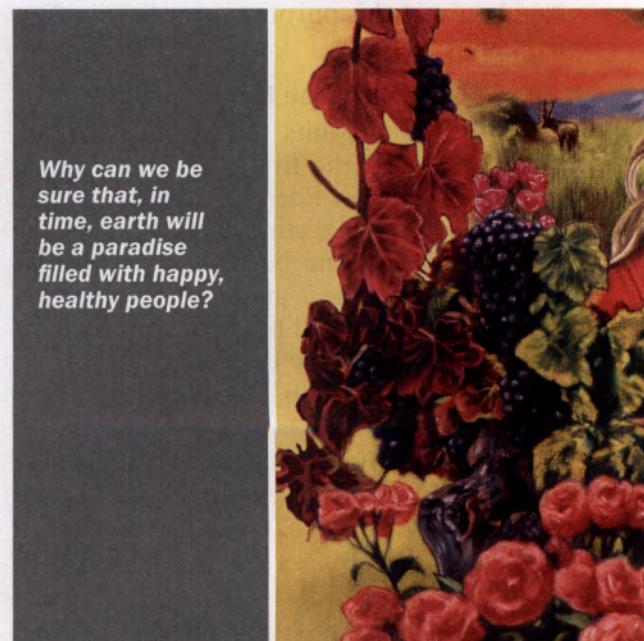
Jehovah's angel Gabriel announced to a virgin woman named Mary her approaching miraculous childbirth, describing how the child would be born to her even though she was "having no intercourse with a man." The miracle that God performed was that of transferring the life of his firstborn Son from his position in heaven to an egg cell within Mary's womb. She thus became pregnant through the operation of God's holy spirit.—Luke 1:26-35.

Jesus was born about nine months later as a perfect human, comparable to the first man,

Adam. In time, he was able to give his perfect human life in a sacrificial death. By so doing, Jesus served as 'the second Adam' and thereby provided the basis for all those faithful to God to be ransomed from sin and death. —1 Corinthians 15:45, 47.

Surely we should be moved by this great love that God has manifested for us! As the Bible says, "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."

Why can we be sure that, in time, earth will be a paradise filled with happy, healthy people?



(John 3:16) The question is, How will we respond to God's love? Should it not be with appreciation for his gift? Consider examples of some who have such appreciation.

Enjoying Meaning in Our Lives

Denise, mentioned in the previous article, found that honoring God by heeding his laws and instructions gave her life focus and meaning. She relates: "I learned from the Bible that besides having a long-range purpose for mankind, God has a specific work for those who worship him. I can't imagine a more satisfying life than using the free will he has given me to praise him by living in harmony with his purpose."

We can do similarly by learning what God's will is and then doing it. True, we need yet to realize fully the application of the ransom sacrifice, which will make possible our enjoying human perfection in a new world of righteousness. But in the meantime, it is urgent that we satisfy the spiritual yearning that God has placed in each of us.

Dave, referred to in the first article of this series, is one who has had his spiritual hunger satisfied. He found answers to his questions about the meaning of life. "Looking back," he says, "I see my life before learning about

'I can't imagine a more satisfying life than using my free will to serve God.'—Denise



God's purpose as a series of fruitless endeavors. I didn't know it at the time, but the hollowness I felt was actually an unfilled spiritual need. I never have that feeling now. I understand why I'm here and what I should be doing with my life."

Yes, unlike the thoughts of imperfect men, God's view of the meaning of life as presented in the Bible is truly satisfying. We are here because of Jehovah's purpose in making us—that we may praise his name, have a good relationship with him, and thus satisfy our spiritual need. Both today and for all eternity, we can enjoy the fulfillment of the inspired proclamation: "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!"—Psalm 144:15.





THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

When Was Jesus Born?

“THE exact date of Christ’s birth is not known,” says the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Still, millions of professed Christians around the globe celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25. This date, however, appears nowhere in the Bible. Was Jesus really born in December?

Although the Bible does not give a specific date for Jesus’ birth, it does provide evidence that he was not born in December. Also, from secular evidence we can learn why December 25 was adopted as the date for celebrating his birth.

Why Not a December Birth?

Jesus was born in the Judean city of Bethlehem. Luke’s Gospel reports: “There were also in that same country shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks.” (Luke 2:4-8) This was not unusual. “The flocks had to spend the greater part of the year in the open air,” says the book *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. But would the shepherds be outside with their flocks on a cold December night? The book says: “They

passed the winter under cover; and from this alone it may be seen that the traditional date for Christmas, in the winter, is unlikely to be right, since the Gospel says that the shepherds were in the fields.”

This conclusion is corroborated by another detail in Luke’s Gospel account: “In those days a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered; (this first registration took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria;) and all people went traveling to be registered, each one to his own city.”—Luke 2:1-3.

Augustus probably ordered this registration as a census in order to gather information for use in connection with taxation and military conscription. To comply with the order, Mary, despite being heavy with child, accompanied her husband, Joseph, on the journey of some 90 miles from Nazareth

Todd Boeny/BiblePlaces.com

**Would
shepherds
spend the night
outdoors with
their flocks in
the snow?**



to Bethlehem. Now think about it. Does it seem likely that Augustus—a ruler who rarely interfered with local government—would require a people who were already inclined to revolt to make such a long trip in winter?

Significantly, most historians and Bible scholars reject December 25 as Jesus' date of birth. No doubt you will find such information in an encyclopedia to which you have access. *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "There is general agreement that Jesus was not born on December 25."

Why December 25 Was Chosen

Hundreds of years after Jesus' death, December 25 was chosen as the date of his birth. Why? Numerous historians believe that the time of year that became the Christmas season was actually a period when pagan festivities were celebrated.

For instance, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states: "One widespread explanation of the origin of this date is that December 25 was the Christianizing of the *dies solis invicti nati* ('day of the birth of the unconquered sun'), a popular holiday in the Roman Empire that celebrated the winter solstice as a symbol of the resurgence of the sun, the casting away of winter and the heralding of the rebirth of spring and summer."

The Encyclopedia Americana informs us: "The reason for establishing December 25 as Christmas is somewhat obscure, but it is usually held that the day was chosen to correspond to pagan festivals that took place around the time of the winter solstice, when the days begin to lengthen, to celebrate the 'rebirth of the sun.' . . . The Roman Saturnalia (a festival dedicated to Saturn, the god

The Bible provides evidence that Jesus was not born in December

of agriculture, and to the renewed power of the sun), also took place at this time." Such festivals usually included licentious behavior by their participants, who engaged in unbridled and riotous merrymaking. Significantly, that behavior has been characteristic of many Christmas celebrations today.

How to Honor Christ

Some feel that regardless of what the actual date is, Christians should still commemorate Jesus' birth. In their minds such a celebration, when observed in a dignified manner, is an appropriate way to honor Christ.

The birth of Jesus is indeed an important event in the Bible account. The Bible says that when Jesus was born, a multitude of angels appeared suddenly and erupted in joyful praise to God, saying: "Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill." (Luke 2:13, 14) However, it is noteworthy that nowhere in the Bible is there even a suggestion that Jesus' birthday should be celebrated. In contrast, there is a specific command to commemorate his death, which Jehovah's Witnesses do once a year. (Luke 22:19) That is one way to honor Jesus.

On the last night of his human life, Jesus said: "You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you." (John 15:14) He also said: "If you love me, you will observe my commandments." (John 14:15) Clearly, there is no better way to honor Jesus Christ than to learn and follow his teachings.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Why could Jesus not have been born in December?—Luke 2:1-8.
- What is more important than the day of one's birth?—Ecclesiastes 7:1.
- What is the best way to honor Jesus?—John 14:15.

Living Through Dramatic Changes in Korea

AS TOLD BY CHONG-IL PARK

"Coward! You are afraid of dying at the front lines. You are trying to evade military service on the pretense of your religious conscience." That was the accusation of the captain of the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) when I stood before him in June 1953, over 55 years ago.

In military prison, 1953

THIS occurred during the Korean War. The captain then pulled out a pistol and laid it on his desk. "Now, I will let you die here instead of at the front lines," he said. "Do you have any second thoughts?"

"No," I answered firmly. At that, the captain ordered an officer to make preparation for my execution.

I was in this situation because I had been drafted but had refused to serve in the military. As we waited, I told the captain that I had already dedicated my life to God, so I believed it would be wrong to sacrifice it in any cause other than God's service. Then a few minutes passed in silence. Shortly, the officer returned and reported that everything was ready for my execution.

Most people in South Korea at the time knew little if anything about Jehovah's Witnesses, let alone our conscientious objection to participation in the military action of any government. Before I describe what happened next, let me explain how I had arrived at the decision I expressed to the military captain.



My Early Life

I was born in October 1930, the first son of a family in a town near Seoul, then the capital of Korea. My grandfather was a devout follower of Confucius, and he trained me to be one too. He opposed my receiving a secular education, so I did not attend school until after he died, when I was ten. Then, in 1941, Japan and the United States entered World War II on opposing sides.

Since Korea was under Japanese rule, each morning we students had to participate in a ceremony to honor the Japanese emperor. My aunt and uncle had become Jehovah's Witnesses and were imprisoned in Korea during World War II because, based on their religious convictions, they refused to become involved in wartime efforts. The treatment of the Witnesses by the Japanese was so cruel that some of them died, including my uncle. Later my aunt stayed with our family.

Korea was liberated from Japanese control in 1945. With the help of my aunt and other Witnesses who had survived imprisonment, I began a serious study of the Bible and was

baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1947. In August 1949, Don and Earlene Steele, the first of the missionaries trained at the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead to be assigned to Korea, arrived in Seoul. Within several months they were followed by others.

On January 1, 1950, I along with three other Koreans began serving as a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. We were the first in Korea to become pioneers after World War II.

Life During the Korean War

Soon afterward, war broke out between North Korea and South Korea on Sunday, June 25, 1950. At the time, all of Korea had only one congregation of Witnesses, made up of 61 of us in Seoul. The U.S. Embassy required all of the missionaries to leave the country for their own safety. Most local Witnesses also left Seoul and scattered throughout the southern part of the country.

The South Korean government, however, prevented young men of draft age like me from leaving Seoul. Suddenly, Communist troops marched into the city and Seoul came under Communist military control. Even during that time, when I had to hide in a small room for three months, I was able to witness to people about God's Kingdom. For instance, I met a schoolteacher who was also hiding from the Communists. He ended up staying with me, and I had a Bible study with him every day. In time, he was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Communist officials from North Korea eventually found us at our hiding place. We identified ourselves as Bible students and explained the Bible teaching of God's Kingdom to them. To our surprise, they did not arrest us but, instead, showed interest in the Bible message. In fact, some of them even came back a few times and wanted to hear more about God's Kingdom. This experience strengthened our faith in Jehovah's protection.

After UN forces reoccupied Seoul, I received special permission to travel to the city of Taegu in March 1951. There I was able to enjoy preaching with fellow Witnesses for several months. Then, in November 1951, before the war ended, Don Steele returned to Korea.

I assisted him in reorganizing our preaching work. *The Watchtower*, as well as the *Informant*—which provided instructions to Witnesses for carrying on the preaching work—had to be translated into Korean, typed, and mimeographed. This material was

"To our surprise, they did not arrest us but, instead, showed interest in the Bible message"

sent to congregations, which by then existed in various cities. Occasionally Don and I traveled together, visiting congregations to encourage them.

In January 1953, I was thrilled to receive a letter inviting me to Gilead School in New York for missionary training. After my flight reservation was made, however, I received a notice from a Korean government office, requiring that I report for military service.

My Life-or-Death Situation

At the recruiting center, I explained to an officer my neutral stand and my objection to military service. At that he turned me over to the CIC to determine if I was a Communist. That is when I faced the life-or-death situation mentioned earlier. But instead of

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Are We Running Out of Water?
- Helping Children With Learning Disabilities
- Are Your Problems a Punishment From God?

shooting me, the captain abruptly stood up, handed a thick wooden bar to an officer, and ordered him to beat me. Even though the pain was excruciating, I was happy that I was able to endure it.

The CIC sent me back to the recruiting center, where the officers, ignoring my beliefs, arbitrarily assigned me a military ID number, and transferred me to the military training center on Cheju island, near mainland Korea. The next morning the new recruits, including me, were scheduled to take the oath to become soldiers. I refused to do so. As a result, I was court-martialed and sent to prison for three years.

Thousands Maintain Integrity

The day that I would have left for my missionary training, I saw a plane flying overhead. It was the flight I had been scheduled to take. Rather than being heartbroken because I could not go to Gilead, I was deeply satisfied that I was keeping my integrity to

Korean Witnesses have spent 26,000 years in prison for refusing military service

Jehovah. And I am not the only Korean Witness who has refused military service. In fact, more than 13,000 other Witnesses in succeeding years have taken a similar stand. They have served a total of more than 26,000 years in Korean prisons.

After serving two years of my three-year prison sentence, I was pardoned in 1955 as an exemplary prisoner and released. I resumed my full-time ministry. Later, in October 1956, I received an assignment to serve at the offices of Jehovah's Witnesses in South Korea. Then, in 1958, I was again invited to Gilead. At my graduation I was assigned back to Korea.

Sometime after returning to Korea, I met In-hyun Sung, a faithful Witness, and we were

married in May 1962. She had grown up in a Buddhist family and had learned about the Witnesses from a classmate. For the first three years of our marriage, we visited a different congregation in Korea each week with the goal of strengthening its members spiritually. Since 1965 we have worked at the Witnesses' branch office, now located about 40 miles from Seoul.

Reflections Regarding Changes

As I look back, I am amazed to see how much has changed in this country. After the second world war and the war with North Korea, South Korea was reduced to little more than rubble. Cities and roads lay in ruins. Electricity and heat were sporadic at best. And the economy was in shambles. In the ensuing 50 years, South Korea has made a remarkable recovery.

Today South Korea boasts the 11th-largest economy in the world. It is renowned for its modern cities, high-speed railway system, electronics, and auto manufacturing acumen. South Korea now ranks as the world's fifth-largest car manufacturing country. But of special significance to me are the strides made in South Korea respecting the human rights of South Korea's citizens.

When I was court-martialed in 1953, the Korean government did not understand the concept of conscientious objection. Some of us were accused of being Communists, and a few of our fellow Witnesses were beaten to death. Many who were imprisoned as conscientious objectors when they were young men have seen their sons, and even their grandsons, go to prison for the same reason.

In the last several years, the media has given generally favorable coverage to incidents

ANSWERS TO PAGE 31
■ The Mount of Olives. ■ They asked when Jesus would restore the Kingdom. ■ Jesus said his disciples would witness about him to the most distant part of the earth. 2. Josiah—Matthew 1:10. 3. Zerubbabel—Matthew 1:12. 4. Joseph—Matthew 1:16.

Visiting congregations with Don Steele during the war, 1952



여호와의 증인 소래부회 일통 스릴 형제 래방 기념
1952. 12. 22.



Helping as a traveling overseer's interpreter, 1956



Before our wedding, 1961

involving the conscientious objection of Jehovah's Witnesses to participation in the military affairs of any country. One lawyer who had prosecuted a Witness conscientious objector even wrote an open letter of apology for what he had done, and it was published in a well-known magazine.

I hope that our right of conscientious objection will be respected in South Korea as it is in many other countries. I pray that authorities of South Korea will accommodate individuals who have convictions like mine and end the practice of sending young conscientious objectors to prison, "in order that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life." —1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

As servants of our God, Jehovah, we treasure the opportunity to uphold his right to be



With In-hyun Sung today

our Ruler. (Acts 5:29) Our wholehearted desire is to make his heart rejoice as a result of our faithfulness to him. (Proverbs 27:11) I am happy that I am among the millions who have chosen to 'trust in Jehovah with all our heart and not lean upon our own understanding.' —Proverbs 3:5, 6.

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ITALY

Masterpieces

"PAINTED" WITH STONES

OF ALL the techniques artists have used to reproduce scenes of nature, the technique often called Florentine mosaic, or *compresso*, is one of the most demanding. This form of mosaic work, typical to Florence, Italy, does not use regularly shaped pieces of stone, tile, or glass to form a design the way many other mosaics do. Rather, artists fashion pictures out of thin, irregularly shaped slices of stone. These are often cut so accurately that the joints between them are practically invisible.

The variety of ready-made colors on the palette of the artist who "paints" with stone is astonishing. Lapis lazuli is a rich azure stone with white markings, glittering with crystals of golden pyrite. Malachite has bands of delicate and intense green. Spectacularly veined marble comes in various shades of yellow, brown,

green, and red. Agate, jasper, onyx, porphyry, and other stones present a spectrum of vivid shades and speckles, the nuances of which artists exploit to create masterpieces. They use the colors and veining of these stones to represent rocky landscapes, vegetation, rough water, or even skies with wandering clouds.

This type of mosaic is by no means new. Likely invented in the Near East, it reached Rome by the first century B.C.E. and became popular for floor and wall decoration. Though the Florentine mosaic technique was widely used in medieval and Byzantine times, the Tuscan city of Florence won it a celebrated name from the 16th century on. To this day, prestigious masterpieces in Florentine mosaic are found in palaces and museums throughout Europe.

"Painting" with stone is a laborious process. One source notes that the hours dedi-

All photos pages 16 & 17: Su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali-Opificio delle Pietre Dure di Firenze, Archivio Fotografico

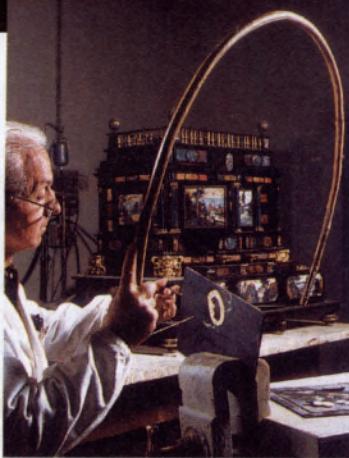


cated to "even a simple work would horrify a modern, industrial time-analyst." Hence today, as in the past, the prices artists ask for their works set these mosaics way beyond the reach of most people.

How Are They Made?

A new mosaic begins with a model, typically a painting. A tracing of it is cut into pieces, each corresponding to a section of the finished work. When an artist patiently chooses the right stone for each section, he is interpreting—not necessarily imitating—his model. Each section of the tracing is glued to the stone slice that is selected.

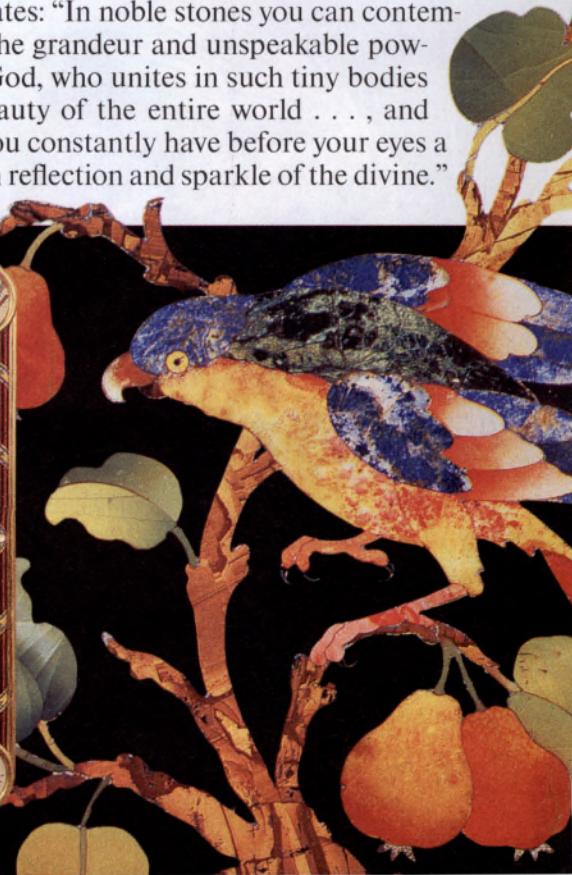
The artist next holds each slice, which is less than an eighth of an inch thick, in a vice. Then, using a saw—an iron wire held in tension by a chestnut-wood bow—he meticulously cuts the pieces he needs (shown above). As he does this, he moistens the wire with an abrasive paste. He then has to file the pieces so precisely that when he holds them up together, he sees no light passing through the joints. Imagine how difficult this would be



when the sections represent the slender tendrils of a vine!

After the pieces are assembled and permanently stuck to a slate backing sheet, a final leveling and polishing of the stone surface confers upon the picture such a brilliance that photographs fail to do it justice. The skill with which artists exploit the color tones of a single piece of stone to attain realistic effects of light and shade on fragile flower petals is truly astonishing. Fruits, vases, butterflies, birds, and landscapes are just some of the subjects that imaginative artists have tackled successfully.

One of the fascinations of Florentine mosaic is that the artist cannot determine the exact details of his design. Instead, he has to choose colors, textures, and stones that God has already created. One source on the subject states: "In noble stones you can contemplate the grandeur and unspeakable power of God, who unites in such tiny bodies the beauty of the entire world . . . , and thus you constantly have before your eyes a certain reflection and sparkle of the divine."



WAS IT DESIGNED?

The Beetle's Pressure-Spray System



■ Though less than an inch in length, the bombardier beetle is noted for its unique defense mechanism. When threatened, the insect sprays boiling, foul-smelling liquid and steam from its posterior, warding off spiders, birds, and even frogs.

Consider: This beetle is equipped with "a pair of glands which open at the tip of [its] abdomen." Each of these has a reservoir that stores an acidic compound and hydrogen peroxide as well as a reaction chamber filled with enzymes dissolved in water. To protect itself, the insect can squeeze the solution from the reservoirs into the reaction chambers to trigger a chemical reaction. The result? Noxious chemicals, water, and steam—at a temperature of about 212 degrees Fahrenheit—are sprayed onto an attacker. The chambers are less than a sixteenth of an inch long, yet the beetle can change the speed, direction, and consistency of its toxic spray.

Researchers have studied the bombardier beetle to learn how to develop more effective and ecologically-sound mist systems. They have discovered that the beetle not only uses one-way inlet valves to allow chemicals into the reaction chambers but also has a pressure-relief valve to expel them. Engineers hope to use spray technology based on the bombardier beetle in car engines and fire extinguishers, as well as in medical drug-delivery devices, such as inhalers. Professor Andy McIntosh of the University of Leeds, England, says: "Nobody had studied the beetle from a physics and engineering perspective as we did—and we didn't appreciate how much we would learn from it."

What do you think? Did the bombardier beetle's complex system of valves, combustion, and explosion develop by chance? Or was it designed?

Should I tell on my friend?

*"It was extremely difficult. This person was a good friend of mine."—James.**

"At first, things were really tense. I was treated as an outsider because I spoke up."

—Ann.



THE Bible says: "There exists a friend sticking closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24) Have you found such a companion? If so, you have found something special.

But what if a friend who claims to be a Christian has got into trouble? For instance, what if he or she has become involved in immorality, smoking, underage drinking, abuse of drugs, or some other serious wrongdoing? (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Timothy 1:9, 10) What should you do? Confront your friend? Tell your parents? Tell your friend's parents? Report the matter to a congregation elder?[#] If you speak up, what will happen to your friendship? Would it be better just to keep quiet?

To Tell or Not to Tell?

Everyone makes mistakes. Indeed, the Bible says: "All have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God." (Romans 3:23) However, some get involved in serious transgressions. Others take a "false step" that if left unchecked could lead to further trouble. (Galatians 6:1) Consider the following real-life example.

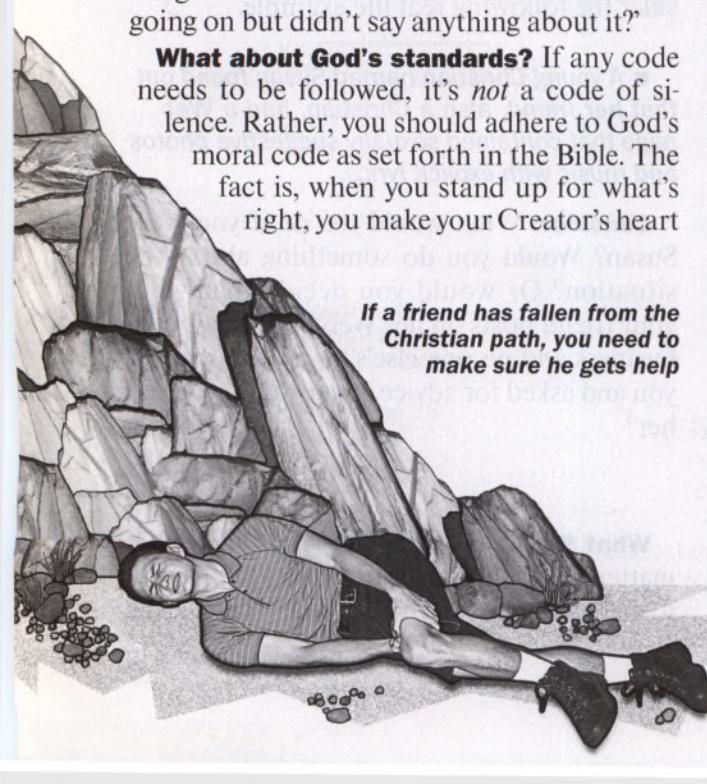
■ **A young Christian named Susan found out that her friend, also a Christian, had a Web page that contained sexually suggestive photos and music with explicit lyrics.**

Consider: What would *you* do if you were Susan? Would you do something about the situation? Or would you decide that what your friend posts on her Web page is her own business and no one else's? If Susan came to you and asked for advice, what would you tell her?

What Susan chose to do: After giving the matter some thought, Susan decided to talk to her friend's parents. "It was scary," she

* Names in this article have been changed.

[#] Among Jehovah's Witnesses, elders render spiritual assistance to any who have fallen into serious sin.—James 5:14-16.



says, “because they’re *also* good friends of mine. It was so hard to tell them that I started to cry.”

What do you think? Did Susan do the right thing? Or would it have been better for her to keep quiet?

To help you reason on the matter, here are some factors to consider:

What would a real friend do? Proverbs 17:17 states: “A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress.” When someone pursues a course that violates Bible principles, that person is ‘in distress,’ knowingly or unknowingly. While it is a mistake to be “righteous overmuch” by making an issue of minor matters, a real friend will not turn a blind eye to unchristian conduct. (Ecclesiastes 7:16) Ignoring the situation is simply not an option.—Leviticus 5:1.

What if the roles were reversed? Ask yourself: ‘If I were a parent and my son or daughter had a Web page with sexually suggestive content, would I want to be made aware of it? How would I feel if my son or daughter had a friend who knew what was going on but didn’t say anything about it?’

What about God’s standards? If any code needs to be followed, it’s *not* a code of silence. Rather, you should adhere to God’s moral code as set forth in the Bible. The fact is, when you stand up for what’s right, you make your Creator’s heart

If a friend has fallen from the Christian path, you need to make sure he gets help

glad. (Proverbs 27:11) In addition, *you* feel better because you know that you truly acted in your friend’s best interests.—Ezekiel 33:8.

“A Time to Speak”

The Bible says that there is “a time to keep quiet and a time to speak.” (Ecclesiastes 3:7) Younger children often can’t tell which course is appropriate in a given situation. When a companion does something wrong, they reason: ‘I don’t want to get my friend in trouble’ or ‘I don’t want to get into trouble with my friend.’ If those were the only factors to consider, the decision would be simple—this would be “a time to keep quiet.”

However, as you grow up, you begin to look at such matters from a more mature viewpoint. You realize that your friend is already in trouble and needs help—help that perhaps you can initiate. Specifically, though, what can you do if you hear that a friend has got involved in conduct that violates Bible laws or principles?

First, confirm whether what you’ve heard is true. It may merely be a false rumor. (Proverbs 14:15) A teenager named Katie recalls: “A friend of mine started telling lies about me, and people who were close to me thought that what she said was true. I was scared that no one would *ever* believe me!” The Bible foretold that Jesus would not “reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears”—or as the *Contemporary English Version* renders it, he “won’t . . . listen to rumors.” (Isaiah 11:3) The lesson? Don’t hastily *assume* that everything you hear is true. Try to find out the facts. Consider a real-life situation.

■ James, mentioned at the outset of this article, heard that his good friend had used drugs at a party.

Consider: What would *you* do if you were James? How might you determine if what *you* heard is the truth?

What James chose to do. At first, James pretended that he had heard nothing and knew nothing. "Then, my conscience started to bother me," he says. "I knew that I'd have to confront my friend about the matter."

What do you think? What advantages might there be in first talking to the person who allegedly engaged in unchristian conduct?

If you don't feel comfortable talking to the person about the matter, what else could you do?

James' friend admitted that he had indeed taken drugs at a party. But then he begged James not to tell anyone about it. James wanted to do what was right. But he wanted his friend to do the right thing as well. So he told his friend that he would give him one week to report the matter to the elders in his congregation. If he did not do so, then James would report it himself.

Do you think what James did was fair? Why or why not?

James' friend did not go to the elders, so James reported the matter. Later, however, his friend came to his senses. He was helped by the elders to see the need to repent and to restore a clean relationship with Jehovah.

Are You Being a Snitch?

Still, you might ask: 'Won't I be a snitch if I tell on my friend? Wouldn't it be easier to

pretend that I don't know anything?' If you find yourself in such a situation, what can you do?

First, realize that the easy thing to do is not always loving and the loving thing to do is not always easy. It takes courage to report a friend's wrongdoing. Why not talk to God in prayer about the matter? Ask him for the wisdom and courage that you need. He will help you.—Philippians 4:6.

Second, think about how your reporting the situation will *benefit* your friend. To illustrate, suppose you and your friend are walking along a steep hillside when, because of a misstep, your friend stumbles off the path to a ledge below. Obviously, your friend needs help. But what if, out of embarrassment, he tells you that he would rather try to climb the steep slope by himself? Would you let him risk his life in that manner?

It is similar when a friend stumbles from the Christian path. That person may feel that he or she can recover spiritually without help. But that is foolish reasoning. True, your friend may feel some embarrassment over what happened. But your 'call for help' may well save your friend's life!—James 5:15.

Therefore, do not be afraid to speak up if a friend has got involved in wrongdoing. By getting help for that one, you are showing loyalty to Jehovah God *and* loyalty to your friend, who may one day be grateful for your loving intervention.

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

TO THINK ABOUT

- How is reporting a friend's wrong conduct actually an evidence of loyalty to your friend?
- What characters in the Bible can you think of whose loyalty to a friend was tested? What can you learn from them?



THE DECEPTIVE POWER OF Advertisements

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN POLAND

Tomek stares at the television screen, mesmerized. He is all ears as a commercial message persuades listeners: "When your son wears this, he will be strong, athletic, and admired by his friends. You must buy it!" Tomek runs to his dad, humming the catchy tune he has just heard. "Daddy, will you buy it for me?" he asks.

■ Why do children want what is advertised? "Because others have those things, they want them too. They want to maintain their status within the group," explains an educator quoted in the Polish magazine *Rewia*. When children beg, cry, and sulk, some parents often give in and buy the product their offspring want.

What makes an advertisement that targets children so deceptive? Its content "does not focus on the price, quality, or usefulness of the product," explains psychologist Jolanta Wąs. The ad is designed "to create emotional involvement." Wąs notes: "Young children will not analyze a story told in an advertisement. . . . They do not compare the information presented with their understanding of the world." And even if they try to do so, their understanding may be too limited to evaluate the product accurately.

How can you protect your child from the deceptive power of advertisements? First, "you have to spend time with your child and keep on explaining that a person's worth is not measured by the particular brand of shoes [or clothes] he wears," says *Rewia*. Let your child know that it is possible to have a happy childhood without the newest toys. Second,

parents themselves must be aware of how advertisements can influence their children. The key is not to "allow advertising to dictate to us what is good for our child," recommends Wąs.

Finally, all parents can benefit from the counsel contained in the Bible. The apostle John wrote: "Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world."—1 John 2:15, 16.

Do you not agree that many advertisements appeal to "the desire of the eyes" and move young as well as old to make a "showy display of [their] means of life"? Interestingly, the apostle John continued his counsel, writing: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17.

Parents who regularly spend time in upbuilding conversation with their children can inculcate in them godly principles and worthwhile values. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7) Then children will not be so easily swayed by the deceptive advertisements of this world, which are designed to get them to pressure their parents into buying things for them.

shells made abalone has won
is still in action to continue
to win over visitors.

Paua

OPAL OF THE SEA

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN
NEW ZEALAND

Beneath the ocean a huge shellfish moves slowly across the rocks, grazing on seaweed that sways in the coastal currents. Its drab outer shell, encrusted with heavy lime deposits and tiny marine creatures, conceals an interior of iridescent colors—cool blues, sea greens, and inky purples that run into soft yellows and pinks, with flashes of gold and silver.

THIS amazing creature is a paua, an abalone unique to New Zealand. It and its abalone relatives live underwater around rocky shorelines. Although the paua is prized for the radiant colors of its inner shell, which can be made into beautiful jewelry, many consider its meat to be a delicious delicacy. In addition, lustrous pearls can be cultured within it.

The paua is one of the more than 100 species of abalones found around the world. South Africa and California, U.S.A., have their own species. The abalone is called awabi in Japan, muttonfish in Australia, and ormer on the island of Guernsey, in the English Channel. It is only in the cold southern waters of the South Pacific, however, that one can find New Zealand's own brilliantly colored abalone, called paua (*Haliotis iris*).

A Biological Marvel

Within the paua's shell, alternating layers of protein and calcium build up

and refract iridescent colors much the way opals do. Thus, the paua has been given the name opal of the sea. A drop in sea temperature causes abalones to "hibernate" or go to sleep. The layers of their shells then take a longer time to grow. The variety in colors, one paua expert believes, may be the result of nutrients in the water as well as the different colors of seaweed the abalones eat.

Pauas are selective about their diet, and they are finicky about their choice of neighbors. They will not live near the spiny sea urchin, or *kina*, because it competes for the same types of seaweed. Also, the starfish is a dangerous enemy. A few of them can wipe out a colony of pauas. The crafty starfish puts a tentacle along the line of the paua's breathing holes, thus suffocating it. Then, when the paua falls off its rocky perch, the starfish has an easy meal.

Multiple Uses for the Paua

Although the paua's black outer appearance is not very appealing, for



centuries the indigenous Maori of New Zealand have prized the meat of the paua for food. The edible part of the paua is a large muscle, or foot, by which the creature moves along its rocky environment. The Maori have also used its shell for fishing lures and decorations, as well as for jewelry and for eyes in their carvings.

The paua is now more popular than ever. A trip to New Zealand may hardly be considered complete without the purchase of some paua jewelry.

Today, divers—without any underwater breathing apparatus—are engaged in an extensive harvest of pauas. This has become a multimillion dollar export industry. To ensure the pauas' survival in New Zealand waters, a quota system has been set. Most of the meat is canned for the Asian market, and some is frozen and sent to Singapore and Hong Kong, where paua is a sought-after luxury food. It is

often served raw and sliced, sushi style. Despite the abundance of pauas in their waters, many New Zealanders have never tasted their meat because of the demand for it overseas.

To help meet the growing international appetite for paua, suppliers now use modern aquaculture. This man-made method of production has been successful with other abalones in Australia, Japan, and the United States. Such new techniques allow pauas to be cultured in temperature-controlled tanks far



away from their natural marine environment.

Cultured pauas are just as voracious as their wild relatives. They can eat up to half their body weight each week. Surprisingly, pauas are also quite athletic. If they are turned over, they are able to flip back over quickly. Cultured pauas are easy to manage. One expert says that "pauas are lovely creatures to farm because they are so docile and well behaved—and they never answer back!"

Paua Pearls

In addition to being a source of shell jewelry and delicious food, pauas can produce lustrous pearls. Natural pearls rarely appear in pauas living in the sea. But they can be cultivated through the use of a technique first developed in the 1890's by the French scientist Louis Boutan. The result is a gem hemispherical in shape that has the same spectacular colors as the shell. What is this technique?

The paua is seeded, usually in three places—twice along the side and once at the

back. Gradually it will overlay these inserts with layers of nacre, or mother-of-pearl, which contains calcium carbonate and conchiolin. After at least 18 months—and thousands of layers—a small pearl is produced. (See the box below.) It takes up to six years for a large gem to develop. About 1 in 50 pauas will produce a nearly perfect pearl. This is a gem with a smooth surface, radiant color, and exceptional luster.

Researchers have still not been able to develop a round pearl from a paua. That is because, unlike an oyster, the paua has a muscle in its stomach that will spit out any bead placed in its digestive system. Perhaps one day someone will find the secret to creating that elusive spherical pearl.

In the meantime we can enjoy the products of this versatile shellfish—lustrous jewelry, an edible treat, and a shell of attractive colors. Are we not thankful to God for giving us such a delightful gift?
—James 1:17.

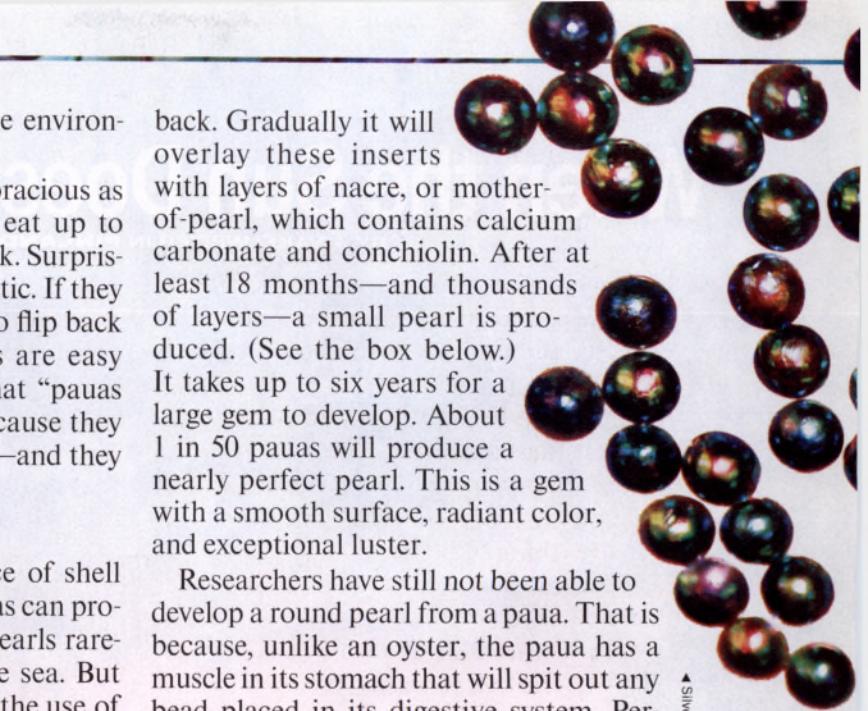
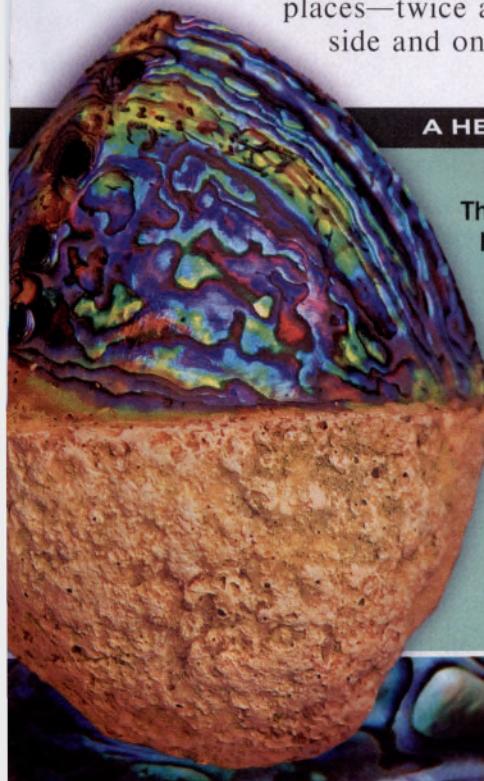
▲ Silverdale Marine Hatchery, New Zealand

A HEAVY-DUTY HOME

The main component of the paua shell is calcium carbonate. This material is also the stuff of which a stick of chalk is made. However, the shell of the paua has at least 30 times the strength of the chalk!

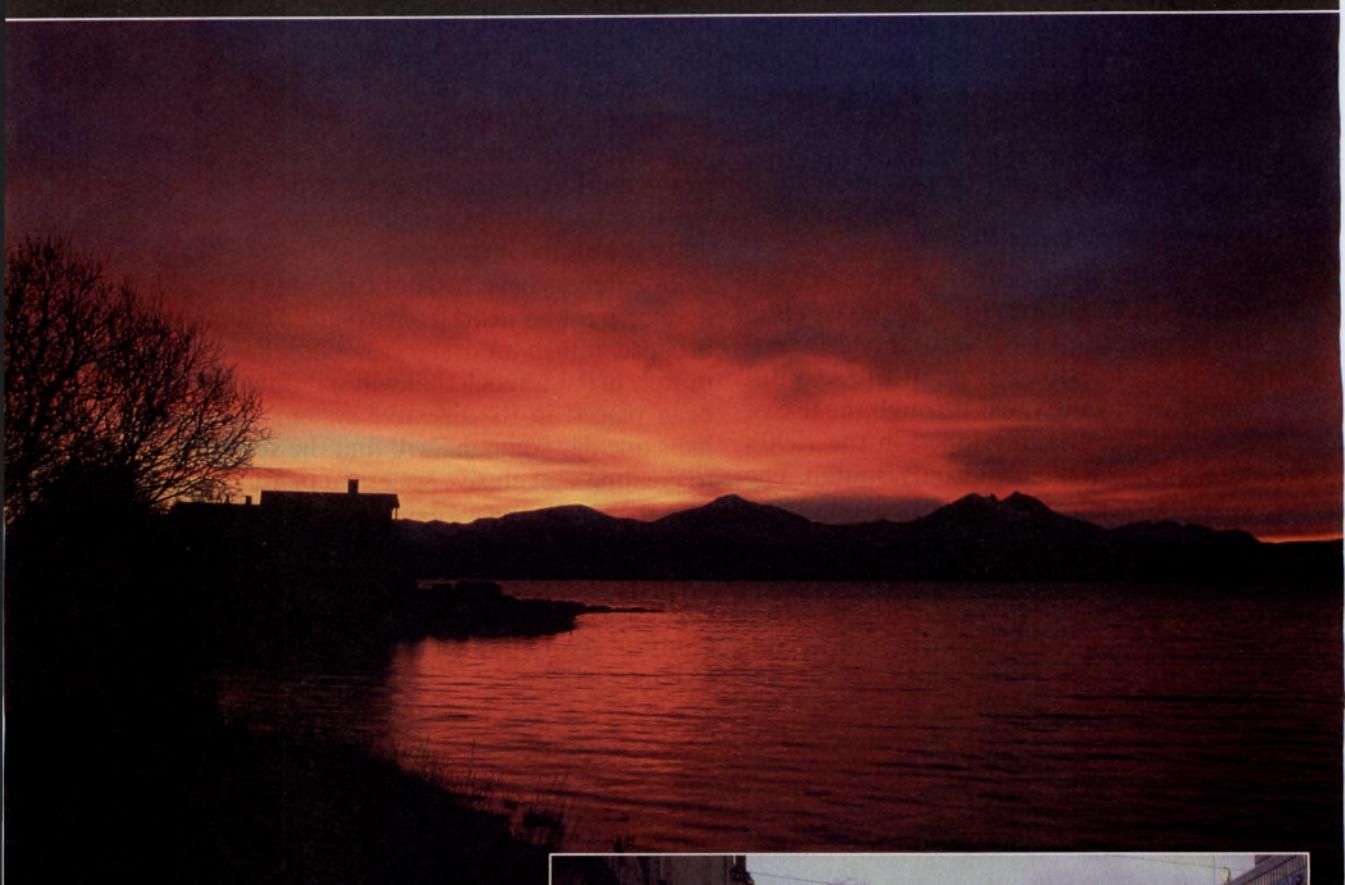
The paua draws calcium carbonate from seawater to make microthin plates of nacre. These make its shell not only extremely hard but also colorful and lustrous. The plates are bonded by a glue of protein and sugar called conchiolin. This powerful adhesive also adds to the mirror finish.

Scientists have been unable to duplicate the glue or the structural process. The shell can repair any cracks and has at least five different mechanisms for resisting breakage. Truly, the paua is a marvel of divine engineering and design.



When the Sun Does Not Rise

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN FINLAND



Noontime during the Arctic winter

For many, the lack of direct sunlight can be depressing



THE sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises," says the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 1:5, *New International Version*) From mid-November till the end of January, however, sunrise and sunset may not be obvious in many areas north of the Arctic Circle. Here people have no choice but to endure the long dark nights of the Arctic winter.

To a lesser degree, long nights are also experienced in areas south of the Arctic Circle. For example, in St. Petersburg, Russia; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; and Oslo, Norway—cities all less than 500 miles south of the Arctic Circle—daylight in midwinter lasts only about six hours.

"The image that Arctic winters are pitch-black is not correct," says Ari, who spent his childhood in Kiruna, Swedish Lapland. Much of the day can be summed up in one word, "twilight." Paula, an artist who lives in Finnish Lapland, says, "When Lapland is wrapped in snow, the colors turn pastel shades of blue and violet."

Dark winters have a negative effect on some people. "I feel the changes of the seasons and climate very keenly," wrote Jean Sibelius, a famous Finnish composer. He added: "In wintertime, when the day is short, I always have a period of depression." Sibelius was by no means the only person who was a victim of the so-called winter blues. Even the Greek physician Hippocrates (c. 460-c. 377 B.C.E.) believed that seasons affect people's moods.

It was not until the 1980's, however, that the winter blues, or winter depression, was defined as a syndrome. Studies have revealed that among northern peoples a small percentage of the population suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). A milder version called subsyndromal SAD, is three or four times more common. Hundreds of thousands

of people are believed to be somewhat affected.

Andrei, in St. Petersburg, Russia, says, "I feel like sleeping all the time." Annika, who lives in Finland, is saddened by the approach of winter. "Sometimes," she says, "the darkness makes me feel almost claustrophobic because there is no place to escape from it."

Experts recommend a variety of methods to cope with winter depression. For instance, some recommend that one should be outdoors as often as possible during daylight. Those who engage in outdoor physical activities during the winter also report relief from the winter blues.

Jarmo, who has experienced winters both in northern and southern Finland, says, "In the gloomiest time, we burn more candles and keep more lights turned on." Some have found relief by receiving bright-light therapy. Others take a break from the dark winter by vacationing in a more southerly country. Some warn, however, that after a sunny vacation in such a place, returning to the darkness of winter may cause certain people to feel even gloomier.

Nutrition is another factor to consider. Because sunlight helps the body produce vitamin D, the lack of sunlight can cause a deficiency of it. Hence, some recommend a winter increase in the consumption of foods containing vitamin D, such as fish, liver, and dairy products.

The very factors that bring winter darkness also bring an abundance of light. As the earth keeps moving in its orbit, little by little it turns its cold top toward the sun. Gradually, sunlight begins to dominate the day. Then comes the Arctic summer, a season when sunlight can be enjoyed even in the middle of the night!

**Much of the
day can be
summed up
in one word,
"twilight"**



A Slave to Alcohol No More (May 2007) I occasionally enjoy your magazine when the Witnesses bring it to me. I find the articles quite refreshing compared with the depressing news on TV and in newspapers. I have never suffered from alcoholism myself, but I have a number of family members and friends who have. The man in the article said that he was alcohol-free after three months. This after a lifetime of alcohol-related misery. While I applaud him, I have to say that he is quite an unrealistic example and, I think, potentially discouraging to anyone who is coping with this problem. A typical alcoholic usually suffers a number of setbacks along the difficult path to recovery.

G. A., United States

"Awake!" responds: We did not mean to imply that breaking free from alcohol abuse is a simple matter. We agree that many who struggle with alcohol addiction experience setbacks and discouragement along the path to recovery. Even those who abruptly quit drinking and are no longer alcohol dependent have to remain vigilant to avoid a relapse. Thus, as the article stated, after ten years of going without a drink, the former "slave to alcohol" acknowledged: "Many don't know the tremendous fight I have and that just one drink is all it would take to lead me back to my old ways. The desire for alcohol still lingers within me. It requires intense prayer and determination to have the strength to say no." By prayerful reliance on God, many have managed to stop being a slave to alcohol.—Psalm 55:22.

Can You Trust the Bible? (November 2007) I am 12 years old and want to thank you for this incredibly interesting and informative special issue of *Awake!* I especially enjoyed the section on page 7 about the internal harmony of the Bible. It brought up things I hadn't thought of before. I'm already looking forward to the next special issue!

D. F., United States

To Think About I would like to thank you for the new format of *Awake!* The questions raised at the end of certain articles have been very helpful to me. They have helped me to retain the information and meditate on the subject. We lead such a hectic life nowadays that some important and upbuilding points can go unnoticed in our reading.

M.A.S., Brazil

Is Death Really the End? (December 2007) Six months ago I lost my mother in a tragic accident. How reassuring it was for me to read this article, which strengthened my hope that I will see her again in the resurrection. Thank you very much.

L.L.R., Brazil

Young People Ask . . . Why Live by Bible Standards? (November 2007) I thought that as long as I didn't commit immorality, there was nothing wrong with dating. But I wasn't satisfied with just spending time with my boyfriend. I started to have inappropriate fleshly desires. Thank you very much for handling these teachings from the Bible in a way that is easy for young people with little experience to understand.

E. F., Japan

Kite Helps to Pull Ship

In these times of rising fuel costs and growing environmental concerns, shipowners are searching for ways to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. And they are using an old ally—the wind. One idea that has already been tested is that of using a kite to assist with pulling a ship, reports the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The kite, 1,000 feet in the air, harnesses the wind, allowing the captain to throttle back the ship's engine. A 1,722-square-foot kite recently helped to power a cargo vessel across the Atlantic.

Surviving Drought

"The larvae of an African fly survive severe droughts by essentially turning into candy drops," says *Science News*. When extremely dehydrated, the larvae of the fly *Polypedilum vanderplanki* replace water in their cellular fluids with a glassy substance, similar to melted sugar when it solidifies. In this mummified condition, the metabolism of the larvae ceases completely. The larvae can remain in this "state of suspended animation" for up to 17 years until the next rains allow them to revive.

The Best Place for Astronomy

An international team has set up a fully robotic astronomical observatory at Dome Argus, which at 13,400 feet above sea level is the highest point on the East Antarctic plateau. Just 700 miles from the South Pole, the site is very cold and at times exceptionally dark. It has very dry, calm air as well as nights that are four months long. Dome Argus is said to be the best place on earth for astronomical observations. With a telescope here, says Lifen Wang, director of the Chinese Center for Antarctic Astronomy, "it is possible to achieve near-space-quality images at a much lower cost than launching a telescope into space."

■ In Germany, only 8 percent of the population consider the most important aspect of Christmas Eve to be religious. In 1980, the figure was 47 percent.

—TV NEWS CHANNEL N24, GERMANY.

■ "For the first time in [U.S.] history, more than one in 100 American adults are behind bars . . . Nationwide, the prison population [is] almost 1.6 million."

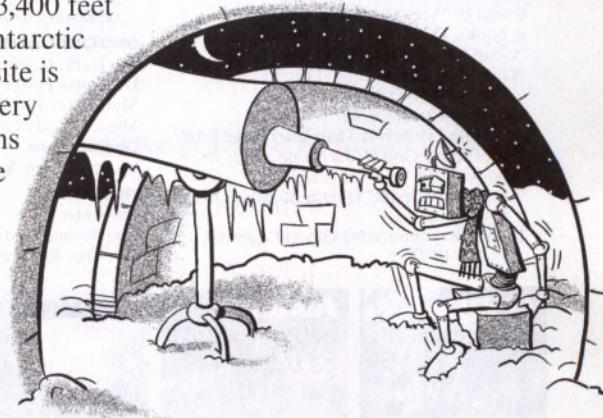
—THE NEW YORK TIMES, U.S.A.

■ A study has found that "100% of Spaniards analyzed" had in their bodies at least one type of pesticide, that is, "substances internationally classified as potentially harmful to one's health."

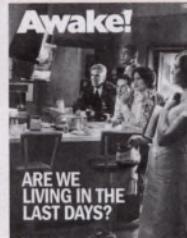
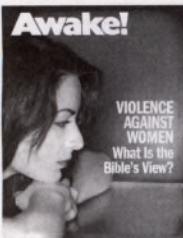
—UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA, SPAIN.

■ "In countries with available information, tobacco tax revenues are more than 500 times higher than spending on tobacco control."—WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, SWITZERLAND.

■ Islam has surpassed Roman Catholicism in the number of adherents. In 2006, Islam claimed 19.2 percent of the world's population and Roman Catholicism 17.4 percent.—REUTERS NEWS SERVICE, BRITAIN.



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Where Did It Happen?

1. Jesus ascended to heaven from which location?

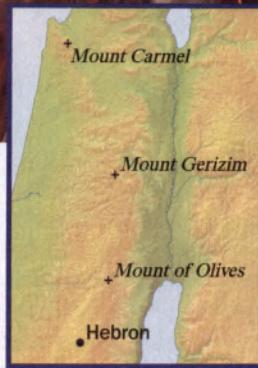
CLUE: Read Acts 1:6-12.

Circle your answer on the map.

■ Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, his disciples asked him a question about what subject?

■ What did Jesus say his disciples would do?

FOR DISCUSSION: How have the angels' words at Acts 1:11 been fulfilled? What can you do to share in the work Jesus gave his followers, as recorded at Acts 1:8?



Who Is Part of Jesus' Family Tree?

Consider the clues. Look up the scriptures. Then write the correct names in the spaces provided.

2

CLUE: During my reign, Hilkiah found "the book of Jehovah's law by the hand of Moses."

Read 2 Chronicles 34:1, 14.



■ Answers on page 14

From This Issue

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

PAGE 4 How does the Bible describe Elijah?

James 5:_____

PAGE 7 What must a man live on? Matthew 4:_____

PAGE 19 Who might stick closer than a brother?
Proverbs 18:_____

PAGE 20 What is there a time to do?
Ecclesiastes 3:_____



Children's Picture Search

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

Center circle: Oxford Scientific/photolibrary

3

CLUE: I was the first governor of the Jews who returned from Babylon to Israel. Read Haggai 1:14.

4

CLUE: I was a carpenter by trade. Read Matthew 1:16; 13:55.

Cured by “a Very Old Book”



■ One of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil, South America, was calling on people at their homes when she met a lady who told her that her mother-in-law had been cured by a book. Curious, the Witness asked what book it was. "It's a very old book," the lady said, and she brought out her son's well-worn copy of *My Book of Bible Stories*.

The woman explained that her mother-in-law had suffered from depression and had been so afraid of death and of being in the dark that she wouldn't leave her bed. The lady's son had obtained the *Bible Stories* book and began to read it to his grandmother. The grandmother became so encouraged and built up by what her grandson read that she was freed from her problem.

The Witness relates: "When I told the lady that the book was printed by Jehovah's Witnesses and that I could obtain a new copy for her, she asked me to bring two of them—one for her mother-in-law and one for herself. When I delivered the books, she asked for more. In time, she obtained 16 copies of the book for her friends!"

