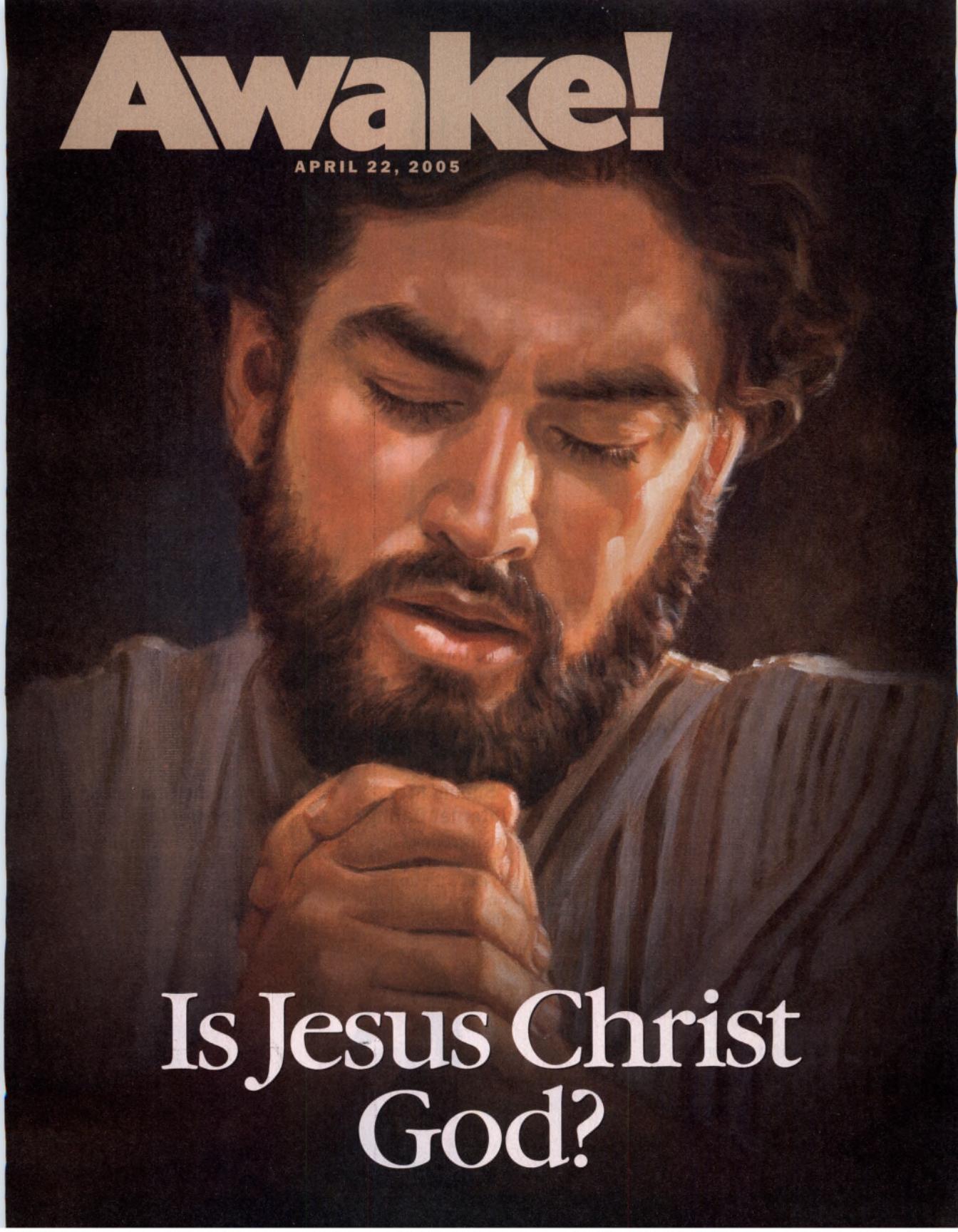


# Awake!

APRIL 22, 2005

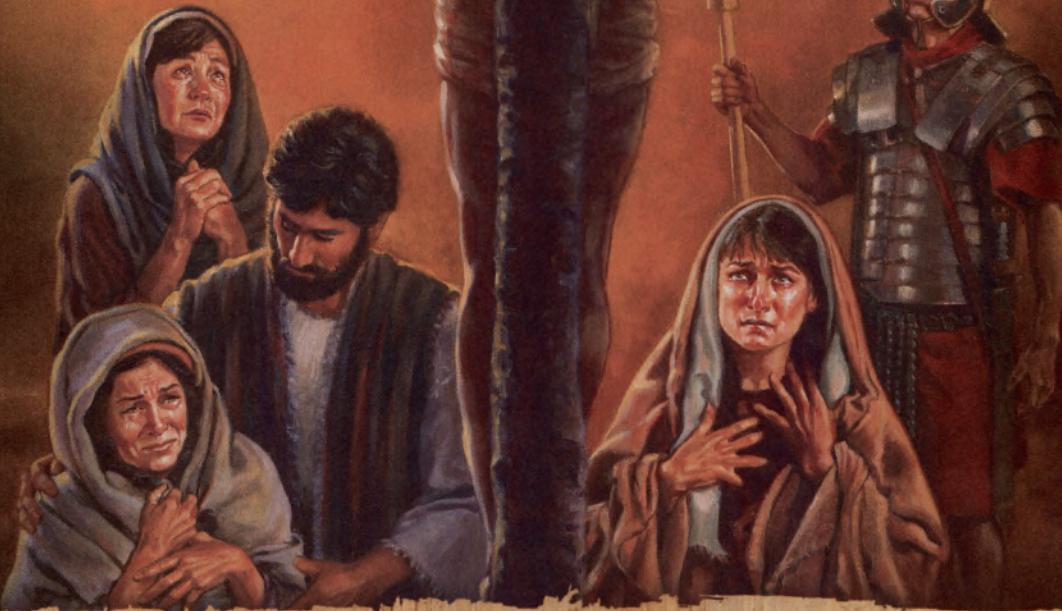


A close-up, dramatic portrait of Jesus Christ. He has dark hair and a full, dark beard. His eyes are closed, and he appears to be in deep prayer or contemplation. His hands are clasped together near his chest. The lighting is warm and focused on his face, while the background is dark and indistinct.

Is Jesus Christ  
God?

# **Awake!**

AVERAGE PRINTING 22,842,000  
PUBLISHED IN 85 LANGUAGES



## **Is Jesus Christ God? 3-11**

Jesus has long been acknowledged as the greatest man who ever lived. Is he also Almighty God, who is called “the only true God”? Learn about God’s grand promises for us.

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# WHO IS Jesus Christ?

ACCORDING to reliable history, a man named Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, a small town in the land of Judea. Herod the Great was king in Jerusalem then, and Caesar Augustus was emperor in Rome. (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:1-7) Roman historians of the first two centuries generally avoided mentioning Jesus, since Roman rulers at that time were trying to suppress Christianity.

On the other hand, *The Historians' History of the World* observes: "The historical result of [Jesus'] activities was more momentous, even from a strictly secular standpoint, than the deeds of any other character of history. A new era, recognised by the chief civilisations of the world, dates from [Jesus'] birth."

*Time* magazine reported that more books have been written about Jesus than any other person in history. Many of these books focus on the question of Jesus' identity, that is, who he really is. There has perhaps been more controversy about this matter than about any other subject in human history.

## Early Questions About Identity

When Mary was told that she would have a child and that she was to name him Jesus, she asked: "How is this to be, since I am having no intercourse with a man?" God's angel Gabriel replied: "Power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, *God's Son.*" —Luke 1:30-35.

Later, Jesus performed miracles that caused his apostles to marvel. When a mighty windstorm threatened to sink their boat on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calmed the waters with the rebuke "Hush! Be quiet!" In astonishment, his apostles exclaimed: "Who really is this?" —Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27.

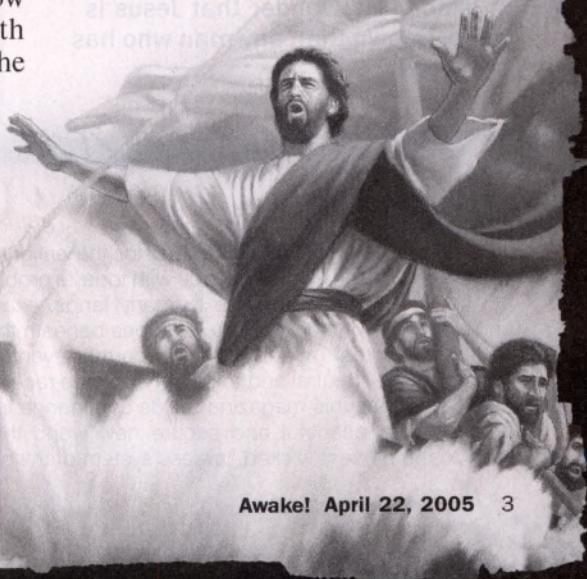
Questions about Jesus' real identity became common among people

of his day, so Jesus asked his apostles who people were saying he was. "Some say John the Baptist," they replied, "others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets"—all of whom were then dead. Afterward Jesus asked: "You, though, who do you say I am?" In answer Simon Peter said: "You are the Christ, *the Son of the living God.*" Even the demons—wicked angels—said of Jesus: "You are the Son of God." —Matthew 16:13-16; Luke 4:41.

## Who Jesus Said He Was

Although Jesus rarely spoke of himself as God's Son, he did acknowledge that he was. (Mark 14:61, 62; John 3:18; 5:25, 26; 11:4) Almost

**"Who really is this?"  
the apostles asked**



invariably, however, he said that he was “the Son of man.” By identifying himself this way, he highlighted his human birth—the fact that he was truly a man. Thus he also revealed himself to be that “son of man” whom Daniel had seen in vision appearing before Almighty God—“the Ancient of Days.”—Matthew 20:28; Daniel 7:13.

Rather than proclaim himself to be God’s Son, Jesus allowed others to reach that conclusion. And even people besides his apostles did so, including John the Baptist and Jesus’

## No One Better Known

The account of Jesus’ life was recorded by four of his contemporaries—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—two of whom were intimate associates. Their books, named after them, are commonly called the Gospels, parts of which can be read in over two thousand languages. These small books are usually incorporated with others that make up the Bible. The circulation of the Gospels—either as individual books or as part of the Bible—is greater by far than that of any other writings in history. No wonder that Jesus is better known than any man who has ever lived!

friend Martha. (John 1:29-34; 11:27) These believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. They learned that he had lived in heaven as a mighty spirit person and that his life had been miraculously transferred by God to the womb of the virgin Mary.—Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20-23.

### Similar to the First Man, Adam

In many respects, Jesus was similar to the first man, Adam. For example, both were perfect men who did not have a human father. (Genesis 2:7, 15) So the Bible calls Jesus “the last Adam”—a perfect man who could serve as “*a corresponding ransom*.” Jesus’ life corresponded to that of “the first man Adam,” whom God created as a perfect human.—1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

The first Adam is called in the Bible “son of God.” (Luke 3:38) However, that Adam lost his precious relationship as God’s son by willfully disobeying God. On the other hand, Jesus was always faithful to his heavenly Father, and he remained God’s approved Son. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) The Bible says that all who exercise faith in Jesus, accepting him as their Savior, can receive everlasting life.—John 3:16, 36; Acts 5:31; Romans 5:12, 17-19.

Yet, some argue that Jesus is not simply the Son of God but that he is actually God himself. They say that he and his Father are both Almighty God. Are they correct? Is Jesus somehow part of God? Is that what Jesus, or any of the Bible writers, said? Really, who is the only true God? Who did Jesus say He is? Let us see.

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Vol. 86, No. 8 Semimonthly ENGLISH

# WHO IS “the Only True God”?

JESUS often prayed to God, whom he called Father, and he also taught others to do so. (Matthew 6:9-11; Luke 11:1, 2)

In prayer with his apostles—only hours before his death—Jesus petitioned: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your son, that your son may glorify you. This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, *the only true God*, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.”—John 17:1, 3.

Notice that Jesus prays to One whom he calls “*the only true God*.” He points to God’s superior position when he continues: “So now you, Father, glorify me *alongside yourself* with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was.” (John 17:5) Since Jesus prayed to God requesting to be *alongside God*, how could Jesus at the same time be “*the only true God*”? Let us examine this matter.

## Jesus’ Position in Heaven

A few hours after this prayer, Jesus was executed. But he was not dead for long—only from Friday afternoon till Sunday morning. (Matthew 27:57-28:6) “This Jesus God resurrected,” the apostle Peter reports, “of which fact we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:31, 32) Could Jesus have resurrected himself? No, according to the Bible, the dead “are con-

scious of nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) “The only true God,” Jesus’ heavenly Father, resurrected his Son.—Acts 2:32; 10:40.

A short time afterward, Jesus’ disciple Stephen was killed by religious persecutors. As they were about to stone him, Stephen was granted a vision. He stated: “Look! I behold the heavens opened up and the *Son of man standing at God’s right hand*.” (Acts 7:56) Jesus, “the *Son of man*,” was thus seen by Stephen in a role supportive to God in heaven—“at God’s right hand”—even as he had been ‘alongside God’ before he came to earth.—John 17:5.

Later, after Stephen’s execution, Jesus made a miraculous appearance to Saul, better known by his Roman name, Paul. (Acts 9:3-6) When Paul was in Athens, Greece, he spoke of “the God that made the world and all the things in it.” He said that this God, the “only true God,” will “judge the inhabited earth in righteousness *by a man* whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that *he has resurrected him from the dead*.” (Acts 17:24, 31) Here the apostle Paul described Jesus as “a man”—yes, lesser than God—whom God had restored to life in heaven.

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The apostle John too described Jesus as subordinate to God. John said that he had written his Gospel so that readers might come to believe that "Jesus is the Christ *the Son of God*"—not that he was *God*. (John 20:31) John also received a heavenly vision in which he saw "the Lamb," who in his Gospel is identified as Jesus. (John 1:29) The Lamb is standing with 144,000 others, who John says "have been bought [or resurrected] from the earth." John explains that the 144,000 have the Lamb's "*name and the name of his Father* written on their foreheads."—Revelation 14:1, 3.

Could "the Lamb" be the same as "his Father"? Clearly not. In the Bible they are distinct. They even have different names.

#### **Name of the Lamb and of the Father**

As we have just seen, the name given to God's Son, the Lamb, is Jesus. (Luke 1:30-32) What about his Father's name? It appears in the Bible thousands of times. For example, Psalm 83:18 says: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." Sadly, God's name, Jehovah, has been replaced in many Bible translations by the terms "LORD" and "GOD," often spelled in all capital letters. The capitals are supposed to distinguish Jehovah from others called gods or lords.\* Yet, in many Bible translations, the Divine Name has been restored to its rightful place.

The English-language *American Standard Version* (1901) is a notable example of a Bible translation that has restored God's name, Jehovah, to its rightful place. Its preface observes: "The American Revisers, after a careful consideration, were brought to the unanimous conviction that a Jewish superstition, which regarded the Divine Name as too sacred to be uttered, ought no longer to dominate in the English or any other version of the Old Testament, as it fortunately does not in

\* See, for example, Psalm 110:1 in the *King James Version*. Both Jesus and Peter quoted this verse.—Matthew 22:42-45; Acts 2:34-36.

the numerous versions made by modern missionaries."\*

#### **The Trinity—Whose Teaching?**

What, then, about the teaching that Jehovah and Jesus are, in effect, the same God, as the Trinity doctrine proclaims? In its issue of April-June 1999, *The Living Pulpit* magazine defined the Trinity this way: "There is one God and Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one Holy Spirit, three 'persons' . . . who are the same or one in essence . . . ; three persons equally God, possessing the same natural properties, yet really distinct, known by their personal characteristics."#

Where did this complex Trinity teaching originate? The *Christian Century*, in its May 20-27, 1998, issue, quotes a pastor who acknowledges that the Trinity is "a teaching of the church rather than a teaching of Jesus." Even though the Trinity is not a teaching of Jesus, is it consistent with what he taught?

#### **The Father—Superior to the Son**

Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Our heavenly Father, whose name is Jehovah, is described in the Bible as being superior to his Son. For example, Jehovah is "from everlasting to everlasting." But the Bible says that Jesus is "the firstborn of every creature." That Jehovah is greater than Jesus, Jesus himself taught when he said: "My Father is greater than I." (Matthew 6:9; Psalm 90:1, 2; Colossians 1:15; John 14:28, *King James Version*) Yet, the Trinity doctrine holds that the Father and the Son are "equally God."

The Father's superiority over the Son, as well as the fact that the Father is a separate person, is highlighted also in the prayers of Jesus, such as the one before his execution:

\* See the article "Should We Use God's Name?" on page 31 of this magazine.

# The Athanasian Creed, formulated a few hundred years after the death of Jesus, defined the Trinity this way: "The Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God."

"Father, if you wish, remove this cup [that is, an ignominious death] from me. *Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place.*" (Luke 22:42) If God and Jesus are "one in essence," as the Trinity doctrine says, how could Jesus' will, or wish, seem different from that of his Father?—Hebrews 5:7, 8; 9:24.

Furthermore, if Jehovah and Jesus were the same, how could one of them be aware of things of which the other was not? Jesus, for instance, said regarding the time of the world's judgment: "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father."—Mark 13:32.

### The Trinity and the Church

The Trinity is not a teaching of Jesus or of the early Christians. As noted previously, it is "a teaching of the church." In its 1999 issue on the Trinity, *The Living Pulpit* observed: "Sometimes, it seems that everyone assumes that the doctrine of the trinity is standard Christian theological fare," but it added that it is not "a biblical idea."

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) discusses the Trinity at length and admits: "The Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th-century invention. . . . The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century."

Martin Werner, as professor at the University of Bern, Switzerland, observed: "Wherever in the New Testament the relationship of Jesus to God, the Father, is brought into consideration, whether with reference to his appearance as a man or to his Messianic status, it is conceived of and represented categorically as subordination." Clearly, what Jesus and the early Christians believed is far different from the Trinity teaching of churches today. From where, then, did this teaching come?

### The Trinity's Early Origins

The Bible tells of many gods and goddesses that people worshiped, including Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech. (1 Kings 11:1, 2, 5, 7) Even many people in the ancient nation of Israel once believed that Baal was the true God. So Jehovah's prophet Elijah presented the challenge: "If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal is, go following him."—1 Kings 18:21.

The worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was also common before Jesus was born. "From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity," observed historian Will Durant. In the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings wrote: "In Indian religion, e.g., we meet with the trinitarian group of Brahmā, Siva, and Viṣṇu; and in Egyptian religion with the trinitarian group of Osiris, Isis, and Horus."

So there are many gods. Did early Christians acknowledge this? And did they view Jesus as Almighty God?



EGYPT

*Triad of Horus, Osiris, and Isis, second millennium B.C.E.*



PALMYRA, SYRIA *Triad of moon god, Lord of Heavens, and sun god, c. first century C.E.*



INDIA

*Triune Hindu godhead, c. seventh century C.E.*

NORWAY *Trinity*

*(Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), c. 13th century C.E.*

# “Those Who Are Called ‘Gods’”

**W**HEN the apostle Paul healed a lame man in Lystra, the people shouted: “The gods have become like humans and have come down to us!” Paul they called Hermes, and his companion Barnabas, Zeus. (Acts 14:8-14) In Ephesus the silversmith Demetrius warned that if Paul was allowed to continue to preach, ‘the temple of the great goddess Artemis would be esteemed as nothing.’—Acts 19:24-28.

People in the first century—like many today—worshiped “those who are called ‘gods,’ whether in heaven or on earth.” Paul, in fact, said: “There are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords.’” However, he also explained: “There is actually to us one God the Father,” and “there is one Lord, Jesus Christ.”—1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.

## Was Jesus Also Called God?

Although Jesus never claimed to be God, as Jehovah’s appointed ruler he is identified in Isaiah’s prophecy by the terms “Mighty God” and “Prince of Peace.” Isaiah’s prophecy adds: “To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7) So, as the “Prince”—the son of the Great King, Jehovah—Jesus will serve as Ruler of the heavenly government of “God Almighty.”—Exodus 6:3.

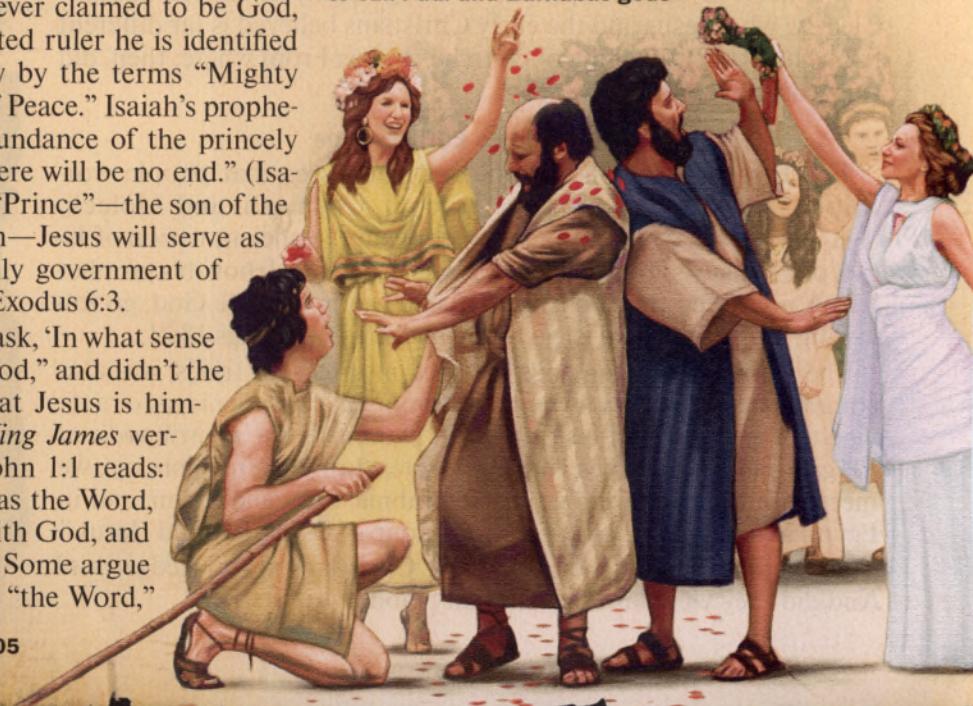
Yet, a person may ask, ‘In what sense is Jesus a “Mighty God,” and didn’t the apostle John say that Jesus is himself God?’ In the *King James* version of the Bible, John 1:1 reads: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Some argue that this means that “the Word,”

who was born on earth as the baby Jesus, is Almighty God himself. Is this true?

If this verse were interpreted to mean Jesus was himself God Almighty, it would contradict the preceding statement, “the Word was *with* God.” Someone who is “with” another person cannot be the same as that other person. Many Bible translations thus draw a distinction, making clear that the Word was not God Almighty. For example, a sampling of Bible translations say the following: “The Word was a God,” “a god was the Word,” and “the Word was divine.”\*

\* See *The New Testament*, by James L. Tomanek; *The Emphatic Diaglott*, interlinear reading, by Benjamin Wilson; *The Bible—An American Translation*, by J.M.P. Smith and E. J. Goodspeed.

**The people of Lystra were inclined to call Paul and Barnabas gods**





**Jesus told Mary Magdalene:  
'I am ascending to my God and your God'**

Bible verses that in the Greek language have a construction similar to that of John 1:1 use the expression "a god." For example, when referring to Herod Agrippa I, the crowds shouted: 'It is *a god* speaking.' And when Paul survived a bite by a poisonous snake, the people said: "He is *a god*." (Acts 12:22; 28:3-6) It is in harmony with both Greek grammar and Bible teaching to speak of the Word as, not God, but "a god."—John 1:1.

Consider how John identified "the Word" in the first chapter of his Gospel. "The Word became flesh and resided among us," he wrote, "and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs [not to God but] to *an only-begotten son* from a father." So "the Word," who became flesh, lived on the earth as the man Jesus and was seen by people. Therefore, he could not have been Almighty God, regarding whom John says: "No man has seen God at any time."—John 1:14, 18.

'Why, then,' one may ask, 'did Thomas exclaim when seeing the resurrected Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"?' As already noted, Jesus is a god in the sense of being divine, but he is not the Father. Jesus had just told Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your

Father and to *my God and your God*." Remember, too, why John wrote his Gospel. Three verses after the account about Thomas, John explained that he wrote so that people "may believe that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*"—not that he is God.—John 20:17, 28, 31.

### **Who Is "the God of This World"?**

Clearly, there are many gods. Some, as we have seen, are named in the Bible. Yet, people who saw Jehovah's power long ago exclaimed: "Jehovah is the true God! Jehovah is the true God!" (1 Kings 18:39) Another god, however, also has power. The Bible says: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."—2 Corinthians 4:4, King James Version.

The night before his death, Jesus three times warned his disciples about this god, calling him "the ruler of this world." Jesus said this powerful ruler, or god, "will be cast out." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) Who is this god, and what is the world over which he is the ruler?

He is none other than the rebel angel, Satan the Devil. How do we know? The Bible explains that when Satan tempted Jesus, Satan showed him "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him: 'All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me.'" (Matthew 4:8, 9) This offer would not have been a temptation at all if Satan had been offering Jesus what Satan did not possess. Indeed, the apostle John declared: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one."—1 John 5:19.

Recall that Jesus promised: "The ruler of this world will be cast out." (John 12:31) In fact, this world, or system of things, along with its ruler, will be removed, as foretold by the apostle John when he stated: "The world is passing away." However, John added: "He that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:17) Let us examine now the glorious purposes of the only true God and how we can benefit from them.

# WHAT “the Only True God” PROMISES

J EHOVAH GOD placed the first human couple in a paradise on earth—the garden of Eden. He instructed them to have children and to ‘subdue the earth,’ which would involve expanding their Paradise home as their family grew in numbers. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15) Will God’s purpose for humans to enjoy an earthly paradise ever be fulfilled?

Indeed, it will! According to Bible prophecy, “[Jehovah] will actually swallow up death forever” and “will certainly wipe the tears from all faces.” When this occurs, “one will certainly say: ‘Look! This is our God. We have

hoped in him, and he will save us. This is Jehovah. We have hoped in him. Let us be joyful and rejoice in the salvation by him.’”—Isaiah 25:8, 9.

The Bible’s last book describes the conditions on earth after this present world, or system of things under Satan’s rule, is removed. Regarding the “new earth” made up of humans who love God, the Bible says: “The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and

*This is what God promises for the earth*



death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—Revelation 21:1-4.

What marvelous promises! Can we believe them? Consider how Jesus’ sacrificial death and the miracles he performed provide a basis for confidence that God will accomplish whatever He promises.—2 Corinthians 1:20.

### **Jesus’ Life as a Ransom**

When Satan induced Adam to disobey God and sin, all of Adam’s offspring inherited his sin. “Just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin,” the Bible says, “death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” Yet, the Bible account continues: “Through the obedience of the one person [the perfect man Jesus] many will be constituted righteous.” (Romans 5:12, 19) As noted in the first article of this series, Jesus is “the last Adam”—the one “out of heaven”—the one who provided his life as “a ransom in exchange for many.”—1 Corinthians 15:45, 47; Matthew 20:28.

So all who exercise faith in Jesus can receive “the release [from sin] by ransom” and can enjoy everlasting life. (Ephesians 1:7; John 3:36) Surely we can rejoice that Jehovah God loved the world of mankind so much that he gave his Son as our Savior! (Luke 2:10-12; John 3:16) An examination of what Jesus did in behalf of suffering mankind in the first century provides insight regarding the future. And what Jesus did was truly amazing!

### **Foregleams of a New World**

Jesus could heal every sick and ailing person who was brought to him. There was not a one whom he was unable to restore to health, regardless of their ailment or infirmity. Moreover, he miraculously fed thousands with only a few fishes and loaves of bread, and he did so on more than one occasion.—Matthew 14:14-22; 15:30-38.

When Jesus restored sight to a man born blind, neighbors and acquaintances acknowl-

edged the miracle, but Jewish religious leaders were skeptical. So the man whose sight had been restored reasoned with them: “From of old it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing at all.”—John 9:32, 33.

During Jesus’ ministry his cousin John the Baptist, who had been imprisoned, sent messengers to confirm reports about Jesus. “In that hour,” the Bible says, Jesus “cured many of sicknesses and grievous diseases and wicked spirits, and granted many blind persons the favor of seeing.” Then Jesus told the messengers: “Report to John what you saw and heard: the blind are receiving sight, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up.”—Luke 7:18-22.

Think of it: If something good occurred in the past, would that not give you confidence that it could happen again? By means of his miracles, Jesus demonstrated on a small scale what he will do on a grand scale during his rule as King of God’s Kingdom. His miracles serve as proof that he was sent by God and that he really was God’s Son.

During the rule of God’s Kingdom, there will be a literal fulfillment of prophecies of marvelous things. As foretold, blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears will be unstopped, the lame will leap as a deer, and no one will be sick. There will also be peace and security everywhere on earth. Even animals that are now dangerous will be at peace with man.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:6-9; 33:24; 35:5, 6; 65:17-25.

Would you like to live forever under the rule of God’s Kingdom, surrounded by such conditions? Jesus showed what you must do when he said in prayer to his father: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) May you allow nothing to prevent you from continuing to take in such life-giving knowledge.



# May Day

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN

*What comes to your mind when you hear of May Day?  
Parades and demonstrations? Maypole dancing?  
A day off work?*

**D**EPEndING on where you live, completely different views of May Day may come to mind. But they are connected. A brief look at the roots of May Day will shed light on its observance today.

### Early Origins

In ancient Rome the first day of May fell during the festival of *Floralia*, named in honor of Flora, the goddess of springtime and flowers. It was a time of singing, dancing, and flower-decked parades. Roman prostitutes especially enjoyed the festival, for they considered Flora their patron goddess.

When the Romans conquered other lands, they took their customs with them. However, in Celtic countries the Romans discovered that the first day of May was already celebrated as the festival of *Beltane*.<sup>\*</sup> The preceding evening, the start of the Celtic new day, all fires were extinguished, and when the sun rose, people lit bonfires on hilltops or under sacred trees to welcome summertime and the renewal of life.

\* *Beltane* is the most commonly accepted English version of the Celtic word.

Cattle were put out to pasture, and the gods were invoked for their protection. Soon *Floralia* became entwined with *Beltane* and became the festival of May Day.

For German-speaking and Scandinavian peoples, *Walpurgis* was the equivalent of *Beltane*. Festivities began on *Walpurgis Night* with the lighting of bonfires to drive away witches and evil spirits. Other Europeans developed their own variations of May Day customs, many of which still survive.

Christendom's churches had little effect on such pagan festivities. "May Day—or *Beltane*—was the calendar's most permissive day, the one festival the Christian church and other authorities could never quite control," observes England's *Guardian* newspaper.



**Sixteenth-century Maypole  
erected each May Day  
outside a church in London**

From the book *Observations  
on Popular Antiquities*

### May Day Customs

By the Middle Ages, new customs had been added to what had become England's favorite holiday. Men and women spent the night in the local woods gathering flowers and blossoming boughs to 'bring in the May' at sun-



rise.\* Immorality was widespread, according to Puritan Philip Stubbes' tract *The Anatomy of Abuses*. Revelers set up a tree as a Maypole in the middle of a village, and it became a focus for day-long dancing and games. Stubbes referred to it as "this stinking Idol." The people chose a May queen and often a May king to preside over the festivities. Maypoles and May queens were common in other parts of Europe too.

What was the significance of these May Day customs? The *Encyclopædia Britannica* explains: "Originally such rites were intended to ensure fertility to the crops, and by extension to cattle and human beings, but in most cases this significance was gradually lost, and the practices survived merely as popular festivities."

#### Ebb and Flow

The Protestant Reformers tried to stamp out what was viewed as a pagan celebration. Calvinist Scotland prohibited May Day in 1555. Then a Puritan-led English Parliament banned Maypoles in 1644. When England was without a king during the Commonwealth period, May Day's "licentious practises" were

discouraged. However, Maypoles were restored with the monarchy in 1660.

Maypole festivities gradually declined during the 18th and early 19th centuries but have been revived in more recent times with a more moral tone. Many of what are viewed as traditional May Day customs, such as children dancing round the Maypole plaiting gaily colored ribbons, date from this more recent time. However, folklorists researching May Day's more distant past are discovering many of its pagan roots.

European emigrants took their May Day customs with them to new lands, and some of their descendants still observe May Day in the traditional way. However, in many countries May Day, or the first Monday following May 1, is now simply a workers' holiday.

#### May Day Becomes Labor Day

The parades and demonstrations of the modern May Day began in North America. Why there? The industrial revolution brought new machines that ran continuously, with the result that factory owners often expected their employees to work up to 16 hours every day except Sundays. In an effort to improve the lives of workers, a federation of trade and labor unions in the United States and Canada called for an eight-hour

\* Before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar a little over 400 years ago, the beginning of May occurred 11 days later than now, with consequent warmer weather and plentiful foliage.



**Anticapitalist rally, May Day 2000,  
London, England**

workday beginning on May 1, 1886. For the most part, employers refused to grant this, so on the first of May, thousands of workers went on strike.

The Haymarket Riot in Chicago, Illinois, gave the labor movement in the United States its first martyrs, and workers in England, France, Holland, Italy, Russia, and Spain rallied in support.\* In 1889 a congress of world Socialist parties meeting in Paris declared that May 1, 1890, would be a day of international demonstrations in favor of an eight-hour workday. The date thereafter became an annual occasion on which to raise workers' demands for better working conditions.

In republics of the Soviet Union, May Day was traditionally celebrated with military parades and displays of technological achievements. Today many countries observe a holiday called Labor Day or International

\* This disturbance erupted the day after a fight between strikers and strikebreakers led to the death of several workers.

Workers' Day on the first of May. The United States and Canada, however, celebrate Labor Day on the first Monday in September.

### Ancient and Modern Links

May Day has always been a people's festival. Workers took the day off with or without their employers' approval. Social roles were reversed. The king and queen of the day were chosen from the common people, and the ruling classes were often the butt of jokes. May Day, therefore, readily became identified with labor movements, and by the 20th century, it had become part of the Socialist calendar.

Like the old May Day, the International Workers' Day has become a day for parades through the streets. Yet, violence has become common during May Day celebrations in recent years. May Day 2000, for example, was the occasion for worldwide rallies against global capitalism. Protests then were marred by fights, injuries, and damage to property.

### Satisfying the Need for Change

Realistically, can we expect humans to bring about the necessary global changes that will benefit all honesthearted ones? Not really. The truth of the ancient Bible proverb has repeatedly been realized, namely: "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

A superior power—beyond that of humans—is required to bring about peaceful world conditions. The Source of that power is earth's Creator, Jehovah God. His Word, the Bible, speaks of him as "opening [his] hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16) We welcome you to examine further God's grand promises.

In fulfillment of the model prayer that God's Son, Jesus Christ, taught his followers, God's Kingdom *will* come, and God's will is sure to be done on earth. The Bible promises that God's appointed Ruler, Jesus Christ, "will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul."—Psalm 72:12-14.

# Gardening Is Good for You

DO YOU enjoy gardening? You could be deriving more than pleasure from your hobby. Researchers have found evidence that "gardening is good for your health, reducing stress levels, lowering blood pressure and even helping you live longer," reports London's *Independent* newspaper.

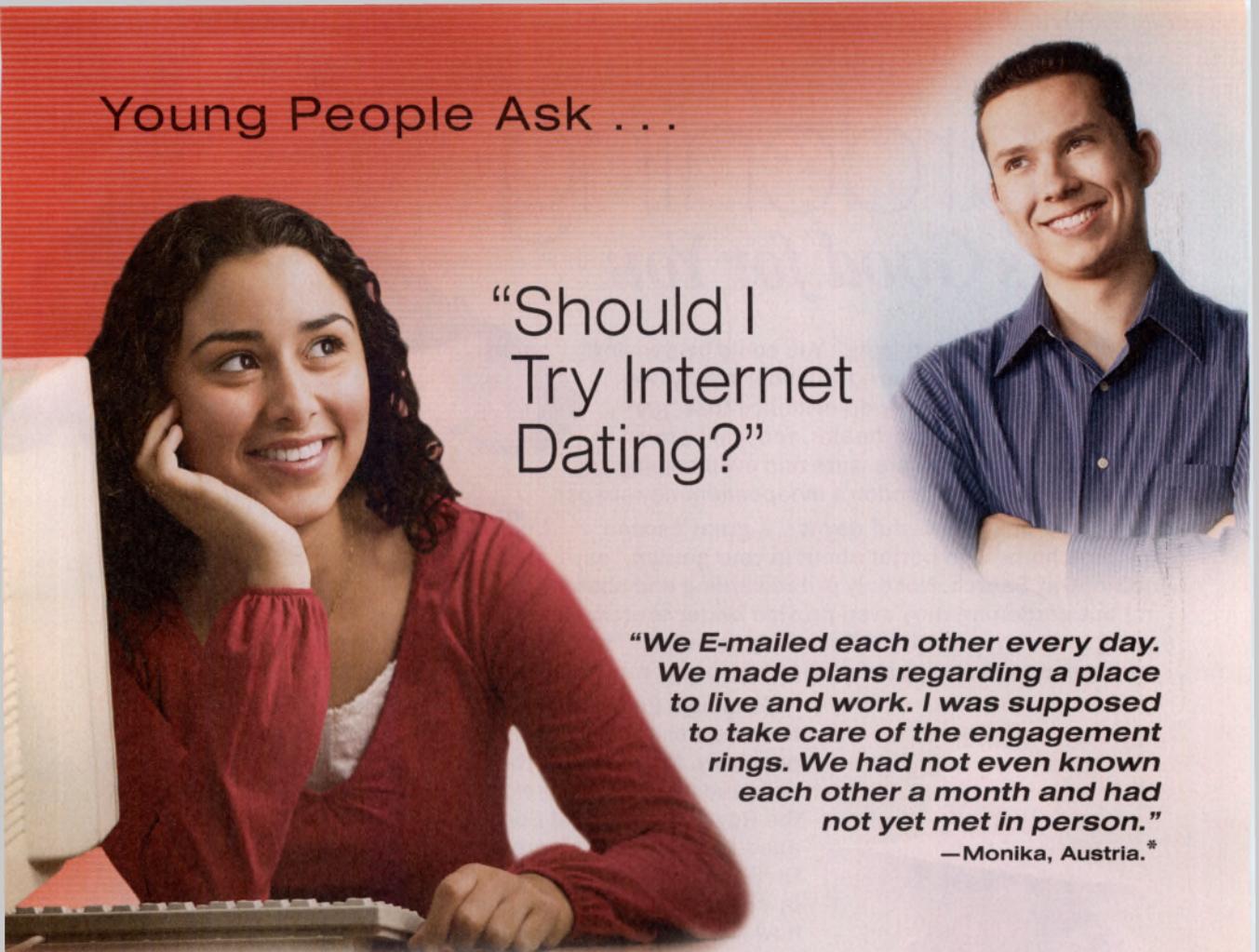
"After a busy, stressful day it's a great escape to come home and potter about in your garden," says author Gay Search. Not only is it rewarding and absorbing but gardening may even provide better exercise than going to the gym. How so? According to Search, "activities such as digging and raking are good steady exercise, which burns more calories than cycling."

Tending a garden especially benefits the elderly. Waiting for a new shoot or bud to appear helps them to look ahead positively. Additionally, "the garden provides an antidote to the pain and frustration" of old age, states Dr. Brigid Boardman of the Royal Horticultural Society. The elderly often feel discouraged because of an increasing dependency on others. As Dr. Boardman notes, though, "the need to be in control is met by our control of what we plant, how we plan the garden, and how it is tended. And the need to care is again fulfilled."

Those suffering from mental-health problems often feel relaxed when working in a beautiful, peaceful environment. Further, growing flowers or food for others may help such individuals to regain confidence and self-respect.

However, it is not just gardeners who benefit from greenery. Professor Roger Ulrich of the University of Texas experimented with a group of people who had been subjected to a stress-inducing test. He found that those who were taken to a green space surrounded by trees enjoyed a speedier recovery—as measured by heart rate and blood pressure—than did those not exposed to a natural setting. A similar test found that patients recuperating in the hospital after surgery benefited from staying in rooms that overlooked trees. Compared with other patients, they "recov-  
ered quicker, went home sooner, needed less pain relief and complained less."





Young People Ask . . .

## "Should I Try Internet Dating?"



*"We E-mailed each other every day. We made plans regarding a place to live and work. I was supposed to take care of the engagement rings. We had not even known each other a month and had not yet met in person."*

—Monika, Austria.\*

YOU would really like to meet someone—someone you can get to know, someone you might want to marry. But, thus far, none of your efforts to find someone like that have worked out. Attempts by well-meaning friends and family to set you up with someone have done nothing but embarrass you and have left you more discouraged than ever. So you are wondering if maybe you should turn to technology for help.

In this age of the computer, finding a compatible mate may seem to be just a few clicks away. All you have to do, some say, is log on to a Web site, chat room, or bulletin board

that has been specially designed for singles. *The New York Times* reports that in one month in the United States alone, 45 million people visited on-line dating Web sites. One Internet matchmaker claims to have more than nine million people using its service in 240 countries.

### **The Appeal of On-Line Dating**

Are you shy, and do you find it difficult to meet people? Do you fear rejection? Or do you simply feel there is a lack of potential marriage mates in the area where you live? Then computer dating may appeal to you. For one thing, on-line matchmaking services promise you control over your "dates." Search boxes that display age groups, coun-

\* Some names have been changed.

tries of residence, personality profiles, pictures, and anonymous screen names are provided. Armed with the power of choice, it may seem that dating on-line is more efficient and less stressful than face-to-face encounters.

What is the reality? Does dating in cyberspace really lead to lasting happiness? Well, consider this: During a six-year period, one matchmaking service had 11 million subscribers. Yet, only 1,475 marriages took place among them. Another dating service with over a million members listed only 75 confirmed marriages! What is wrong with this trend?

#### A True Picture of Each Other?

"On the Internet," said one newspaper article, "everyone tends to be attractive, honest, and successful." But how realistic is the information people provide about themselves? Another news article put it this way: "It is taken for granted that everyone lies a little." An editor of a popular teen magazine did some personal research into this claim. She joined three of the most popular dating Web sites and shortly received a number of responses. These led to dates with several men. The result? Real failures! The men had blatantly lied about themselves. She warned: "Based on my experience, they lie."

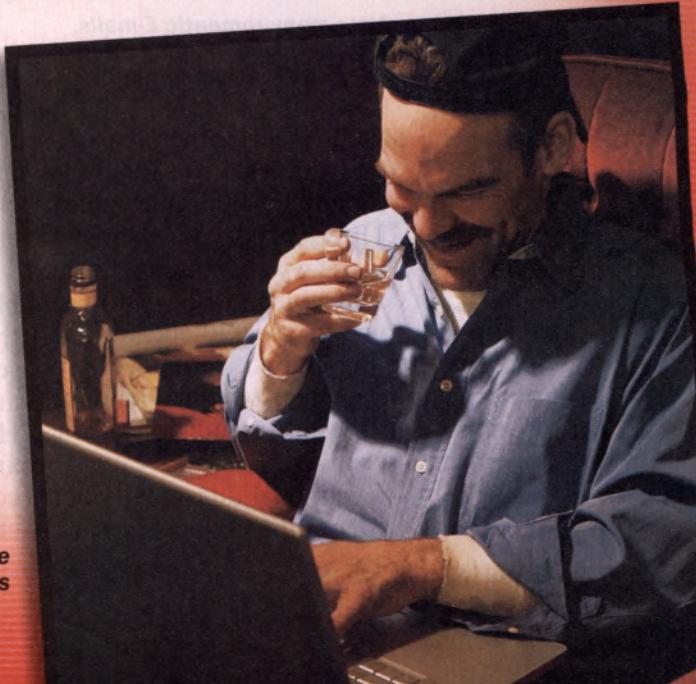
Misrepresenting one's height or weight may seem like a little thing. 'Looks are not that important,' some may argue. True, the Bible itself says that "charm may be false, and prettiness may be vain." (Proverbs 31:30) But is lying about seemingly little things a good way to begin a relationship? (Luke 16:10) How confident can you be about other things the person might say about more serious issues, such as personal goals? The Bible says: "Speak truthfully with one another." (Zechariah 8:16) Yes, honesty provides the foundation for a relationship that can grow.

**When on-line, people often exaggerate or lie about themselves**

Dating in cyberspace, though, often involves unrealistic fantasies. A report in *Newsweek* makes this observation: "Users can carefully edit their e-mails and present themselves in the most flattering way. . . . The result is a positive-feedback loop: they seem nice and interested in you, so you're nice and interested in them." As a professor at New York's Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute who studies on-line relationships observes, a strong attachment may form very readily in such circumstances. Yet, as often noted, this can't be counted on to lead to a happy marriage. One man wrote about his experiences with on-line dating: "It's a trap. Your imagination fills in the blanks with exactly what you want."

#### Close Encounters

Some may believe, however, that the lack of personal contact has distinct advantages. They may feel that on-line dating allows couples to focus on what a prospective partner is like on the *inside* without being distracted by personal appearance. True, the Bible encourages us to focus on a person's inner qualities. (1 Peter 3:4) Yet, the problem is that in a computer relationship, you cannot observe gestures, smiles, or countenance. You cannot see



how he or she treats others or behaves under pressure. And such things are critical in determining if he or she is someone you can come to trust and love. Read the Bible's description of love found at 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5. Notice that love is defined by *behavior*, not words. You must therefore take the time to observe a person to see if his or her actions and words match.

Lacking such vital information, couples often start sharing intimate feelings and thoughts early in the courtship. Throwing caution to the wind, some couples hastily make serious romantic commitments, even



**After many romantic E-mails,  
a face-to-face meeting often  
proves disappointing**

though they hardly know each other. An article entitled "On the Internet, Love Really Is Blind" tells of two people 8,000 miles apart who met on-line. Three weeks later they met in person. "She wore heavy eye mascara," said the man. "I don't date women who wear mascara." The relationship quickly ended. The results of another in-person meeting were so disappointing that the man, who had paid for the visit, canceled the return portion of the woman's airline ticket!

A young woman named Edda recalls her own experience with on-line dating. She says:

"The relationship was too good to be true. We were planning on getting married." But when they saw each other in person, the relationship completely flopped. "He was not what I expected but was critical and a complainer. It was just not going to work." One week later the relationship broke off, leaving Edda totally disillusioned.

In the fantasy world of computer dating, emotions can become intense prematurely. This can leave you vulnerable to emotional devastation if the relationship does not work out—as is likely. "He that is trusting in his own heart is stupid," warns Proverbs 28:26. Yes, it is unwise to make serious decisions based upon fantasy and emotion. The proverb thus continues: "But he that is walking in wisdom is the one that will escape."

#### **The Dangers of Haste**

Rushing into a relationship when you know little about each other is certainly unwise. The English writer Shakespeare is quoted as saying: "Hasty marriage seldom proveth well." The Bible counsel is more direct: "Everyone that is hasty surely heads for want."—Proverbs 21:5.

Sadly, many of those engaging in Internet dating have found that to be true. After corresponding with someone for just one month, Monika, quoted at the outset, hoped that she had found the answer to her desire for a partner. Despite making plans for marriage—even arranging to obtain engagement rings—her hurried relationship ended in "great sorrow."

You can avoid heartache by heeding the Bible's counsel: "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty." (Proverbs 22:3) However, disappointment and hurt feelings are not the only dangers you might face in computer dating. A future article will consider additional problems.

# I MET THE CHALLENGE OF SERVING GOD



AS TOLD BY  
IVAN MIKITKOV

**"If you stay in our town, you will be sent back to prison," the Soviet State Security Committee (KGB) officer warned me. I had just been released after serving a 12-year sentence. My father and mother were seriously ill and needed my care. What was I to do?**

I WAS born in 1928 in the village of Taul, Moldova.\* When I was a year old, my father, Alexander, visited Iași, Romania, where he met Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. When he returned to Taul, he shared what he had learned from them with his family and neighbors. Soon a small group of Bible Students was formed in Taul.

As the youngest of four children—all boys—I was surrounded from infancy with spiritually minded people, who set a good example for me. Over time, it became evident to me that serving Jehovah would provoke opposition—and would be a challenge. I have vivid memories of the police repeatedly searching our house, trying to find our hidden Bible literature. These occasions did not frighten me. I learned from our study of the Bible that God's own Son, Jesus Christ, as well as his disciples, had been persecuted. During our meetings we were often reminded that Jesus' followers should expect persecution.—John 15:20.

\* The current country name, Moldova, will be used throughout this article instead of the former names Moldavia or the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

## Strengthened to Face Persecution

In 1934, when I was only six, a letter was read to our congregation in Taul telling us about the sufferings of our fellow Christians in Nazi Germany. We were encouraged to pray for them. Though I was still little, I never forgot that letter.

Four years later I faced my first personal test of integrity. During religious lessons at school, the Orthodox priest repeatedly ordered me to wear a cross around my neck. When I refused, he asked all the children in the class to display their crosses as a sign that they were good church members. Pointing to me, the priest then asked the class: "Do you want someone like him in your class? All who don't, raise your hands."

Since the students were afraid of the priest, they all raised their hands. "You see," he said, turning to me, "nobody wants to have anything to do with you. Leave this building immediately." A few days later, the director of the school visited my home. After talking to my parents, he asked if I wanted to continue going to school. I told him I did. "As long as I am director," he replied, "you will go to school and the priest will not be able to stop

you." True to his word, as long as that man was director, the priest did not bother me.

### Persecution Increases

In 1940 the area in which we were living, called Bessarabia, became part of the Soviet Union. On June 13 and 14, 1941, all those who were politically or socially prominent were deported to Siberia. Jehovah's Witnesses were not affected by this deportation. From that time on, though, we conducted our meetings and did our preaching more discreetly.

In the latter part of June 1941, Nazi Germany mounted a full-scale sneak attack on the Soviet Union, which up till then had been its ally. Shortly, Romanian forces recaptured Bessarabia. This put us under Romanian rule once again.

In nearby villages the Witnesses who refused service in the Romanian military were arrested, and most were sentenced to 20 years of forced labor. Father was summoned to the police station and beaten brutally because he was a Witness. Also, I was forcibly taken from school to attend church services.

The tide of World War II then turned. In March 1944 the Soviets quickly took northern Bessarabia. By August they had taken the whole country. I was only in my mid-teens at the time.

Soon, all physically fit men from our village were drafted into the Soviet army. But the Witnesses refused to compromise their neutrality. So they were sentenced to ten years' incarceration. In May 1945, World War II in Europe ended with the German surrender. Nevertheless, many Witnesses in Moldova remained incarcerated until 1949.

### Postwar Calamities

After the war ended in 1945, Moldova suffered a terrible drought. Despite the drought, the Soviet government continued to demand from farmers a large portion of their produce as tax. This led to horrific famine. By 1947, I had seen many dead bodies on the streets of

Taul. My brother Yefim died, and for weeks I was so weak from hunger that I could hardly move. But the famine passed, and we Witnesses who remained alive continued our public ministry. While I presented the message locally, my brother Vasile, who was seven years older than I, preached in nearby villages.

As the Witnesses became more active in the ministry, the authorities began observing us more closely. Our preaching, as well as our failure to share in politics or to do military service, prompted the Soviet government to start searching our homes for Bible literature and arresting us. In 1949 some Witnesses from nearby congregations were deported to Siberia. So once again those of us who remained began making efforts to be more discreet in carrying out our ministry.

In the meantime, I had developed a serious health problem that progressively worsened. Doctors eventually said that I had tuberculosis of the bones, and in 1950 my right leg was encased in a plaster cast.

### Deportation to Siberia

On April 1, 1951, with my leg still in a cast, my family and I were arrested, and along with other Witnesses, we were deported to Siberia.\* With hardly any time to prepare, we managed to bring only a little food. It was soon gone.

Finally, after about two weeks on the train, we arrived in Asino, in the district of Tomsk. There we were unloaded like cattle. Although it was freezing cold, it was wonderful to have some fresh air. In May, when the river ice broke up, we were taken 60 miles by ship to Torba, where there was a lumber camp in the Siberian taiga, or subarctic woodland. Here we began our sentence of forced labor—which we were told was to last forever.

While hard labor in a lumber camp was not

\* On the first two weekends of April 1951, the Soviets carried out a well-planned program in which they rounded up over 7,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses and their families living in the western part of the Soviet Union and transported them by train thousands of miles east into exile in Siberia.



**Our home while in exile  
in Torba, Siberia, 1953.  
Father and Mother (left),  
and my brother Vasile  
and his son (right)**

**In a prison camp, 1955**



the same as being in prison, we were under constant scrutiny. At night our family slept together in a railroad car. That summer we built homes—simple dugouts partly below ground and partly above—for protection during the coming winter.

Because of the cast on my leg, I was spared work in the forests and was assigned to make nails. This work gave me opportunity to share secretly in the duplication of *Watchtower* magazines and other Bible publications. Somehow these were regularly smuggled into our area from thousands of miles away in western Europe.

#### **Arrested and Imprisoned**

In 1953 my plaster cast was removed. But, in the meantime, despite trying to be careful, my spiritual activity, including reproducing Bible literature, had come to the attention of the KGB. As a result, along with other Witnesses, I was eventually sentenced to 12 years in a prison camp. During the trial, however, we were all able to give a fine witness regarding our God, Jehovah, and his loving purposes for mankind.

We prisoners were eventually sent to various camps near Irkutsk, hundreds of miles farther east. These camps had been established as places of punishment for those who were deemed enemies of the Soviet State. From April 8, 1954, until early 1960, I served time in 12 of such labor camps. Afterward, I was moved more than 2,000 miles west to the huge Mordovian complex of prison camps about 250 miles southeast of Moscow. There I had the privilege of being in the company of faithful Witnesses from many parts of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets realized that when the Witnesses were allowed to mix freely with non-Witness prisoners, some of these also became Witnesses. So in the Mordovian prison complex, which was made up of many work camps that stretched for some 20 miles or more, an attempt was made to isolate us from close association with other prisoners. Over 400 Witnesses were put together in our camp. A few miles away, a hundred or so Christian sisters were in another camp of the prison complex.

In our camp I was very active in helping organize Christian meetings as well as copying Bible literature, which had been smuggled into the camp. This activity evidently came to the attention of camp officials. Shortly afterward, in August 1961, I was sentenced for one year to the infamous, czarist-era Vladimir Prison, about 120 miles northeast of Moscow. The U.S. pilot Francis Gary Powers, who had been shot down on May 1, 1960, while flying a spy plane over Russia, was also a prisoner there until February 1962.

While I was in Vladimir Prison, I was provided with only enough food to keep me alive. I coped well with starvation, since I had experienced this in youth, but the extreme cold of the 1961/62 winter was hard for me to endure. The heating pipes broke, and the

temperature in my cell fell well below freezing. A doctor saw my sorry state and arranged for my transfer to a less harsh prison cell for the worst weeks of that cold spell.

### Sustained to Meet the Challenge

Negative thoughts can discourage one after months of confinement, which is what prison authorities hope for. However, I prayed constantly and was strengthened by Jehovah's spirit and by scriptures that I called to mind.

Especially while I was in Vladimir Prison did I identify with the apostle Paul's words about being "pressed in every way, but not cramped beyond movement," and "perplexed, but not absolutely with no way out." (2 Corinthians 4:8-10) After one year, I was returned to the Mordovian camp complex. In these camps, I completed my 12-year sentence on April 8, 1966. Upon release, I was given the character description "impossible to reform." To me, that was official proof that I had stayed faithful to Jehovah.

Often I have been asked how we received and then duplicated Bible literature while in Soviet camps and prisons despite efforts to prevent us from doing so. It is a secret few have ever learned, as noted by a Latvian political prisoner who spent four years in the women's Potma camp. "Witnesses somehow kept getting literature in quantity," she wrote after her release in 1966. "It was as if angels at night flew over and dropped it," she concluded. Indeed, only with God's help was our activity accomplished!

### A Period of Relative Freedom

After my release, those taking the lead in the preaching work asked me to move to western Ukraine, near Moldova, to help our Moldovan brothers. However, as an ex-convict under scrutiny by the KGB, I was very limited in what I could do. After two years, under threat of reimprisonment, I moved to the Soviet republic of Kazakhstan, where authorities sel-

dom checked papers. Then, in 1969, when my parents became very sick, I moved to Ukraine to care for them. There, in the town of Artymosk, north of the large city of Donetsk, a KGB officer threatened to send me back to prison, as recounted at the outset of this article.

As it turned out, the officer was simply trying to intimidate me. There wasn't sufficient evidence to take action. Since I was determined to carry on my Christian ministry and the KGB would be on my heels practically anywhere I went, I continued to care for my parents. Both Father and Mother died faithful to Jehovah. Father died in November 1969, but Mother lived on until February 1976.

When I moved back to Ukraine, I was 40 years old. While caring for my parents there, I was in a congregation with a young woman named Maria. She was only eight when, like my family, she and her parents had been exiled from Moldova to Siberia in early April 1951. Maria said she liked my singing. That was a start, and although both of us were busy in the ministry, we managed to make time to cultivate a friendship. By 1970, I had convinced her to marry me.

Soon our daughter, Lidia, was born. Then, in 1983, when Lidia was ten, I was betrayed to the KGB by a former Witness. By then I had served nearly ten years as a traveling overseer throughout eastern Ukraine. Opposers to our Christian activity were able to get people to provide false testimony at the trial, and I was given a five-year sentence.

In prison I was kept isolated from other Witnesses. Despite years of such isolation, though, no human agency could block my access to Jehovah, and he always sustained me. In addition, I found opportunities to witness to other prisoners. Finally, after serving four years of my sentence, I was released and reunited with my wife and daughter, who had both remained faithful to Jehovah.



**Christian sisters in Siberia, when  
Maria (lower left) was about 20**



**With our daughter, Lidia**

### **Back to Moldova**

We spent another year in Ukraine and then returned permanently to Moldova, where there was a need for mature, experienced help. By that time, the Soviet leadership allowed for more freedom of movement. We arrived in Bălți in 1988, where Maria had lived before being exiled 37 years earlier. By 1988, there were about 375 Witnesses in this second-largest city of Moldova; now there are well over 1,500! Even though we lived in Moldova, I still served as a traveling overseer in Ukraine.

By the time our organization was legalized in the Soviet Union in March 1991, thousands of people had become disillusioned by the failure of Communism. Many were bewildered and lacked real hope for the future. So when Moldova became an independent sovereign republic, what a fertile territory our neighbors—and even some of our former per-



**Our wedding,  
1970**

**With Maria today**



secutors—proved to be! After our exile in 1951, only a relatively few Witnesses were left in Moldova, but now there are well over 18,000 in this small country of about 4,200,000. Our sufferings of the past have indeed been blotted out by the wonderful experiences we have enjoyed!

In the mid-1990's, poor health resulted in my having to discontinue serving as a traveling overseer. There are times when my condition discourages me. Yet, I have come to appreciate that Jehovah knows what we need to lift our spirits. He provides the encouragement we need at the right time. If I had the opportunity to live my life over, would I choose a different path? No. Rather, I wish that I might have been more courageous in my ministry and that I could have been more active and energetic.

I feel that Jehovah has blessed me and that all of his servants are a blessed people regardless of their circumstances. We have a vivid hope, a living faith, and the assurance that soon everyone will have perfect health in the new world of Jehovah's making.

**W**HEN spring arrives in this tiny valley nestled in the Carpathian Mountains, the fertile ground gradually becomes covered with a carpet of white blossoms. The best time to visit here is during late spring, when a sweet aroma drifts over the alpine meadow, coaxing visitors to take a closer look.

Where is this beautiful display? In the Valley of Narcissi—a nature reserve near Khust, in Western Ukraine. Here vast fields of wild narcissi are found. Although more than 400 plant species grow in the valley, the narcissus is king.

In fact, the reserve is named after the flower, which is also known as the narrow-leaved narcissus, or daffodil. This bulbous plant, with its long thin leaves and trumpet-shaped crown surrounded by white or yellowish petals, is also found throughout the Alps and the Balkans.

The narcissus has been praised for centuries by

poets and musicians alike. One species, in fact, is named *Narcissus poeticus*, or poet's narcissus. But poets aren't the only ones who have taken note of its beauty. In ancient Rome rulers once used yellow narcissi to salute their victorious warriors. And in Prussia, the narcissus was a symbol of love and happiness. Today, communities throughout the world continue to laud the beauty of the flower at annual festivals and celebrations.

However, the narcissus is much more than a pretty flower. The name narcissus is related to the Greek word *narka'o*, meaning, "to be stupefied." Could narcissi actually produce such an effect? When these flowers are in bloom in the Valley of Narcissi,

## *The Valley of Blossoming*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN UKRAINE



visitors can be somewhat overpowered or even feel slightly intoxicated!

The narcotic effects of the scent have led some to attribute curative powers to the flower. The Arabs used narcissus oil to treat baldness, while the French used it to treat epilepsy and hysteria. Today, narcissus oil is used in perfumes and, in its purified form, in aromatherapy.

#### **Will It Be Preserved?**

The narrow-leaved narcissus is considered a high-mountain flower. It usually grows between 3,000 and 6,800 feet above sea level. But the elevation of the Valley of Narcissi is 650 feet above sea level, making it the lowest valley where this particular flower grows.

In order to preserve this wonder of nature, the Valley of Narcissi was made a reserve in 1979. Some 20 years later, the Council of Europe declared the narrow-leaved narcissus a protected species.

Initially, there was a prohibition against cutting grass in the Valley of Narcissi after the flowering season. However, within a few years, the number of flowers decreased. Why? Scientists learned that when allowed to grow unabated, the grass choked the young flower sprouts. Once the mowing restriction was lifted, though, the valley returned to its natural balance. So now the valley is beautiful in the spring, and it supplies hay throughout the winter for livestock.

This amazing floral beauty is a reminder of the potential for our earthly home. Indeed, many Bible students look forward to the time when, under the rule of God's Kingdom, "the wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom" with beauty. (Isaiah 35:1) Then, beauty similar to that of the Valley of Narcissi will be reflected throughout the entire earth as the earth is brought to a paradisaic state like that originally found in Eden.  
—Genesis 2:8-15.

# *Beauty*



# Facing Illness With a Sense of Humor

**C**ONCHI is a cheerful middle-aged woman who has been battling cancer for seven years. Since the first diagnosis of breast cancer, she has undergone seven different operations to keep malignant tumors at bay. How does she cope?

"When the doctors give me bad news, if I feel the need, I cry as much as I can to get the grief out of my system," she says. "Then I try to get on with my life and do things that I enjoy—such as learning Chinese, attending Christian conventions, and going on holiday with my family and friends. I always remember Jesus' words: 'Who of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life span?' —Matthew 6:27.

"And I always try to keep a good sense of humor," she adds. "I make jokes with the doctors, watch films that make me laugh and,



above all, try to have regular contact with friends and relatives. Having friends with whom you can laugh is a wonderful tonic. On one occasion, just before surgery some friends and relatives told me about an amusing incident that had occurred the night before. I laughed so much that I went into the operating room totally relaxed."

Conchi is not the only one who has discovered that a good sense of humor and a positive disposition can help us cope with health problems. Modern medicine has also begun to recognize the valuable role of humor in our fight against pain and disease.

## Beneficial for Body and Mind

This concept is nothing new. Three thousand years ago, King Solomon wrote: "A glad heart is excellent medicine." (Proverbs 17:22, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Lope de Vega, a Spanish author of the 17th century, likewise wrote: "If we could spend good humor, I think we would live healthier." But in today's stressful world, it seems that humor is hoarded rather than spent. We apparently live in the golden

## In Our Next Issue

- What's Happening to Movies?
- Should Icons Be Used in Worship?
- Meet the "Flying Mitten"

age of technology, but the decline of humor. The work *El arte de la risa* (The Art of Laughter) notes that in modern society it seems that "*Homo sapiens* [mankind] has been replaced by *Homo digitalis*." Sometimes digital bytes and computer monitors seem to be supplanting the language of laughter, gestures, and smiles.

A good sense of humor helps patients to have more positive thoughts, emotions, and behavior. According to a recent article by Dr. Jaime Sanz-Ortiz, a specialist in cancer and palliative medicine, humor "facilitates communication, strengthens immunity, alleviates pain, lessens anxiety, relaxes emotional and muscular tension, and inspires creativity and hope."

#### The Invaluable Sense of Humor

Why is a good sense of humor effective as a healer? Because it is a quality that allows us to handle situations in a positive way, even in the face of unfavorable circumstances. "By including humor and laughter in our daily lives, we maintain our energy level, we alleviate fatigue, and we expel self-pity," asserts Sanz-Ortiz.

Naturally, what makes us smile or laugh differs from person to person and from culture to culture. "Just as beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, so humor depends on the mind of the spectator," explains Sanz-Ortiz. But whatever our background or education, a good sense of humor is often an effective way to communicate and a useful outlet for accumulated anxiety, tension, or insecurity. If it can help us so much, what can we do to cultivate a good sense of humor?

The first step we can take is to stop focusing entirely on our problems or our sickness and start trying to enjoy the posi-

tive side that every moment gives us. Furthermore, we should strive to think in a rational way, rejecting distorted or irrational thoughts that only exaggerate our predicament. We can also develop a sense of humor by learning to look at things in a different way. We don't always have to laugh or smile, but if we see the amusing side of a situation, it will enable us to cope. "Humor momentarily transfers our attention away from our concerns and gives a new perspective to the problem . . . , allowing us to deal with it with renewed options," Sanz-Ortiz maintains.

Of course, a good sense of humor is not an antidote to every crisis we face in life, still it will often help us to confront problems in a more positive, balanced way. As Conchi recognizes, "it's no joke being sick, but you have to try to keep your sense of humor. I imagine my life as a vegetable garden that has many different crops, one of which—unfortunately—is my disease. Yet, I try to keep it in a corner so it does not overrun the others. Of course, I can't say that I have beaten cancer, but I am still enjoying life, and that is very important."



**Conchi receives encouragement from her husband, Felix, and her younger sister Pili**

# Watching the World

## Young Victims of War

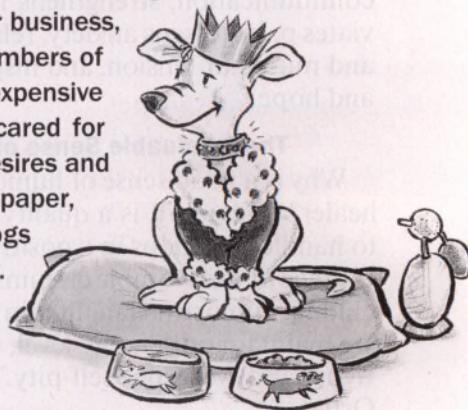
The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that of the 800,000 people massacred during Rwanda's racial riots, 300,000 were children, reports the German newspaper *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. It is estimated that more than 100,000 children in Rwanda live in households without any adult supervision. "Their everyday life is plagued by extreme poverty," says the newspaper.

## Maintaining a "Mental Edge"

"Being bilingual helps prevent people from losing their 'mental edge' as they age," says the *Toronto Star* newspaper. York University psychologist Ellen Bialystok tested the cognitive functions of 104 adults aged 30 to 59 and of 50 adults aged 60 to 88, all of whom had similar education and income levels. In each age group, half the participants were bilingual. Each person was asked to complete a simple task with two competing options while his reaction time was measured. "Bilinguals were faster on the test than monolinguals," notes the newspaper. According to Bialystok, bilingual people are always presented with two language options, and their brain must

## It's a Dog's Life

"Australia spends more on pets than on foreign aid," reports *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. "Doggie lifejackets, diamond jewellery and breath fresheners for pets are among other items that have sent Australians' spending on their pets soaring to \$2.2 billion a year." Jason Gram, a pet shop owner, noted the change in attitude toward pets in the last decade. "Dogs used to be in the backyard, covered in fleas and chewing on a bone," he said. "Now they're indoors, sitting on a fluffy bed and wearing a diamante collar." He noted, though, that the shift has been good for business, as dogs are now treated as members of the family and lavished with expensive goods. While some pets are "cared for as if they had human needs, desires and aesthetic standards," said the paper, there is "no evidence that dogs preferred a \$50 toy to a \$5 toy. But the indulgence appeared to satisfy the owners' need to demonstrate love."



decide the right language to speak in reply. "Over time, these mental gymnastics protect the brain by hindering the natural slowdown of the executive processes that occurs with age."

## "Politically Correct" Bible?

"Favorite prayers and psalms from the Bible have been radically reworked for a new Anglican prayer book in a bid to get the faithful to think about issues like Third World debt and fair trade," reports Reuters news service. *The Pocket Prayers for Peace*

and *Justice* replaces Jesus' words from the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," with "You are giving us our daily bread when we manage to get back our lands or get a fairer wage." Likewise, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," from the 23rd Psalm, has been removed and replaced with "Even if a full-scale violent confrontation breaks out I will not be afraid, Lord." Traditionalists have called the new 96-page book "a travesty and therefore blasphemous,"

as well as "crass and insulting," says London's newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*.

### Economic Abortions

Contrary to the thinking of many, "it is middle-class married [women], not promiscuous teenagers, who are making up the bulk of abortion patients in Australia," reports *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. With husbands working full-time and their wives working part-time, the decision not to have children is often driven by economics. "Motherhood brings with it both career and financial implications," says Peter McDonald, professor of demography at the Australian National University.

"The income level [women] can get without a child is very high, but if they have a child, then they are going to lose out." According to the *Herald*, 1 in 3 pregnancies in Australia is terminated by abortion.

### "Get to Know Your Child's Friends"

In the United States, "teenagers who reported that at least half of their friends were sexually active were 31 times likelier to get drunk, 5 1/2 times likelier to smoke and 22 1/2 times likelier to have tried marijuana," reports *The New York Times*. The survey, conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, involved 500

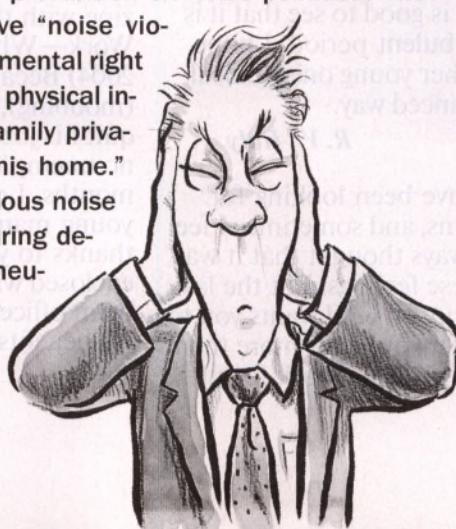
parents and 1,000 youths between 12 and 17 years of age. Joseph A. Califano, Jr., the chairman and president of the center, said: "There is a clear message for parents of 12- to 17-year olds: make sure you are aware of the dating practices of your child and get to know your child's friends." He added: "Parents who open up dinner conversation to topics such as dating and substance use are likelier to help their kids grow up drug free."

### Self-Harm Among the Young

"Britain has the highest rates of recorded self-harm in Europe," reveals *The Times* of London. Each year, British accident and emergency units treat 150,000 cases in which people have deliberately harmed themselves, such as by cutting themselves. The problem is most common among youths. "Although young women self-harmers outnumber young men by seven to one, rates in men have doubled since the 1980s," states *The Times*. It seems that these individuals harm themselves "as a way of coping with emotional pain or in response to emotional numbness." According to Andrew McCulloch, of the Mental Health Foundation, the figures "may be evidence of growing problems facing our young people, or of a growing inability to respond to those problems."

### Noise Pollution

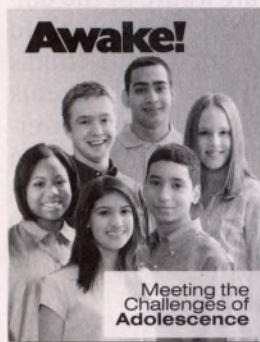
Excessive noise very often diminishes the quality of life for people who live in cities. According to the World Health Organization, it may even have a negative effect on their health, reports the Spanish newspaper ABC. The harmful effects of noise pollution have also been recognized by the Constitutional Court in Spain, which ruled against a public place of entertainment accused of violating a city prohibition on noise pollution. The court stated that excessive "noise violates the individual's fundamental right to safeguard his moral and physical integrity, his personal and family privacy and the inviolability of his home." According to the court, serious noise pollution could cause "hearing deficiency, sleep disorders, neurosis, high blood pressure and an increase in aggressive behavior."



# From Our Readers

**Adolescence** Thank you for the series “Meeting the Challenges of Adolescence.” (July 8, 2004) Recently I entered adolescence and have had some problems that made me feel bad. Thanks to these articles, I have received the needed counsel that will help me to remember my Grand Creator. I hope to go through adolescence without the pains that succumbing to this world brings.

*R. R., Albania*



When I was a child, I had many friends my age. But as we got older, we stopped talking to one another. After Christian meetings, I would

sit in the car without associating. I was relieved when I read that it is common for adolescents to experience a wide range of emotions and that one of the best ways to counteract loneliness is to reach out to others—including those not part of your peer group. That day at the meeting I spoke to others, regardless of their age, and this made me happy.

*M. K., Japan*

I am 15 years old, and I needed this information very much. The young people quoted helped me to understand that I am not the only one dealing with painful emotions and that these feelings can be conquered. This strengthened and encouraged me!

*L. R., Ukraine*

Thank you for this series. It is good to see that it is possible to cope with this turbulent period. I hope that these articles will help other young ones to deal with this phase of life in a balanced way.

*R. V., Italy*

This series is just what I have been looking for. I have emotional ups and downs, and sometimes I feel very insecure and lonely. I always thought that it was my fault that I was having these feelings. But the last article in the series stated: “Jehovah God wants you to be happy—really happy. That involves far more than the mere facade of fun that is simply a mask for un-

derlying misery.” When I read these words, my tears flowed. The article also said that in time these disturbing feelings can pass. This really, really comforted me. I got renewed strength. Thank you very much!

*H. T., Japan*

When I saw this magazine at the Kingdom Hall, I immediately started looking through it. Reading it at home, I couldn’t put it down. I was very disappointed with the ending, though, because I didn’t want the article to stop! Keep writing articles like this!

*K. C., United States*

**Keyboards** I am 12 years old. Thank you for the article “A World of Music at Your Fingertips.” (July 8, 2004) I bought a book on musical instruments, which included explanations of keyboard instruments. The details of the keyboard are explained but not as well as in *Awake!* I have been looking for such an article for quite some time! The ability to play a musical instrument is indeed a wonderful gift from our Creator!

*D. G., Germany*

**Mobbing** Recently, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses gave me the magazine with the series “Victimized at Work—What Can You Do?” (May 8, 2004) Because of workplace bullying (mobbing), an acquaintance of mine quit his job. In Germany, that means no unemployment benefits for three months. I did what I could for the young man. But it is especially thanks to your magazine, which I enclosed with a letter to the employment office, that the young man got his benefits three days later!

*R. S., Germany*

# SHOULD WE USE God's Name?

**I**N 1902, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* reported on the release of the 1901 *American Standard* version of the Bible, a revision of the 17th-century *King James Version*. In its article the journal said regarding the propriety of consistently using God's name, Jehovah, in the English Bible:

"We cannot understand how there can be any difference of opinion as to the rightness of this step. This is the Lord's personal name, by which He has elected to be known by His people: the loss suffered by transmuting it into His descriptive title seems to us immense. To be sure there are disputes as to the true form of the name, and nobody supposes that 'Jehovah' is that true form. But it has the value of the true form to the English reader; and it would be mere pedantry to substitute for it Yahwé or any of the other forms now used with more or less inaccuracy by scholastic writers. We account it no small gain for the English reader of the Old Testament that he will for the first time in his popular version meet stately with 'Jehovah' and learn all that 'Jehovah' has been to and done for His people."

Many other English Bible translations use "Jehovah" or a form of God's name. Similarly, God's personal name is found in numerous non-English Bible translations, examples of which can be seen on this page. God told Moses regarding his name, Jehovah: "This is my name to time indefinite, and this is the memorial of me to generation after generation." Surely, therefore, there is no question about the propriety of using God's name today!—Exodus 3:13-15.

III ay tshavisiwa ni makumo,  
Va khomiwa hi mapfalo va fa.  
18 Va ta ti'a lešaku wena loyi vito  
ra yena a ngu Yehova.  
U tlakukile henlia ka misava  
hikwayo.

Tsonga

Qirokwazo, ngabanyadziswe oare,  
18 Uazioe kuti imi moga, imi mune-  
zita rinonz Jehova,  
Ndimi Wokumsoro-soro kumsoro  
kwapasi pose.

Shona

hu-mát;  
18 Hầu cho chúng nó biết rằng chỉ một  
minh Chúa, danh là Đức Giê-hô-va.  
Là Đáng Chí-Cao trên khắp trái đất.

Vietnamese

1 Sean deshonrados, y perezcan.  
18 <sup>¶</sup>Y conozcan que tu nombre es  
JEHOVÁ;  
Tú soio Altísimo sobre toda la  
tierra.

Spanish

हो जाए,  
१८ जिस से यह जानें कि केवल तू जिसका  
नाम महोवा है,  
सारी पृथ्वी के ऊपर परमप्रधान  
है ॥

Hindi

Oo, mangalibya sila at mangangon  
18 Upang kanilang maalaman na  
ikaw lamang, na lang pangalan  
ay JEHOVA.  
Ay Katawatasan sa boong lupa.

Tagalog

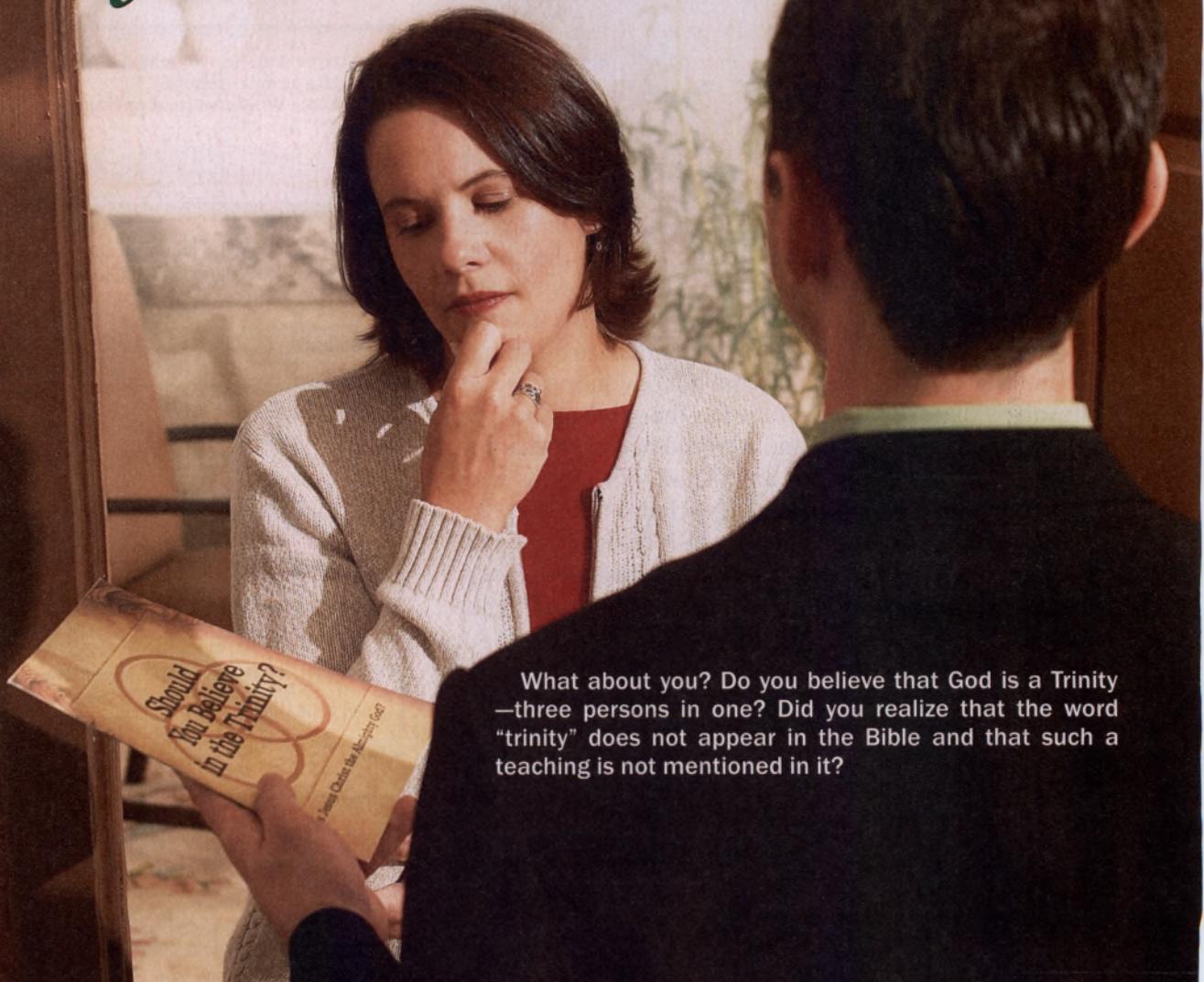
17 Let them be confounded, and troubled for  
ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:  
18 The <sup>name</sup> know that thou, whose <sup>name</sup>  
alone is JEHOVÁ, art the Most High over all  
the earth.  
[562] PSALM 84

English

**Psalm 83:18 as it appears  
in various languages**



# Do You Think Jesus Is God?



What about you? Do you believe that God is a Trinity—three persons in one? Did you realize that the word “trinity” does not appear in the Bible and that such a teaching is not mentioned in it?

