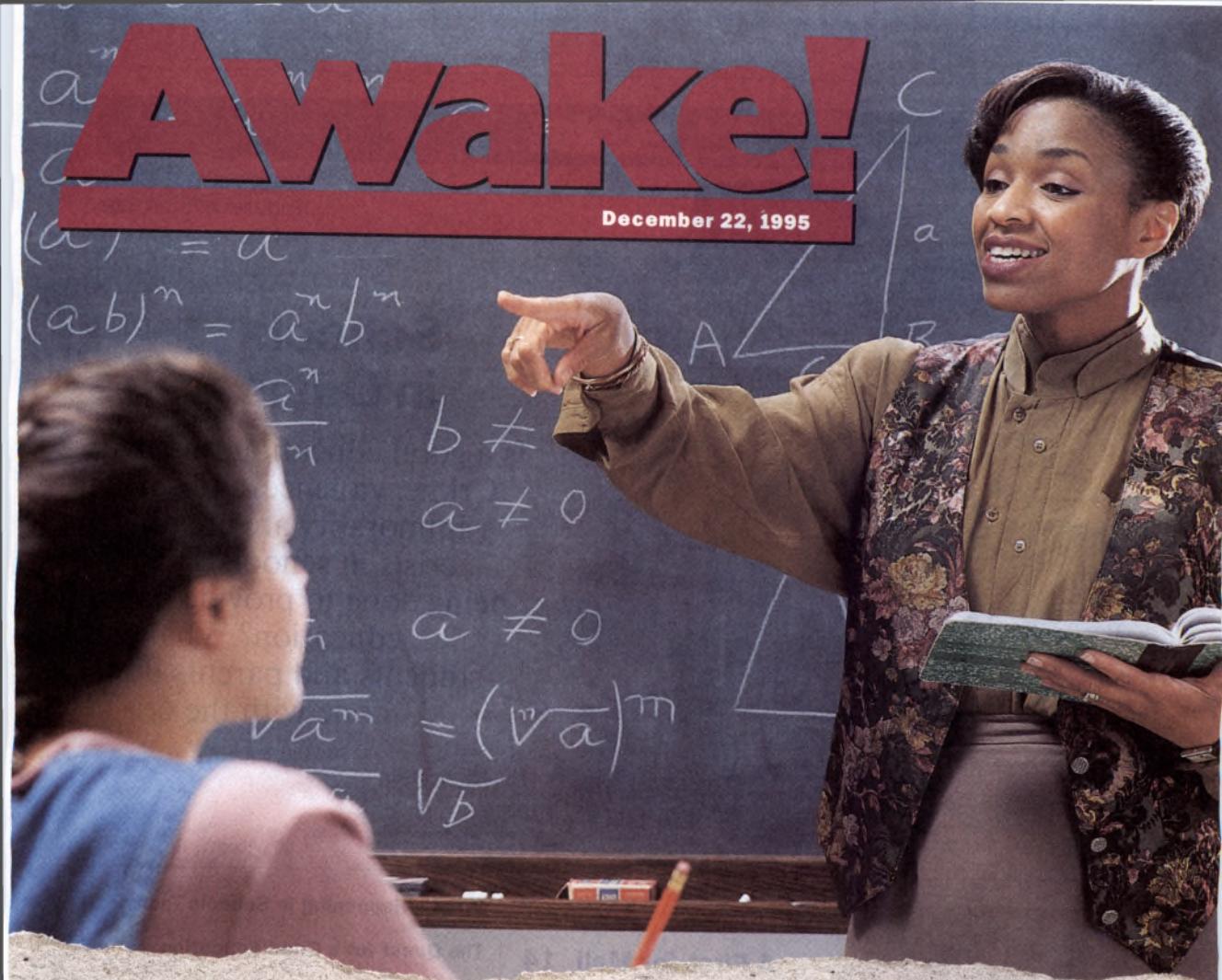


Awake!

December 22, 1995



Schools in Crisis





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Is a good education possible? Crime, violence, and sexual immorality are creating a crisis in schools. What is being done to provide better education? What can students and parents do to cope with the crisis?



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What's Happening in Schools Today?



UR Schools in Crisis: Bring in Cops Now" was a recent front-page headline in a New York City newspaper. The New York City Board of Education has its own school security guards—a force of 3,200—who patrol the more than 1,000 city schools. Now many want the regular city police brought into the schools to help with security. Are they really needed?

A *New York Times* headline said: "Report Finds 20% of Students in New York City Carry Arms." The head of New York City schools from 1990 to 1992, Joseph Fernandez, admitted: "I've never seen anything like the violence we now have in our big-city schools. . . . I could not imagine when I accepted the chancellorship in New York in 1990 that it would be so bad. It's not a phase, it's a malignancy."

How Bad Is It?

Fernandez reported: "During my first ten months as chancellor, we averaged a school kid murdered every other day—stabbed on subways, shot in school yards or on street corners . . . Some high schools have fifteen or sixteen [security guards] working the halls and grounds." He added: "Violence in our schools is epidemic, and extraordinary measures have had to be taken. Schools in Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit—all the big metropolitan centers—now present the same image of an almost apocalyptic savagery.

"The shame in this is stunningly obvious. Over the last two decades we have come to accept the unacceptable: American schools

as war zones. Houses of fear and intimidation instead of havens of enlightenment."

There are security officers in 245 school systems in the United States, and in 102 of these, the officers are armed. But they are not the only ones armed. According to a University of Michigan study, it is estimated that students in the United States carry some 270,000 guns, not counting other arms, to school every day!

Instead of improving, the situation has grown much worse. The metal detectors used in many schools have failed to stop the flow of weapons. During the fall of 1994, reported incidents of violence in New York City schools rose 28 percent compared with the same period a year earlier! "For the first time ever," explains *Phi Delta Kappan* about a poll taken in the United States, "the category 'fighting, violence, and gangs' shares the number-one position with 'lack of discipline' as the biggest problem confronting local public schools."

School violence has created a crisis for schools in many countries. In Canada, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* carried the headline: "Schools Are Turning Into Danger Zones." And a survey in Melbourne, Australia, revealed that almost 60 percent of primary-school children are driven to and from their school by parents because of fear of assault or abduction.

Violence, however, is only part of the problem. There are other things happening in our schools that cause grave concern.

The Question of Morals

Even though the Bible says that fornication—having sexual relations outside of

marriage—is wrong, schools today do not uphold such sound moral teaching. (Ephesians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Revelation 22:15) Surely this has contributed to the situation Fernandez described when he said: "As many as 80 percent of our teenagers are sexually active." In one high school in Chicago, a third of the female students were pregnant!

Some schools have nurseries to care for students' babies. In addition, condoms are routinely handed out in a futile effort to stem the epidemic of AIDS and of skyrocketing illegitimacy. If condom distribution does not actually encourage students to commit fornication, it condones their doing so. When it comes to morals, what are students to think?

A longtime university teacher said that there is a "surprising number of young people who think there's no right or wrong, that moral choices depend on how you feel." Why do youths think this way? The teacher noted: "Perhaps it was their high-school experience that led them to become moral agnostics." What is the consequence of such moral uncertainty?

A recent newspaper editorial lamented: "No one, it sometimes seems, is to blame for anything. Ever." Yes, the message is that anything goes! Consider an example of the profound effect this can have on students. In a university class on the subject of World

War II and the rise of Nazism, a professor found that most of his students did not believe anyone was to blame for the Holocaust! "In the students' minds," the teacher said, "the Holocaust was like a natural cataclysm: It was inevitable and unavoidable."

Whose fault is it when students are unable to recognize right from wrong?

In the Midst of Critical Times

In defense of schools, a former teacher said: "The problem originates in the community, and the schools simply reflect the problems already existing there." Indeed, it is difficult to successfully teach what society's leaders fail to practice.

Illustrating this, during a time when the immorality of U.S. government officials was headline news, a well-known columnist wrote: "I have no idea how teachers in this cynical age can set about teaching morality.... 'Look at Washington!' the littlest voices will cry. They know . . . that the dirtiest cheating in history has gone on under the roof of that big white house."

The Bible foretold that "in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Surely these are critical times! In view of this, what is being done to cope with the crisis in schools today and to help students get a good education? What can you as parents and students do? The following articles will discuss this.

Awake!®

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The Quest for a Good Education



A GOOD education prepares children to cope successfully with life in today's society. It equips them with academic skills, including the ability to read and write well and to do arithmetic. Moreover, it affects their interaction with others and fortifies wholesome standards of morality.

Because these are critical times, though, such an education is very difficult to provide. A veteran Australian schoolteacher lamented: "Classes are made up of children prone to violence, who use foul, abusive language; children exhausted from lack of sleep as a result of TV viewing; children malnourished or hungry; and children reared without discipline." And teachers will tell you: "Unruly children are impossible to teach."

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, described the dilemma of teachers: "They have got to do drug and alcohol education, sex education, . . . student self-esteem exercises, gang member detection, . . . and a whole bunch of other things. Everything but real teaching. . . . What they're really asked to do is be social workers, moms, dads, therapists, cops, nutritionists, public health workers, medical technicians."

Why is this required of teachers? A summary of the makeup of classrooms in one large city in the northeastern United States indicates why. *The New York Times* reported statements by one expert concerning an average class of 23 students. He said that "8 to 15 were likely to be living in poverty; 3 to have been born to mothers on drugs; 15 to live with single parents."

Clearly, the family is in the process of disintegration. In the United States, nearly 1 of every 3 births is illegitimate, and 1 in every 2 marriages ends in divorce. Yet the percentage of out-of-wedlock births in Denmark, France, Great Britain, and Sweden is even higher. What efforts are being made to cope with the crisis that this situation creates in the schools?

Seeking Solutions

Various experimental or alternative schools have been set up. These are usually smaller—making possible closer supervision—and many develop their own curricula in an effort to meet the needs of children better. In New York City, 48 such smaller schools have opened since 1993, and 50 more are being planned. "It is [school] violence that set off the experiment," *The New York*

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Times noted. By 1992 more than 500 alternative schools had been started in Russia, with over 333,000 students.

On the other hand, *The Toronto Star* reported: "Thousands are shipping their children off to exclusive private schools." In the Canadian province of Ontario alone, almost 75,000 children go to private schools. These are now also found throughout Russia, and the magazine *China Today* says that they have sprung up in China "like bamboo shoots after a spring rain." *The Handbook of Private Schools* provides free listings for nearly 1,700 of such schools in the United States, where the annual tuition can be \$20,000 or more.

Still other parents have opted for teaching their children at home. In the United

In Russia, "a teacher earns half as much as a typical bus driver"

States alone, it is estimated that the home-schooling ranks swelled from about 15,000 in 1970 to as many as one million in 1995.

Different Results

Not all school systems throughout the world are realizing comparable results. In July 1993, Shanker told a group of U.S. educators: "Other countries are running schools and they are getting results that are substantially better than ours." To illustrate, he told about meeting a couple from Russia who had moved to the United States. He related: "They said that even though they had their kid in a very good private school, their eighth-grade youngster was learning what she had learned in the third grade back home."

The former Soviet Union developed a

school system that taught nearly all of its people to read and write. On the other hand, according to a U.S. Department of Education estimate, 27 million Americans can't decipher a street sign or the number on a bus. And Australia's *Canberra Times* reported that "up to 25 per cent of primary school children were going on to high school without being able to read and write."

The crisis in schools now exists to some extent almost everywhere. The 1994 book *Education and Society in the New Russia* says that "72.6 percent of Soviet teachers interviewed agreed that the school system was in a severe crisis." According to Tanya, a veteran teacher in Moscow, a major factor for the crisis is that "parents and students themselves no longer esteem education." She noted, for example, that "a teacher earns half as much as a typical bus driver—or even less."

A Good Education Vital

As human society becomes ever more complex, a good education takes on greater importance. In many places the amount of schooling needed to enable a young adult to get employment that will support him and a future family has become higher. Therefore, those who have mastered basic academic skills will have far better job opportunities. Employers are particularly concerned with the bottom line—how well the job applicant can do the work.

The manager of a job service office observed regarding many high school graduates: "They haven't been taught to work." He added: "In dealing with young people the problem that employers tell me about constantly is that they can't read or write very well. They can't fill out a job application."

Parents will surely want a good education for their children, and young ones will wisely want one for themselves. But it is important that they use the keys needed. What are these keys, and how can they be used?

The Keys to a Good Education



RECENTLY *The New York Times* featured a front-page story about Latoya, a 16-year-old high school student. She was 11, she said, when her father began to beat and sexually abuse her. Her mother, who used drugs, had left the family. "Home," the newspaper reported, "was an abandoned apartment with no toilet, or a room where she was too afraid to sleep." However, Latoya was exceptional. Despite all of this, earlier this year Latoya was president of the National Honor Society at her high school and maintained a B average in honors classes.

What can assist a child even from a bad environment to do well in school? Often, a key to a good education is having a caring adult—preferably one or both of the child's own parents—who is supportive and deeply involved in the child's education. One high school senior felt this was so important that she was moved to say: "It is only with parental support that children can survive in school."

Most teachers agree. A New York City

teacher claimed: "For every student who does well and gets through the educational system—and there are many—there is a parent who was there every step of the way."

Parental Support, an Important Key

Reader's Digest last year explored the question, "Why do some students do better than others?" One of the conclusions was that "strong families give kids an edge in school." Parents of such families provide their children with loving attention and impart to them proper values and goals. But one parent noted: "You can't give the proper guidance if you don't know what's going on at school."

A good way to find out is to visit. A mother who makes visits wrote: "When I walk the halls of my daughter's school, I hear foul, obscene language. Kids are making out everywhere—if it were a movie, it would be rated X." Such visits may help you to appreciate how difficult it is for children today to get a good education, as well as to live a moral life.

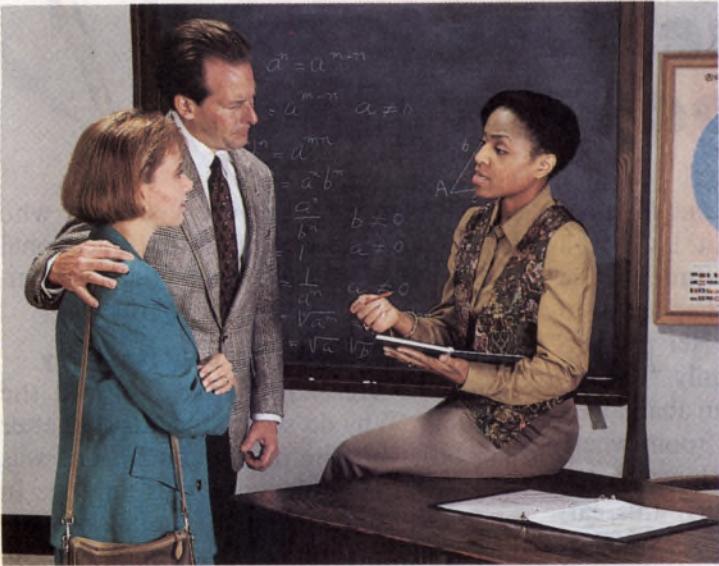
Pampering or Loving Discipline?

The Bible warns that pampering young ones leads to disaster. (Proverbs 29:21) In agreement, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said: "There are parents who think that they're doing everything right for their kids if they do everything the way the kids want them to do it. And we know that's wrong."

Even many young ones know that such pampering is wrong. Earlier this year a Massachusetts newspaper reported: "A sur-

vey of 1572 West Springfield students in grades six through twelve found that 'parental permissiveness' and not peer pressure is a more significant influence in terms of drug and alcohol use among children in this age group."

Such pampering of young ones has also contributed to an epidemic of sexual promiscuity. Indeed, as the Bible says, failure to provide discipline leads to family shame. —Proverbs 29:15.



Listen respectfully if a teacher has complaints about your child

Significantly, the publication *The American Teacher 1994* noted: "Students who have been victims of violence are more likely to say their parents have infrequent communications with school, such as individual meetings with teachers, parents' or group meetings, or visits to the school."

A concerned mother revealed what parents need to do. "Be there!" she said. "Let the school administration know that you're interested in what your child is learning. I visit school often and sit in on classes." Another mother emphasized the value of being a child's advocate. She explained: "My children have gone to the office to speak to a counselor and have literally been ignored. When my child brought me in the next day, they bent over backward to help me—and my child."

This mother of four boys also stressed the importance of taking an interest in school activities that directly affect your child's education. "Attend open house, the science fair—anything your children may be doing that parents are invited to," she said. "This

gives you opportunities to meet your child's teachers. They need to know that you view your child's education as a very important part of his life. When teachers know this, they are more inclined to put time and extra effort into your child."

Cooperation With Teachers

Some parents may feel that they have more important things to do on evenings when schools schedule special occasions for parents to interact with teachers. Yet, really, what is more important than making yourself available to those who are trying to help your children get a good education? Good parent-teacher cooperation is vital!

In Russia there is a fine provision to enhance parent-teacher cooperation. All school assignments are recorded in what is called a Dnievnik—a daily activity record that is combined with a calendar. A student must bring his Dnievnik to each class and make it available to the teacher on request. Students must also show the Dnievnik to their parents, who are requested to sign it each week. As Victor Lobachov, a Moscow father of school-age children, noted, "this information helps parents to keep acquainted with the assignments and grades of their children."

Teachers today, however, often complain that parents fail to take an interest in the education of their children. One high-school teacher in the United States said that he once sent out 63 letters to parents informing them of their children's poor academic performance. Only three parents responded by contacting him!

Truly, that is sad! Parents should be deeply involved in their child's education, which is primarily *their* responsibility. An educator stated the matter correctly when he said: "The primary objective of formal education is to *support parents* in producing responsible young adults."

Thus, parents should take the initiative in getting to know their child's teachers. As one parent said, "the teachers need to feel free to call you at anytime." And parents should welcome—even encourage—teachers to speak openly about their child. Parents should ask such specific questions as: Are you having any problems with my child? Is he respectful? Does he attend all classes? Does he arrive on time?

What if the teacher says something about your child that is not favorable? Do not assume that it is untrue. Unfortunately, many youths who appear to live honorable lives at home or at their place of worship are actually living a double life. So listen respectfully to the teacher, and check out what he or she says.

When Your Child Comes Home

How do you as a parent feel when you return home from work? Stressed out? Frustrated? Your child may feel even worse when he or she comes home from school. So one father encouraged: "Make coming home a nice thing to do. They've probably had a very hard day."

When it is possible, it is certainly desirable for a parent to be at home when the child arrives. As one mother noted, "children can't



Ask your child about school every day

tell you what's going on if you're not there to talk with them. So I make it a point to be there when the kids get home." A parent needs to know not only what his child is doing but also what he or she is thinking and feeling. Finding this out involves a lot of time, effort, and gentle probing. (Proverbs 20:5) A *daily* interchange is important.

A primary-school teacher in New York City noted: "On any given day, values of a school system in crisis may have been imparted to your child." So he encouraged: "Be alert to what is being developed in your child's heart. Take time, regardless of how tired you may be, to draw him out and replace any wrong values with the right ones." —Proverbs 1:5.

Similarly, a veteran high-school teacher advised: "Rather than merely ask what happened in school, it would be beneficial to ask pointed and specific questions concerning the day and its activities. This need not be done in a rigid or prying manner but in casual conversational dialogue with the child."



What Parents Can Do

- ✓ Get to know your child's school, its aims, and its attitude toward the values and beliefs you hold.
- ✓ Become acquainted with your child's teachers, and try to build a good working relationship with them.
- ✓ Take a deep interest in your child's homework. Read with him frequently.
- ✓ Control what your child watches on TV and how much he watches.
- ✓ Watch your child's eating habits. Junk food can have adverse effects on his ability to concentrate.
- ✓ Make sure your child has sufficient sleep. Tired children do not learn well.
- ✓ Try to help your child choose wholesome friends.
- ✓ Be your child's best friend. He needs all the mature friends he can get.

What Children Can Do

- ✓ With your parents' help, work out educational goals and ways to achieve them. Discuss these goals with your teachers.
- ✓ Choose your subjects carefully with the help of your teachers and parents. Optional courses that are easy are generally not the best.
- ✓ Try to build up a good relationship with your teachers. Find out what they expect of you. Discuss your progress and problems with them.
- ✓ Pay good attention in class. Don't be drawn into disruptive behavior.
- ✓ Select your friends wisely. They can help or hinder your progress at school.
- ✓ Do your homework and assignments as well as you can. Give them quality time. Ask your parents or another mature adult for help if you need it.

Richard W. Riley, the U.S. secretary of education, urged: "Talk directly to your children, especially your teenagers, about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the values you want your children to have. Such personal talks, however uncomfortable they make you feel, may save their lives."

Never should a parent, especially one who has responsibilities in a Christian congregation, give the impression that he is too busy to listen to his children. Even though it may be disturbing to hear what they say, let them know by your facial expressions and manner that you are pleased they are speaking freely with you. One student advised: "Don't be shocked when your child talks about drugs or sex in school."

Because of the breakdown in family life, there are many today who may be referred to as "fatherless boys." (Job 24:3; 29:12; Psalm 146:9) Within a Christian congregation, there is usually someone who can assist a youngster who needs help. Are you one who can?

Promote Study and Responsibility

Most young people are not as committed to schoolwork as Latoya, who was mentioned in the introduction. The majority need a lot of encouragement to study. Regarding his own children, former New York City school chancellor Joseph Fernandez said: "We had mandatory study periods in the home. We made books available, encouraged trips to the library, and made priorities out of attendance and involvement."

Another school administrator said: "We need to surround our children with books and stories the way we now surround them with television, movies, videos and malls." When children are doing their homework, parents may be able to arrange to be nearby doing some personal study or reading. Your children can thereby see that you value education.

In many homes television is the greatest challenge to studying. "By age 18," one educator said, "young people have spent 11,000 hours in the classroom and 22,000 watching television." Parents may need to limit TV viewing by their children, perhaps only watching it occasionally themselves. In addition, commit yourselves to learning something with your children. Read together. Schedule daily time to check homework.

In school your children will receive many assignments to prepare. Will they fulfill these? They probably will if you have taught them to care for responsibilities at home. An important way to do this is to assign them a daily routine of chores. Then require that they fulfill these according to a specific schedule. True, such training will take a lot of effort on your part, but it will teach your children the sense of responsibility that they need in order to succeed in school and later in life.

Student Commitment, a Vital Key

Guidance counselor Arthur Kirson identified another key to a good education when he said regarding Latoya, mentioned at the beginning: "The first time I met her was after one of the major incidents at home. Here's this kid sitting with a scratched up face [from the alleged abuse suffered from her father]. And the only thing I've ever seen her worry about is her school work."

Yes, a vital key to a good education is a child's intense *commitment* to learning. A New York City youth observed: "In schools nowadays it's completely up to the students to develop self-motivation and discipline in order to benefit."

For example, a mother who was concerned about her child's education was told by a teacher: "Don't worry Mrs. Smith. Justin's so smart, he won't need to know how to spell. He'll have a secretary do it for him."

Regardless of how smart a child is, mastering the skills of reading and writing—including clear composition, readable penmanship, and accurate spelling—is important.

Shockingly, some educators failed to protest when renowned psychologist Carl Rogers claimed: "No one should ever be trying to learn something for which one sees no relevance." What is wrong with his statement? As should be obvious, a child often cannot foresee the future value of what he is asked to learn. In many cases the value of it is not realized until later in life. Clearly, a child today needs personal commitment to get a good education!

Cindy, a 14-year-old ninth grader, is a good example of a youth who demonstrates such commitment. She explained: "I stay after school and talk to the teachers and get to know them. I try to determine what they want from their students." She also pays attention in class and gives her homework priority. When listening in class or when reading, successful students make it a habit to do so with pencil and paper handy so they can take good notes.

Also vital to getting a good education is a commitment to avoid bad associates. Cindy related: "I am always looking for somebody who has good morals. For example, I'll ask schoolmates what they think about so-and-so's using drugs or sleeping around. If they say something like, 'What's wrong with it?' I realize that they are not good associates. But if someone shows real disgust with such behavior and says she wants to be different, then I'll choose her to sit next to at lunch period."

There are clearly many challenges to getting a good education today. But such an education is possible if both students and parents use the keys. Next we will consider another provision that can assist you tremendously in obtaining a good education.

A Successful Worldwide School



THIS is not some expensive private school or prestigious university that only a select few can attend. No, this school operates without charge to its students. Sessions of it are likely being held at a location near you. It is called the Theocratic Ministry School, and it is conducted at the meeting places of Jehovah's Witnesses. Some five million persons worldwide attend this school.

You may wonder, 'What are the requirements for enrollment? What is taught in the school? How is it conducted? And how are people benefiting from it?'

Requirements

While all persons are welcome to attend the Theocratic Ministry School, those who enroll must be in agreement with the teachings of the school's principal textbook, the Bible. They are required to lead a life that meets the moral requirements of the Bible. So students cannot be living a life of immorality. They cannot be thieves, drunkards, fornicators, users of tobacco, and so forth.

—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Many schools today have abandoned dress codes, but students who are enrolled in the Theocratic Ministry School are expected to be modestly attired in clean clothes. (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) There is no age requirement for this school. Children as young as four or five who are able to read are enrolled and regularly handle assignments, as do men and women in their 90's.

Format and Curriculum

To make attendance convenient, the 45-minute-long sessions of the Theocratic Ministry School are almost always held on

a midweek evening. Following brief welcoming comments by the school instructor, the first speaker for the evening gives a 10-to-15-minute talk based on one of the school's textbooks. Then, he often conducts a three-to-five-minute oral review of the material he has covered.

Next, a qualified teacher covers highlights of the weekly Bible-reading assignment, which is generally composed of from two to four chapters in the Bible. Six minutes is allowed for this review. Students who keep up with this weekly homework assignment will over a period of time read the entire Bible.

After the Bible highlights, three student presentations are given, each of which is limited to five minutes. One is a Bible reading from a portion of the homework assignment. The other two presentations are based on school text material that all students are encouraged to read in preparation for class. After each student's assignment, the school instructor offers commendation and, often, suggestions for improvement.

The school instructor's counsel is based on the publication *Theocratic Ministry School Guidebook*, which each student is expected to study carefully. To improve on a particular speech quality for his next assignment, the student may be asked to review a chapter from the guidebook, such as "Audience Contact and Use of Notes," "Fitting Illustrations," "Use of Repetition and Gestures," and "Sense Stress and Modulation."

In some communities the Theocratic Ministry School has an extension literacy and reading-improvement class. Tens of thousands have learned to read or improve



The Theocratic Ministry School is helping millions to get a good education

their reading in such literacy classes. For example, in Mexico between 1946 and 1994, more than 127,000 were helped to become literate.

Assisting Millions

Throughout the world the Theocratic Ministry School is supporting parental efforts to provide a good education for their children. Sixteen-year-old Moriah said: "I learned to dig for information and to rehearse my presentations. Now every assignment I get in high school is a piece of cake."

Fifteen-year-old Matthew, who enrolled in the Ministry School at age seven, noted: "I have a great advantage over my peers when it comes to academic achievement. I have acquired study and listening skills and the ability to deliver speeches with effectiveness." His 17-year-old brother, Phil, added: "The Theocratic Ministry School has made me more confident. I know that if given an assignment, I can handle it."

The Theocratic Ministry School has also educated adults. Michael, who reached

goals such as giving presentations to management, explained: "I was extremely timid when I joined the Ministry School. I am no longer shy. The school provided the safe environment, the knowledge, the skills, and the personal encouragement that I needed to break out of my shell." A parent noted: "I feel that I have made up for missed opportunities of learning as a youth."

In a small Latin-American village, members of the Department of Education attended the Theocratic Ministry School. After listening to a local speaker, one of the visitors, a school principal, exclaimed: "It is not possible that this man that we have always known as an illiterate is able to converse in Spanish [rather than his native dialect], much less to talk to an audience, but he is."

Indeed, the Theocratic Ministry School is one of the finest schools in the world! It can help both young and old to get a good education. As one youth said, "I would recommend that anyone who is considering joining the school join immediately."

A First for Mali

MY HUSBAND serves as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mali, a sparsely populated country in western Africa. Its northern part is covered by the Sahara Desert, and most of the rest of the country is made up of rolling grasslands. Mali is larger than England, France, and Spain combined. Although these countries have over 140 million inhabitants, Mali has a population of only some ten million—about 150 of whom are Witnesses.

Our home base is Ziguinchor, a small city in neighboring Senegal. In November 1994 we flew from there to Dakar, then on to the capital of Mali, Bamako, a large city of well over a half million inhabitants. From Bamako we traveled either by bush taxi, bus, or train to smaller cities, such as Ségou, San, and the ancient city of Mopti. We stayed in each of these places about a week to share in the Christian ministry with the few Witnesses there.

In December we returned to Bamako to enjoy the district convention, which had a peak attendance of 273. How delighted we were to see 14 new ones baptized! The day after the convention, we left by bus for the small city of Sikasso, where the first Kingdom Hall in Mali constructed by Jehovah's Witnesses was scheduled to be dedicated the following weekend.

A Real Challenge

The congregation in Sikasso is made up of only 13 Witnesses, 5 of whom are pioneers, or full-time ministers. When we arrive on Monday, we are anxious to hear what their plans are for the dedication. They tell us that they are counting on my husband, Mike, to arrange for it! So after unpacking

our luggage, we are off to look at the Kingdom Hall. When seeing it, we are thrilled that such a building could be built by just this handful of Witnesses. However, much is yet to be done. There are no curtains, the outside is not painted, and there is no sign "Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses."

We realize that in a few days, at least 50 visitors are coming from Bamako to attend the dedication. Local people have also been invited. The congregation has just one elder, Pierre Sadio. When we ask him how he expects to finish the hall before Saturday, the day of the dedication, the friends draw closer to hear his reply. "I think Jehovah will help us to finish in time," he answers.

So much has to be done in such a short period of time! I hesitantly ask if I may help provide the curtains. A big smile of relief appears on the faces around me. Then Mike suggests that we get a sign made for the front of the hall. Soon we are all talking at once. Everyone is so excited. It will be a real challenge to put the finishing touches on the hall in time!

A Flurry of Activity

We Christian sisters rush off to the marketplace to pick out the material. Afterward we find a tailor to make the curtains. "You have four days to finish them," we tell him. To provide something decorative, Mike volunteers to do a lovely macramé plant hanger for the front of the hall. So off we go again, this time to find the rope needed for the plant hanger as well as to find a flowerpot.

Arrangements are also made for someone to provide the Kingdom Hall sign. Inside and outside the hall, there is a flurry of activity. A group of neighbors gather to watch. There is so much to do! How will we feed the

50 visitors? Where will they sleep? We race all week to prepare, but nothing seems to go smoothly.

We are up early Friday, the day before the dedication. The air is filled with excitement because the visitors from Bamako are to arrive. Around noon the Kingdom Hall sign arrives. When Mike unveils it, the brothers sigh in admiration. Even the curious onlookers watch in appreciation. We wait impatiently as it is attached to the front wall. Now it is evident that this is not just an ordinary building. It is the "Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses."

Nearby, at a pioneer's house, the sisters are busy cooking. A big, black caldron boils over with food. We just finish clearing the paint pails and brooms from the side of the hall when shouts ring out: "They're here! They're here!" The friends come running from the hall, others from the house. The neighbors are amazed by it all. The brothers dance in excitement. What a reception the friends receive when they get off the bus! I feel so very proud to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses!

I look around at the visitors—friends from local tribes as well as from Burkina Faso and Togo. Americans, Canadians, French, and Germans have also come. That night we have a big feast. We build a huge fire to light up the yard. I feel like pinching

myself to be sure that I am actually having the privilege of being part of the event. As the evening wears on, we reluctantly begin to leave for our respective lodgings.

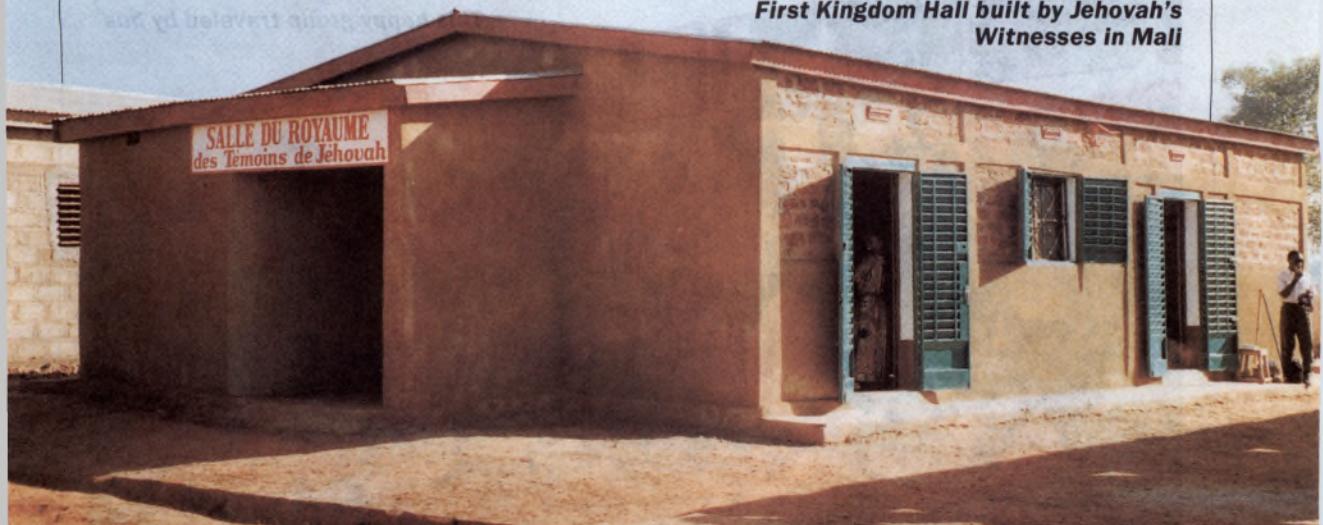
As many as 20 are housed in one dwelling. I can tell it is hard for some. I see a local sister help a French visitor to the outside toilet. The visitor is a relative of one of the missionaries, but she is not a Witness herself. As they return, she says: "You people are so poor, but you really are so loving and kind." I feel like saying: "No, they're not poor. All of Jehovah's people are rich!" Really, where else can you see such a diversified group of people living in peace and harmony?

A Moving Dedication

The night is short, and dedication day arrives quickly. After a meeting for the field ministry at the Kingdom Hall, the Witnesses go out and invite people of the town to the dedication. I stay behind to arrange flowers and plants. The local sisters bustle around cooking for the evening.

Finally, at four o'clock, the time of the dedication arrives. A total of 92 are present, yet the hall is not overcrowded. I'm so excited that it's hard to sit still. Pierre Sadio gives the history of the work in Sikasso. When he was assigned here, there were just he and his wife and their two children. Life was very rough, but in time Jehovah

First Kingdom Hall built by Jehovah's Witnesses in Mali



blessed their service. The first person to become a Witness in Sikasso is now a special pioneer. Then Pierre explains how the few Witnesses were able to build. They hired a mason, and every Sunday the whole congregation worked all day on the project.

Now Mike interviews friends who worked on the hall. One by one, he asks them if they ever thought that this day would come and how they feel when they look at the Kingdom Hall full of people. Most become so choked up that they can hardly finish their comments. Among the Witnesses present, there is not a dry eye.

Next the dedication discourse is given by Ted Petras from the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Senegal. The dedication prayer is given, and the brothers clap for the longest time. Afterward Mike invites everyone who helped build the hall to come forward. There they stand, their faces beaming, tears of joy rolling down their cheeks. As we sing the concluding song, I'm feeling so very happy. Being a missionary allows me to be in on the most wonderful experiences. We would have missed so much if we had stayed home in the United States.

Further Warm Association

After the dedication, refreshments are provided. The sisters file in carrying large plates of watermelon on their heads. They

are followed by two brothers, wearing chef's hats for the occasion and carrying platters of cakes. The flat cakes are gaily decorated with orange slices and lemon slices. The whole atmosphere is so festive.

The visitors leave after they are served. Then the Witnesses proceed to a nearby house for the evening meal. We all sit outside under the full moon, a roaring fire lighting up the yard. I am so excited and tired from the day's activities that I can't finish my meal. I give a half-eaten chicken leg to a little girl. The local pioneers watch our plates, and if anything is left, they finish it. Leftovers do not exist here. We are so spoiled in the United States.

As our evening comes to a close, a brother reminds those who came from Bamako that the bus will pick them up at 9:15 a.m. The next morning the brothers are sitting all over the yard, waiting for the bus to arrive. Then we sing one last song, "We Thank You, Jehovah." The tears start flowing, and just as we are finishing, the bus comes into view. All the brothers and sisters hug one another.

We stand there waving as the bus slowly pulls out. All in the bus wave until it disappears from sight. After that, those of us who remain turn to look at one another. It was a truly wonderful dedication and a wonderful week.—Contributed.



This happy group traveled by bus



**Young
People
Ask...**

Should I Attend Rock Concerts?

A well-known band is coming to your hometown. Tickets are selling fast, so you must decide now. Are you going to attend?

WHOLESOME music in a suitable setting can be a good thing. After all, Jehovah God created us with the ability to enjoy music, and a great variety of music is acceptable to him.

Among youths today, the music of choice is usually rock music in any of its many forms. Many enjoy it the most when it is performed live. Nevertheless, among other things, reports of mayhem and wild behavior at rock concerts raise serious questions for God-fearing youths. Just what goes on

at rock concerts? Would attending one be a good idea?

Testing out the Music

First, let's consider the music itself. Music can express—and arouse—a wide range of emotions. In Bible times, God's people often used music to express their love for God. (Psalm 149:3; 150:4) Music was also used to express joy, excitement, and sorrow. (Genesis 31:27; Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6, 7; Matthew 9:23, 24) Sad to say, though, music was not always wholesome even in Bible times. Wild, sensual music may have played a role in inciting some Israelites to sin when the nation camped at Mount Sinai.—Exodus 32:1-6, 17, 18, 25.

To be honest, much of rock music likewise promotes bad things—sexual immorality, drugs, rebellion, spiritism. This does not necessarily mean you have to swear off music, but the Bible does tell Christians to "keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:10) So you have to be selective and discerning when it comes to music.*

How does your choice of music affect you? Does it make you feel happy, calm, or peaceful? Or does it make you feel angry, rebellious, or depressed? One Christian man in Denmark recalls the days when he was a fan of heavy metal, a form of rock music. He says: "I would listen to it while working. And if I made a mistake, I would get so mad that I would crush the thing I was working on and throw it away in a fit of anger!" Another youth admits: "I listened to much rap and heavy metal that glorified sex and a worldly life-style. This music fed my mind, and the result was a craving for the things they sang about." Now if a mere recording can have such an effect, think of the power of a live performance!

* See the "Young People Ask . . ." articles on music appearing in the February 8, February 22, and March 22, 1993, issues of *Awake!*



Alcohol, drugs, and wild behavior are common at rock concerts

Consider too: Just how *loud* will the music be? Granted, people have different preferences in this regard. And the Bible does not rule out reasonably loud music. Why, at the dedication of Solomon's temple, the trumpeters alone numbered 120! (2 Chronicles 5:12) That must have been impressively loud! However, there is a world of difference between a loud shout of praise to God and earsplitting rock music. In the latter case, the loudness is often used to stir the crowd into a spirit of wild abandon. But the Bible condemns "revelries," or "wild parties." (Galatians 5:21; *Byington*) And respect for your body would rule out listening to music at a level that is so loud that you risk damaging your hearing.—Romans 12:1.

Another point to consider is made at Job 12:11. There the Bible asks: "Does not the ear itself test out words as the palate tastes food?" In harmony with this, you should "test out" the song lyrics! One Christian youth admits: "I started listening to the lyrics of some of the songs that I liked, and to my surprise they were not fit for a Christian to listen to. I found it necessary to get rid of

that music." (1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 5:3, 4) Be forewarned, too, that many performers use concerts to promote their latest releases—material that may be markedly different from their older, perhaps more wholesome, music.

In addition, you should be sure the music has no demonic overtones—something particularly prominent in forms of heavy-metal music. Heavy-metal bands are notorious for adorning themselves and their albums with demonic symbols and satanic paraphernalia. (James 3:15) Attending a concert by such a group could hardly be pleasing to God, who commands us to "oppose the Devil!"—James 4:7.

Out Of Control

What might take place at the concert itself? One teenage girl named Stacey went with her friends to see a band that they felt played relatively innocent music. But in the middle of the concert, the band's lead singer simulated a séance and invited the audience to join in trying to contact the spirit world! Just a gag? Perhaps. But since the Bible condemns spiritism in any form, Stacey

and her friends felt obliged to walk out.—Levitcus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:10-13; Revelation 22:15.

Other Christian youths have had similarly harrowing experiences, for while overt spiritism may be relatively rare at rock concerts, out-of-control behavior is common. At one concert the band helped instigate a riot that resulted in 60 injuries and over \$200,000 in damages! At yet another concert, three youths were crushed to death. True, most rock concerts do not end up in rioting, injuries, or deaths. But there is an obvious need for caution. Proverbs 22:3 says: "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."

So if you should think of going to a concert, get the facts. Does the band have a reputation for inciting out-of-control behavior? What type of audience does the band attract? (1 Corinthians 15:33) To what extent does use of alcohol and drugs go on? And what about the concert hall itself? Has it experienced problems with security in the past? What will the seating arrangements be? When seating is a free-for-all, the likelihood of someone getting hurt is greatly increased.

Drug and alcohol abuse are epidemic at rock concerts. "People don't come for the music," said one disillusioned Christian man who in his youth attended a concert by a classic rock band. "They come to get drunk." He decided it was his last rock concert. One teenage Christian girl similarly reports: "I remember going to a concert where a 'progressive' band was playing. It was so awful! People were smoking pot. The language was horrible, and many there looked like Satan worshipers because of the way they were dressed." Even where drugs and alcohol are vigorously prohibited, it is not uncommon

for many in the audience to arrive already intoxicated. Could attending such an affair possibly be in harmony with the Bible's command to "repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind"?—Titus 2:12.

The Power of Environment

You might feel, though, that there's no need for you to worry about how those around you behave as long as you don't join in the mayhem yourself. However, your environment does affect you. At Ephesians 2:2, the Bible speaks of "the *authority* of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience." Note that this world has a "spirit," or dominant mental attitude. It is everywhere, as pervasive as the air itself. But observe also that this spirit, or attitude, has "authority"—the power to alter your thoughts, feelings, and behavior—if you expose yourself to it! You simply cannot breathe in this powerful air and be unaffected.

In most cases rock concerts are high-level exposures to the world's spirit. One can easily be drawn into the rowdy atmosphere that usually prevails—or into the screaming and waving that amount to almost worshipful adoration of the performers. Such excess admiration negates the adoration that rightfully belongs to God. It amounts to idolatry, something clearly condemned in the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 5:21) Do you want to risk getting swept up into it?

It is safe to say that most rock concerts involve risks that overshadow any benefits one might gain by attending them. Of course, your parents will have the final say as to whether or not attending a particular concert will be allowed. But if you have the freedom to make that decision yourself, choose wisely. There are many ways of enjoying oneself that are wholesome and do not entail the risks of attending rock concerts.

The Challenge of Living With Tourette Syndrome

AS A toddler, Edward was overactive. He would frantically empty cupboards, throw pillows, and move chairs from one room to another. He was—in his mother's words—"a holy terror."

But when Edward started school, his behavior became even more startling. First, he began to make strange siren noises. Later, he developed twitches in his face and neck. He would grunt, bark, and make other odd sounds. He even had outbursts of vulgarity.

To an observer it might have seemed that Edward was a spoiled child who just needed discipline. In reality, however, he suffered from Tourette syndrome, a neurological disorder characterized by spasmodic muscular and vocal tics.

Many children develop temporary minor tics as a normal phase of development. But Tourette syndrome, usually with lifelong symptoms, is the most severe in the range of tic disorders.* Despite increasing public and professional awareness, this tormenting disorder is still unfamiliar to many persons, and its bizarre symptoms are easily misunderstood.

What Causes Their Tics?

Admittedly, the muscular tics associated with Tourette syndrome can seem peculiar. Twitches in the face, neck, shoulders, or limbs may occur. Symptoms may also include odd mannerisms, such as repeatedly touching the nose, rolling the eyes, or pulling or flicking the hair.

* Tourette syndrome is three times more common in males than in females. For this reason we will refer to the Tourette patient in the masculine gender. Of course, the same principles apply to females with Tourette syndrome.

Vocal tics can be even more disturbing. Some of these are involuntary throat-clearing, sniffing, barking, whistling, cursing, and repeating words or phrases. "By the time my daughter was seven," says Holly, "she repeated *everything*. If she was watching TV, she would repeat what she heard, or if you talked to her, she would echo what you said. You might think she was being a smart aleck!"

What causes these strange tics? Experts say that a chemical imbalance in the brain may be involved. Yet, there is still much to learn about the disorder. Chemical abnormalities are considered important, but *The American Journal of Psychiatry* reports: "The exact nature of these abnormalities remains to be determined."*

Whatever the exact cause, most experts say that Tourette syndrome is a physical disorder over which the sufferer has little control. Therefore, simply telling a child or an adult with Tourette syndrome, "Stop doing that" or, "Stop making that noise," is futile. "He wants to stop even more than you want him to," says the brochure *Coping With Tourette Syndrome*. Pressuring him to stop will likely add stress, which may even cause the tics to increase! There are more effective ways to cope with Tourette syndrome, for the sufferer as well as for his family and friends.

* Studies have shown that as many as one half of Tourette syndrome patients are also afflicted with obsessive-compulsive symptoms, and one half display Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder symptoms. The relationship between these disorders and Tourette syndrome is still being researched.

Support From Parents

Elinor Peretsman of the Tourette Syndrome Association told *Awake!*: "Adults who grew up with Tourette syndrome and who are now leading successful lives all say that they got wonderful help from their families. They were loved and supported, not berated or blamed for their condition."

Yes, a child with Tourette syndrome must have—and must sense that he has—parental support. For this to be accomplished, parents must work *as a team*. Neither parent should carry the entire load. A child who senses one parent's passive withdrawal may begin to blame himself for his condition. "What did I do to get this way?" cried one teenage Tourette sufferer. But, as already noted, the tics are involuntary. Both parents can reinforce this truth by taking an active part in the child's life.

Admittedly, this is not always easy. At times parents—especially fathers—feel somewhat embarrassed by the child's symptoms. "I hate to take my boy to movies or sporting events," confesses one father. "People turn around and glare at him when he tics. Then I get angry at them, feel helpless about the situation, and end up taking it out on my son."

As this candid statement reveals, often the greatest challenge for parents is their own view of the disorder. Therefore, if your child has Tourette syndrome, ask yourself, 'Am I more concerned about the embarrassment that the disorder causes *me* than about the embarrassment that it causes *my child*?' "Always put your feelings of awkwardness aside," urges one parent. Remember, your embarrassment is minute compared with that of the sufferer.

In contrast, mothers usually must guard against the other extreme, that of becoming exclusively focused on the one child to the exclusion of her husband and the other

The Role of Discipline

OBVIOUSLY it would be wrong to chastise a child simply for the involuntary manifestations common to Tourette syndrome. The presence of such behavior does not mean that the child is not being properly disciplined. However, the word "discipline" can mean "to train or develop by instruction and exercise." While tics cannot be eliminated, parents can train the child to subdue unacceptable behavior that is a by-product of the disorder. How?

(1) Teach him that actions have consequences. A child with Tourette syndrome needs to know that his impulsive actions have consequences. Teach him this by asking questions about everyday matters, such as, 'What would happen if this food was not put back in the refrigerator?' Allow him to respond. He may say: 'It would get moldy.' Then, let him choose a course of action that would prevent the undesired outcome. He may conclude: 'We should put it back in the refrigerator.' If this is done repeatedly and with a variety of situations, the child can be trained to think before impulsively acting.

(2) Set boundaries. This is especially important if a child's behavior is potentially harmful to himself or to others. For instance, a child with a compulsion to touch a hot stove can be told that he is not allowed near the stove. A child who tends to get excessively angry can be taught to go to a private place until he cools down. Make it clear which actions are appropriate and which ones are not.

(3) If possible, teach the child to modify objectionable tics. Some can control their tics temporarily. Often, however, forcing such restraint simply delays the inevitable outburst. A better approach is to help the child modify tics that are socially objectionable. For example, spitting can be made less objectionable by having the child carry a handkerchief. This teaches the child responsibility for managing this symptom so that he can function in society.

"We must not be afraid to discipline," says *Discipline and the TS Child*. "Over time this will give him the knowledge and self-confidence that he can function autonomously, without us there, in any social situation."

children. Balance is required so that no one is neglected. Parents still need time to themselves. Also, notes a parent named Holly, "you have to spend private time with each of the siblings, so that they don't feel encompassed by the child with Tourette syndrome." Of course, both parents must cooperate to achieve this family balance.

What about discipline? Having Tourette syndrome does not take away the need for training. On the contrary, since the disorder is often accompanied by impulsive behavior, structure and guidance are all the more essential.

Of course, each child is different. Symptoms vary in type and degree from one person to another. But experts say that regardless of the tics, you can teach the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Support From Friends

Do you have an acquaintance who has Tourette syndrome? If so, you can do much to alleviate his turmoil. How?

First, learn to see the person behind the illness. The *Harvard Medical School Health Letter* says: "Behind the unusual movements, the strange sounds, and the aberrant behavior is someone who desperately wants to be normal and who needs to be understood as a person as well as a patient." Indeed, persons with Tourette syndrome do

feel the pain of being different. This feeling can be more disabling than the tics!

So do not withdraw from someone with this disorder. The Tourette patient needs association. You may well benefit from his company too! Nancy, the mother of a 15-year-old boy with Tourette syndrome, says: "Those who stay away from my son miss out on the opportunity to learn empathy. We come out of any experience with an education, and living with my son has taught me to be more understanding and not to prejudge." Yes, insight will help friends to be supportive and not judgmental.—Compare Proverbs 19:11.

Debbie, one of Jehovah's Witnesses whose symptoms began at the age of 11, says: "I have lots of friends at the Kingdom Hall, including traveling overseers, who love me and take my tics in stride."

Help for the Sufferer

Many are relieved simply to know that their tics are due, not to a personal failing, but to a neurological disorder with a name—Tourette syndrome. "I'd never heard of it before," says Jim, "but I was relieved when they put a name to what I had. I thought, 'It's OK. I'm not the only one.' I'd always felt I was."

But what can be done about the tics? Many have been helped by medication. However, results vary from one person to another. Some experience side effects, such as muscular rigidity, fatigue, and depression. Shane, a teenager who has tried several medications, says: "The side effects were less tolerable than the tics. So I decided that I would rather continue without medication as long as possible." For others, side effects may not be as severe. Thus, whether or not to use medication is a personal decision.*

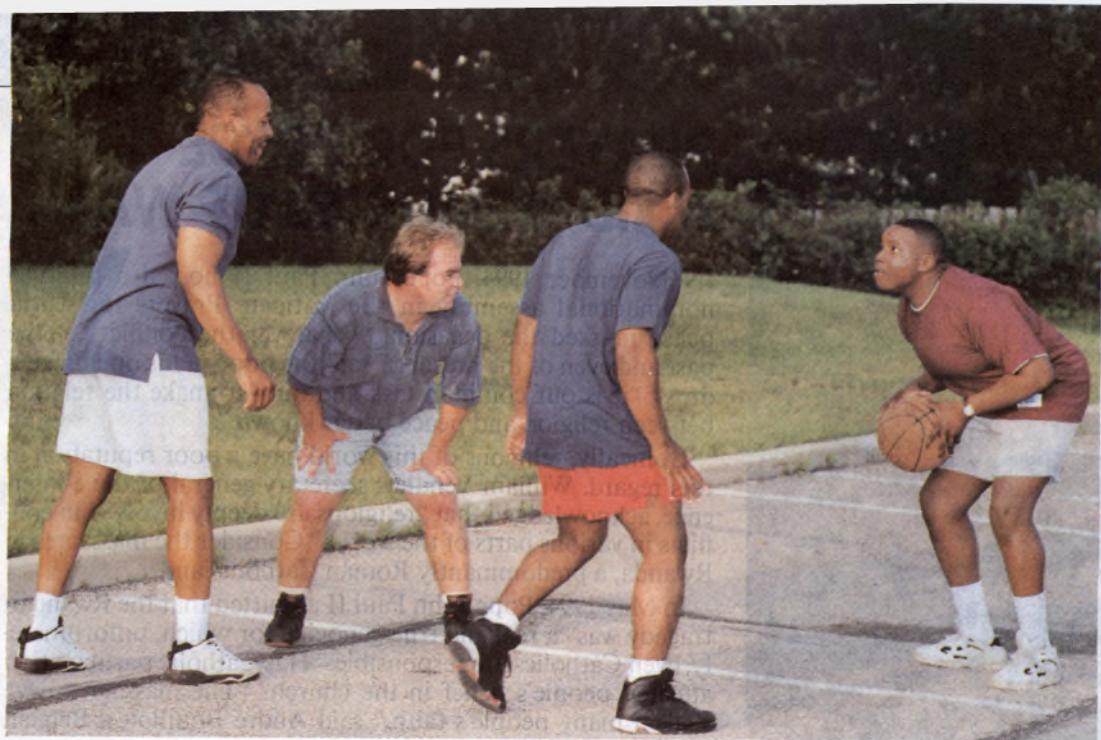
IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our Threatened Planet —Can It Be Saved?

The Greek Orthodox Church —A Religion Divided

Is Mary the "Mother of God"?

* While the link between nutrition and behavioral problems is controversial, some suggest that parents be alert to any foods that seem to intensify a child's tics.



"I don't allow my condition to keep me from everyday activities"

With or without medication, "the social terrors that must be overcome may be the toughest challenge," notes *Parade Magazine*. Kevin, a young man with chronic muscular tics, decided to meet this challenge head-on. "Out of fear of being embarrassed," he says, "I used to turn down invitations to play basketball or to go over to a friend's house. Now I just tell people straight out what I have, and it makes me feel a lot better."

But what if you have Tourette syndrome and your tics are disturbing to others, perhaps including coprolalia, the involuntary outburst of offensive words? You can draw comfort from what the Bible says. It assures us: "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." (1 John 3:20) He knows that you would 'put away' this "obscene talk" if you were physically able to. (Colossians 3:8) Yes, the Creator understands this disorder better than any human. He does not hold one accountable for a physical disorder over which one has no control.

Those who live with Tourette syndrome face a daily challenge. "If you have Tourette syndrome," says Debbie, "be assured that you can still accomplish many things. I have been able to share fully in the preaching work, auxiliary pioneering many times."

Of course, some, whose symptoms are more severe, may be more limited. Mark used to give talks in the Theocratic Ministry School, held at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. Now, at age 15, his coprolalia and screaming tics prevent him from doing so. "This does not make him any less of a Witness," says his mother. "Mark loves Jehovah very much and is looking forward to the time when he will be cured of this terrible disease."

Debbie is also comforted by this hope. She says: "It is wonderful to know that I, along with many others, will no longer have Tourette syndrome in the new world to come."—Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:3, 4.



Luc Delahaye/Sipa Press

PRAYERS FOR PEACE AMID MEMORIES OF WAR

IN November 1994, Pope John Paul II hosted a multidenominational assembly in the Vatican. Prayers for world peace marked the occasion. "Whatever the conflicts of the past and even of the present," said the pope in his opening address, "it is our common task and duty to make the relation between religion and peace better known."

Ironically, religions of this world have a poor reputation in this regard. William Vendley, secretary-general of the conference, acknowledged that "religions are deeply involved in conflicts in various parts of the world." Consider the massacres in Rwanda, a predominantly Roman Catholic land.

In May 1994, Pope John Paul II admitted that the Rwandan tragedy was "a real and true genocide for which, unfortunately, even Catholics are responsible." Has Catholic participation affected people's belief in the church? "The massacres have shaken many people's faith," said André Bouillot, a Belgian Jesuit. And with good reason.

According to a Reuters report published in the *Miami Herald*, "priests, pastors and nuns are among the 40,000 Hutu prisoners awaiting trial for acts of genocide." *The New York Times* reported: "Many Rwandans say their bishops and archbishops did not condemn the massacres quickly or forcefully enough and that they were too close to the Habyarimana Government, which helped to train the death squads. At least one priest has been arrested by the new Tutsi-dominated Government on charges of collaboration in the massacres." Not surprisingly, "the new Government," adds the *Times*, "says it does not want the Catholic Church to be as powerful as before, and soldiers have harassed and even threatened to arrest priests who are too outspoken and independent."

How does Jehovah God view prayers for peace that are offered by bloodguilty religionists? Isaiah 1:15 answers: "When you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed your very hands have become filled."

Meanwhile, Jehovah's true servants remain "no part of the world" and its conflicts. During the massacres in Rwanda, Jehovah's Witnesses of each tribe provided asylum in their homes for threatened Witnesses of the other tribe, thus protecting them at risk to their own lives. The "great crowd" of Witnesses, drawn worldwide from every ethnic background, pray for and advocate God's Kingdom as the only hope for true peace and security.—John 17:14; Revelation 7:9; Matthew 6:9, 10; 24:14.

Doctors Learned From My Near Death

IN MID May 1991, we learned that we were expecting our fourth child. Our youngest, Mikael, was nine, and our twin daughters, Maria and Sara, were 13. Although the addition was unplanned, we soon got used to the idea of having another baby.

One evening in the third month of pregnancy, I felt a sudden pain in my lung. The following day I could hardly walk. The doctor said that I had pneumonia, and she gave me penicillin. I began to feel better after a couple of days, but I was quite weak. Then I suddenly experienced pains in my other lung, and the same procedure was repeated.

During the days that followed, I could not lie down because of difficulty in breathing. A little over a week after the first attack of pain, one of my legs became blue and swollen. This time I was admitted to the hospital. The doctor informed me that the pain in my lungs had not been due to pneumonia but to blood clots. She also said that I had a blood clot in my groin. I learned that blood clots are one of the most common causes of death among pregnant women in Sweden. A few days later, I was moved to the Karolinska Sjukhuset Hospital in Stockholm, which has a special maternity clinic for complicated pregnancies.

The doctors decided to put me on the blood-thinning medication heparin. They assured me that the danger from hemorrhaging due to taking heparin was small compared with the risk of suffering another clot in the lungs. After a couple of weeks, I was well enough to return home. I felt a

warm, ardent happiness at being alive with the lively little child growing inside me.

Time for Delivery

It was decided to induce the delivery, but before steps could be taken to start the procedure, I felt severe pain in my lower abdomen. So I was rushed to the hospital. The doctors, however, could not find anything wrong.

The following evening my abdomen was very swollen, and the pain had not diminished. In the middle of the night, a doctor examined me and found that I was in labor. The next morning my abdomen was swollen even more, and the pain was insufferable. The doctor looked worried and asked when I had last noticed the child's movements. I suddenly realized that it had not been for a long time.

I was immediately rushed to a delivery room. From a distance I could hear the staff talking. "She refuses to have a blood transfusion," someone said. Then a nurse bent over me and said in a loud voice: "You know your child is dead, don't you?" I felt as if someone had stabbed a dagger into my heart.—Proverbs 12:18.

Firm Refusal to Accept Blood

Suddenly my doctor appeared and told me that my condition was extremely serious. He asked if I still wanted to stick to my decision not to accept a blood transfusion. I emphatically stated that I did, but I don't remember much after that. However, I had made very clear to my doctor that Christians are commanded to abstain from blood and that

With my helpful surgeon



I wanted to be obedient to God's law.—Acts 15:28, 29; 21:25.

In the meantime they called for another doctor, Barbro Larson, a skilled surgeon. She quickly arrived and operated immediately. When they opened my abdomen, they found I had lost three liters of blood through internal bleeding. But Dr. Larson respected my decision concerning blood transfusion.

Afterward, another doctor said that it was only a matter of minutes before I would die. "I don't know if she is alive right now," he reportedly claimed. Later it was learned that the doctors could not find the source of the bleeding, so they put a compress in my abdomen. The doctors and nurses offered no hope whatsoever for my survival.

When my children arrived at the hospital and learned of my condition, one of them said that Armageddon will soon be here and that afterward they would have me back in the resurrection. What a wonderful and just arrangement the resurrection is!—John 5:

28, 29; 11:17-44; Acts 24:15; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Life in the Balance

My hemoglobin had fallen to 4 grams per deciliter, but the bleeding seemed to have ceased. Earlier I had put a copy of the *Awake!* magazine of November 22, 1991, in my case record. Dr. Larson found it and noticed the heading, "Preventing and Controlling Hemorrhage Without Blood Transfusion." She eagerly scrutinized it to see if there was something she could use to help me survive. Her eyes fell on the word "erythropoietin," which is a medication that stimulates the body to produce red blood cells. She now administered it. But the medication takes time to produce results. So the question was, Would the erythropoietin work in time?

The following day my hemoglobin level had decreased to 2.9. When I woke up and found all my family at my bedside, I wondered what had happened. I could not speak

because of the respirator. I felt almost hysterical with grief, but I could not even cry. Everybody told me I had to save my strength in order to survive.

The next day I had a fever due to the inflammation caused by the compress left in my abdomen. My hemoglobin had dropped to 2.7. Although it is very dangerous to anesthetize a person in that condition, Dr. Larson explained that despite the risk, they were forced to operate again to remove the compress.

Before the surgery the children were allowed to come in and see me. Everyone thought it was a farewell. Several members of the medical staff were crying. They didn't believe I was going to make it. Our children were very brave, and this made me calm and confident.

Because the anesthetic given was minimal, sometimes I could hear what the staff were saying to one another. Some were talking about me as if I were already dead. Later, when I recounted what I had heard during the operation, a nurse said she was sorry. But she said that she was convinced I was going to die and still didn't understand how I survived.

The following day I felt a little better. My hemoglobin was 2.9, and my hematocrit was 9. My Christian brothers and sisters visited, bringing food and coffee for my family. We were grateful for their love and affection. By evening my condition was still critical but stable, and I was moved to another ward.

The Doctors Learn

Many members of the medical staff were curious about me, and most of them were very kind. One nurse said: "Your God must have saved you." A doctor from another ward came by and commented: "I just want to see what a person with such a low hemoglobin level looks like. I cannot understand how you can be so alert."

The next day, although it was her day off, my doctor came to see me. She told me that she felt a humbleness because of what had happened. If I fully recovered, she said, they were going to initiate new research into alternatives to blood transfusion therapy in treating patients.

My recovery was dramatic. Two and a half weeks after my tragic delivery, my hemoglobin level had increased to a little more than 8. So I was discharged from the hospital. Three days later we had our annual circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I was there. How encouraging it was to see again our Christian brothers and sisters who had been so supportive during our ordeal!—Proverbs 17:17.

As Dr. Larson promised, a report about my case, called "Erythropoietin Replaces Blood Transfusion," was later published in the Swedish medical journal *Läkartidningen*. It said: "A 35-year-old woman, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, suffered an acute massive obstetric bleeding. She refused blood transfusion but accepted erythropoietin therapy. After nine days of postoperative treatment with high doses of erythropoietin, the hemoglobin increased from 2.9 to 8.2 grams per deciliter without any side effects."

The article concluded: "Initially the patient was very weak, but she recovered surprisingly fast. Moreover, the postoperative course was totally without complications. The patient could be discharged from the hospital after two weeks."

Even though this experience was a hard blow for us, we are pleased that as a result, some doctors may have learned more about alternatives to blood transfusion. Hopefully, they will be prepared to try the methods of treatment that have proved successful.—*As told by Ann Ypsiotis.*

WATCHING THE WORLD

World Faces "Health Catastrophe"

"The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill-health and suffering across the globe is . . . extreme poverty." So states *The World Health Report 1995*, published by WHO (World Health Organization). Half of the world's 5.6 billion people do not have access to essential medicines; almost one third of the world's children are undernourished; and one fifth of the global population live in extreme poverty, according to the report. *The Independent*, a London, England, newspaper, quotes the director-general of WHO as warning of a "health catastrophe in which many of the great achievements . . . in recent decades will be thrown into reverse."

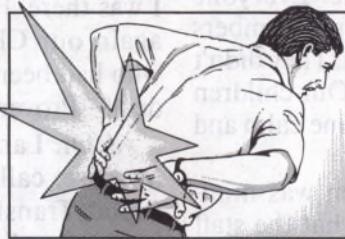
Reducing Crib Deaths

In the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, a program provides all parents of newborn babies with a leaflet informing them of factors that may increase the risk of crib death. After the program was instituted, crib deaths in the state fell by 40 percent, according to the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Following similar programs, Australia, England, the Netherlands, and Norway are said to have experienced reductions of as much as 60 percent in such fatalities. This new crib-death awareness program warns parents against laying the baby down to sleep on its stomach, using a large feather bed or a soft mattress, smoking dur-

ing pregnancy, and exposing the newborn to tobacco smoke.

Coping With Back Pain

Occurring in 90 percent of the people around the world at some time in their lives, low back pain is "the most frequent condition to affect human beings," according to *The Medical Post of Canada*. In the majority of cases, however, expensive



medical intervention may not be necessary. Dr. Garth Russell, an orthopedist, says that "90% of cases of sudden or acute inflammatory back pain (usually following physical activity) involve only severe muscle spasms of the back, and will respond to two to three days of bed rest." Thereafter, Dr. Russell recommends, "begin light exercise and resume your daily activities."

Violent Video Games

Realistic, violent video games are prevalent in the culture of many young people, according to a report in *The Vancouver Sun* of Canada. The paper cites a study demonstrating that young players become physiologically excited when playing such games. Their heart rate increases significantly—in some cases it more than doubles. Of

concern to the researcher was the question, "Do kids keep the violence in the realm of the video game or does it leak into their life?" University of British Columbia education professor Charles Ungerleider believes such games send the message that violence is a way to solve problems. He observes: "It's a peculiar commentary on society that violent video games are an acceptable form of entertainment."

Troublesome Viruses

According to an article in *U.S. News & World Report*, "new plagues as well as old diseases are on the rampage." Why? A number of factors have increased human vulnerability to diseases, explains Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. The factors include the increase in international travel, which results in the introduction of diseases into populations with no immunity. Additionally, what scares people at the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), in Atlanta, Georgia, notes *U.S. News*, "are the mundane microbes, once easily quashed with antibiotics, that have started defeating even the newest and most powerful drugs."

Effects of a Toxic Environment?

According to *The Globe and Mail* newspaper, for the first time, Canada experienced an increase in the national mortality far greater than predicted. Instead of the expected 3-percent increase, deaths among Canadians from 1992 to 1993 increased 4.3 percent, the highest increase

on record. The figures include a rise in infant deaths, the first in 31 years. These increases are unusual and alarming, according to the report. One Canadian expert was reminded of the death of the canary—used in the past to warn of poisonous gases in mines. "Could this be the first indication that the environment is becoming increasingly toxic?" was the question asked.

Youths Pessimistic About Future

Australia used to be called the "lucky country," but an increasing number of Australian young people might not agree with that assessment today. The newspaper *The Australian*, reporting on a study of young people between 15 and 19 years of age, found they had "an 'apocalyptic' vision of Australia's economic future." Students in their 9th, 10th, and 11th year in state, Catholic, and private schools were interviewed. "According to the report, the findings suggest 'quite clearly' that the current generation of 15 and 16-year-olds are 'not rushing to embrace the future'—believing society is getting more violent and unemployment will remain high," the paper said. When asked to describe their lives ten years hence, "most of the respondents identified a deteriorating economy and a society in which individuals had reduced control over their economic destiny."

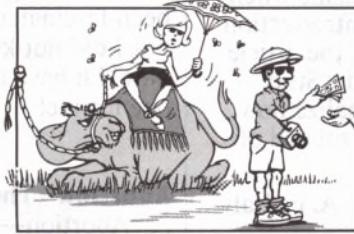
HIV Carriers Not Told

In Japan some doctors are failing to inform HIV carriers of their infection, and spouses of such carriers have been infected. After surveying 363 of the country's hospitals and medical institutions, the Health and

Welfare Ministry revealed that only 43 percent of the institutions inform all HIV patients of their condition. About 28 percent inform only some of their patients. Some hospitals admitted failing to inform their patients at all, while others declined answering the survey's question, said *The Daily Yomiuri*. One main reason given by doctors for withholding information was the "extremely unstable mental condition" of the carriers.

Something New at the Camel Fair

While tourists often look for the unusual when they travel, they themselves may seem quite odd to local residents.



The *International Herald Tribune* reports that Western tourists have discovered what may be the world's largest camel market in the northern desert city of Pushkar, India. There, the camel traders find their foreign visitors amusing. The *Tribune* explains that the "camel drivers marvel at this bizarre breed that turns red under the desert sun, views the world through black boxes held in front of their faces [cameras] and is willing to pay \$2 (more than two days' wages for most desert farmers) for an hour's ride on a lumbering camel." When asked if the growing number of tourists is good or bad, a camel trader re-

plied: "Good. We like to look at them."

China's Eroding Values

"Preoccupation with wealth is threatening the foundation of Chinese society, the family," reports *The Wall Street Journal*. "Families are disintegrating, spawning a selfish 'me generation' of youths. Crime and corruption are at record levels." Children who formerly respected their parents now use them as servants and are unwilling to care for them in their old age, says one researcher. Although many in China still hold to traditional values, these are being eroded as millions leave their homes in search of opportunity elsewhere. "Chasing money has become the goal. For money, people are willing to neglect the good, to neglect social morals," says the public security vice-minister Bai Jingfu.

New Species

Searching for new plant species, British and Brazilian botanists have been exploring a single mountain in northeastern Brazil for over 20 years. So far they have discovered a staggering 131 species that were formerly unknown, all growing within an area of only 66 square miles. This "garden of Eden," as the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* calls the site, grows on 6,420-foot-high Pico das Almas in the Brazilian state of Bahia. Botanists checked some 3,500 herbaria to be sure that all these plants were indeed new discoveries—and they were. Simon Mayo of England's Royal Botanic Gardens told the newspaper: "It is impressive to discover so many plants at the end of the twentieth century."

FROM OUR READERS

Procrastination The article "Procrastination—The Thief of Time" (April 8, 1995) was written in a practical and humorous way. As I read it, I found myself laughing at myself, since I have the terrible habit of procrastinating.

F. B. H., Brazil

I have been a chronic procrastinator most of my life, so this was timely information for me. It was well written, and I plan to use the information to help me structure my time better. Often I have wanted to write a letter of thanks for different articles and never got it done. Now I finally have accomplished that!

M. H., United States

I was leafing through the magazine when I noticed the article. I read the introduction, thinking I would read the rest of the article later. But the opening words said: "Stop! Don't put this article down!" I realize now that I have allowed myself to be robbed of time because of procrastination.

A. E., Italy

I am a tailor, and procrastination had been a way of life for me. I ignored making lists, delegating at the appropriate time, and planning for interruptions. But now I have learned to put your suggestions to use, and I am enjoying the rewards.

S. N., Nigeria

Last Days As a full-time evangelizer, I would like to thank you for our journals. As I was reading the featured series of articles in the April 22, 1995, issue, "Are These the Last Days?" I thought to myself, 'How clear, direct, and well illustrated these articles are! The layout, superb photography, and captions truly brought the points home and made the articles easy to read and comprehend. It was a delight to offer such material to our neighbors!

J. B., United States

Shingles I read your article "Shingles—Coping With the Pain." (April 22, 1995) Three days later I developed a skin rash that closely resembled the description of shingles in your article. I went to the doctor and told him I thought I might have shingles. Sure enough, he told me to "go to the head of the class"—my diagnosis was correct! Since the disease was discovered in an early stage, he said I would be spared much of the pain that most shingles patients get. Thanks for your article!

K. B., United States

Matreshka Thank you for the article "Matreshka—What a Doll!" (April 22, 1995) As I read it, I was struck by the way it was written. The photos are beautiful! I have been fascinated by this doll since I was little, but I did not know anything about its origin. Now I'll have to persuade someone to buy one for me!

M. T., Italy

Abortion The article "Young People Ask . . . Abortion—Is It the Answer?" caught my attention. (March 8, 1995) Twenty-four years ago, when I became pregnant at 15 years of age, I experienced the same flood of emotions as the girls mentioned in the article. The baby's father encouraged me to have an abortion, but I decided to have my baby. My priest wanted me to give my baby up for adoption. I never set foot in the Catholic Church again! My parents, though, were supportive. I began thinking about giving my baby a solid spiritual upbringing. When Jehovah's Witnesses came to our house, I accepted a Bible study and was soon baptized. Today I am happily married. And my son? He is serving at the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. I shudder to think about the first alternative—abortion. It is *not* the answer!

G. J., United States

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They Received First Prize

Two young students in Madras, India, shared the first prize for their model of a space station with a space vehicle and the launchpad. Where did the young boy and girl, seen in this photograph, get the idea for their project?

The youths explained in a letter to the publishers of *Awake!*: "We are taking this opportunity to thank you specially, since we obtained the prizes only because of the series on space exploration that appeared in the September 8, 1992, *Awake!*"

Awake! is published for the enlightenment of the entire family. Customs and people in many lands, the marvels of creation, practical sciences, and points of human interest are all embraced in its coverage.

