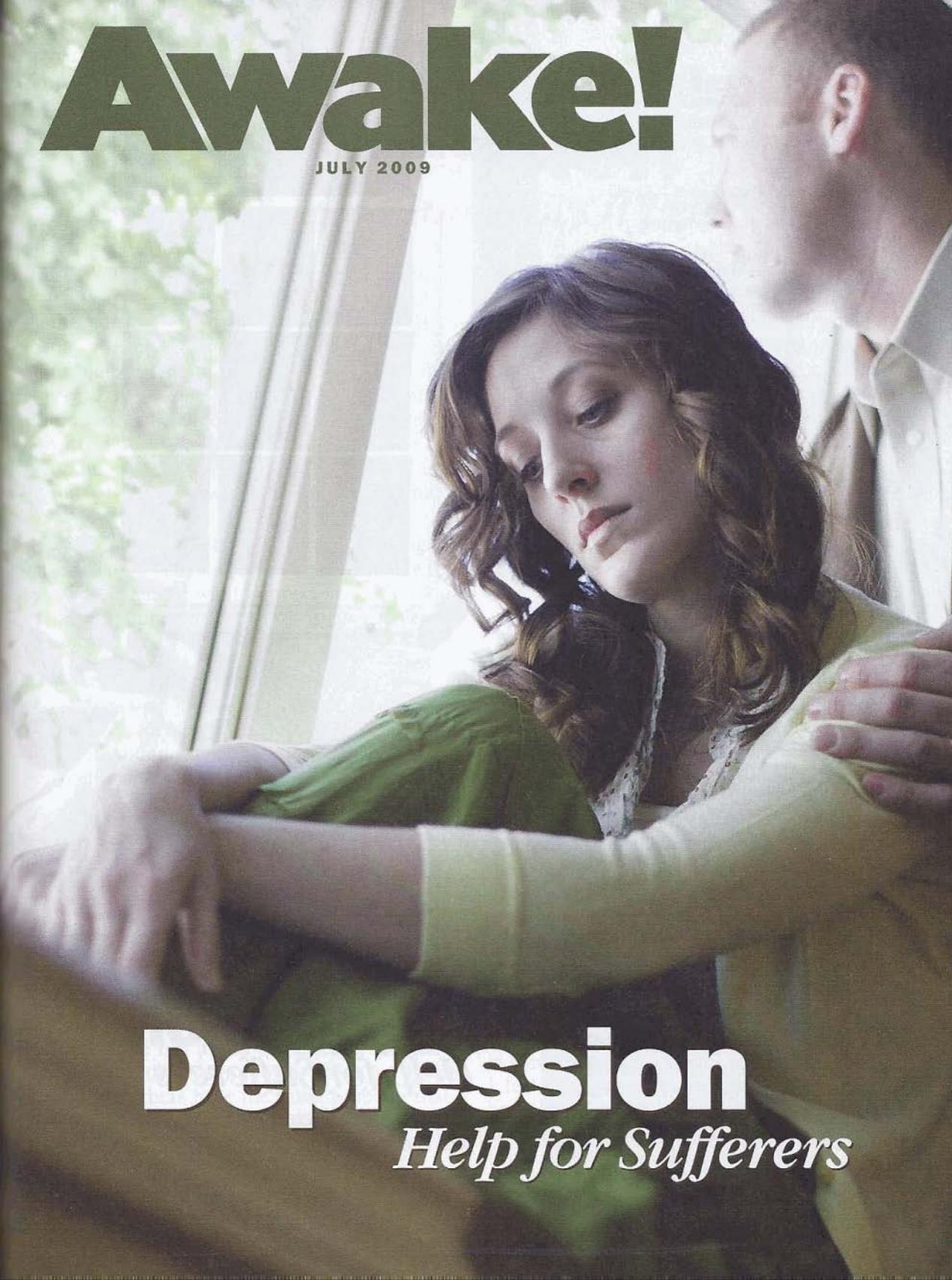


Awake!

JULY 2009

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a green top, sitting alone and looking distressed. A man's hands are visible on her shoulders, suggesting support or concern. The background shows a window with a view of trees.

Depression
Help for Sufferers

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 36,725,000

PUBLISHED IN 82 LANGUAGES

- 3 Depression—How Does It Feel?
- 4 Depression—How to Treat It
- 6 Help From 'the God of Comfort'
- 10 Was It Designed?
The Energy-Efficient Boxfish
- 14 The Lazy Life of a Sloth
- 17 Albarracín—An "Eagle's Nest"
With a Difference
- 20 Tabàky—A Beauty Treatment
From Wood
- 21 Rickshaw Anyone?
- 24 Young People Ask
Why Am I Afraid to Share
My Faith?
- 30 Watching the World
- 31 How Would You Answer?
- 32 'It Answers Our Questions'

11

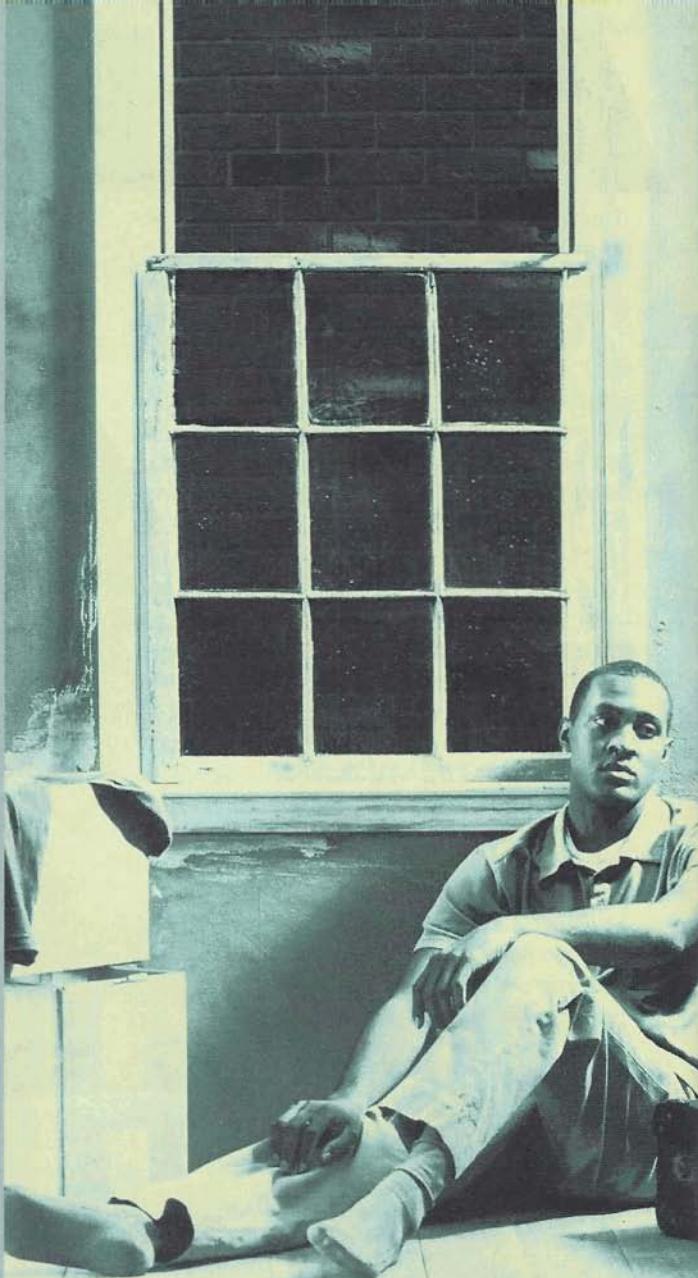
Driving—How You Can Keep It Safe

Here are some common-sense suggestions for avoiding trouble when driving.

28

Is It Wrong to Change Your Religion?

Is the religion you received at birth the right one? What if your answer is no?



Depression *Help for Sufferers* 3-9

Millions are affected by depression.
Are there effective remedies?

Depression

How Does It Feel?

"I WOKE up one morning when I was 12 years old," remembers James,* "sat on the edge of my bed, and wondered, 'Is today the day I die?'" James was in the grip of major depression. "Every day of my life," says James 30 years later, "I have fought this emotional and mental illness." James felt so worthless when he was young that he tore up his childhood photographs. "I didn't even think that I was worth remembering," he recalls.

Because we all contend with feelings of sadness occasionally, we could conclude that we understand what depression is all about. But how does it feel to have *clinical depression*?

A Cruel Intruder

More than just a spell of melancholy blues, clinical depression is a grave disturbance that often hinders a person from carrying out daily activities.

For example, for more than 40 years, Álvaro has been afflicted with "fear, mental confusion, anguish, and deep sorrow." He explains: "My depression made it difficult for me to deal with the opinions of others. I always felt responsible for everything that went wrong." He describes depression as "having a terrible pain without knowing where the pain is located, fear without knowing why and, worst of all, absolutely no desire to talk about it." Now, though, he has found some relief. He knows the cause of his symptoms. He says, "Knowing that others have the same problem that I have has made me feel better."

* Names in this series of articles have been changed.

In Brazil, 49-year-old Maria was afflicted with depression that caused insomnia, pain, irritability, and "a seemingly unending feeling of sadness." When her condition was first diagnosed, Maria was relieved to put a name to the cause of her suffering. "But then I became more anxious," she explains, "because so few people understand depression and it carries a stigma."

Nothing to Be Sad About?

Although depression sometimes has an obvious trigger, it often intrudes on a person's

"Your life is suddenly darkened by a cloud of sadness for no apparent reason"

life without warning. "Your life is suddenly darkened by a cloud of sadness for no apparent reason," explains Richard from South Africa. "Nobody you know has died, and nothing distressing has occurred. Yet, you feel dejected and listless. And nothing will make the cloud go away. You are overwhelmed by feelings of despair, and you don't know why."

Depression is nothing to be ashamed of. Yet, Ana in Brazil felt ashamed to be diagnosed with depression. "In fact, eight years later I still feel ashamed of myself," she admits. In particular, she finds it difficult to deal with her emotional anguish. "The suffering is sometimes so intense," she explains, "that I feel physical pain. All the muscles in my body hurt." At such times it is almost impossible to get out of bed. And then there are the times when Ana cannot stop crying. "I sob

with such intensity and become so exhausted," she says, "that it feels as though my blood has stopped circulating."

The Bible acknowledges that people can become dangerously low in spirit. For instance, the apostle Paul's concern about one man was that he might be "swallowed up by his being overly sad [“swallowed up in over-

whelming depression,” *Jewish New Testament*.]” (2 Corinthians 2:7) Some depressed people become so distraught that they wish they could just fall asleep in death. Many feel as did Jonah the prophet: “My dying is better than my being alive.”—Jonah 4:3.

What can depressed ones do to treat and cope with this distressing malady?

Depression

How to Treat It

“**M**Y HUSBAND and I have sought out medical treatment, made lifestyle changes, and worked hard to develop a routine that I can cope with,” says Ruth, who has suffered with depression for many years. “We seem to have found an effective medication, and I am doing better. But during the time when nothing else seemed to work, the constant love of my husband and friends helped me not to give up.”

As Ruth’s experience indicates, patients who suffer from clinical depression need all the support they can get, including whatever medical approach might be advisable. It can be risky to ignore depression because in some cases when left untreated it can be life-threatening. About two thousand years ago,

Jesus Christ acknowledged that those with medical experience could provide needed help, when he said that ‘those who are ill need a physician.’ (Mark 2:17) The fact is that physicians can do much to alleviate the suffering of many depressed patients.*

Some Helpful Options

There are a number of treatments for depression, varying according to the symptoms and the severity of the illness. (See the box on page 5, “What Kind of Depression?”) Many people may be helped by their family physician, but some need more specialized treatment. The doctor might prescribe antidepressants.

* *Awake!* does not endorse any particular treatment. Each individual should carefully evaluate his options before making a personal decision.

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today’s problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator’s promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2009 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

sant medication or recommend some other form of assistance. Some people have experienced good results with herbal medications, dietary adjustments, or a controlled exercise program.

Common Issues

1. Well-meaning friends with little or no medical training might try to tell you which method of treatment to accept and which to reject. They might also have strong opinions about whether you should take herbal medicine, prescribed medication, or nothing at all.

Consider: Make sure that any advice you accept comes from a reliable source. In the end, you are the one who must make an informed choice.

2. Discouragement may make patients discontinue their choice of treatment because they do not seem to be getting better or because of unpleasant side effects.

Consider: "There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." (Proverbs 15:22) A program of medical therapy is more likely to succeed if there is good communication between doctor and patient. Frankly explain your concerns or describe your symptoms to your doctor, and ask whether you need to adjust the treatment or simply to persevere before you will begin to experience benefits.

3. Overconfidence can make patients stop their medical remedy abruptly after a few weeks because they feel better. They may

WHAT KIND OF DEPRESSION?

The effectiveness of any particular medical approach depends on what type of depression a patient has.

■ **Major depression** has symptoms that are severe enough to last six months or longer if untreated and that impact on most aspects of a sufferer's life.

■ **Bipolar disorder** is also known as manic depression. Sufferers may experience emotional extremes that career between prolonged episodes of intense hyperactivity (mania) and devastating lows (depressions).

—See the article "Living With a Mood Disorder," in the January 8, 2004, issue of this magazine.

■ **Dysthymia**, although not as disabling as major depression, has depressive symptoms that make it difficult for the patient to function normally. Some may also experience intermittent periods of major depression.

■ **Postpartum depression** is a debilitating emotional condition that affects many mothers after they give birth.—See the article "Understanding Postpartum Depression," in the June 8, 2003, issue of this magazine.

■ **Seasonal affective disorder** likely occurs as a result of a lack of sunlight during autumn and winter. It usually clears up during spring and summer.

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislam, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese⁺ (audio Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Cimbera, Croatian, Czech,⁺⁺ Danish,⁺ Dutch,⁺ English,⁺⁺⁺ Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,⁺⁺ French,⁺⁺ Georgian, German,⁺⁺ Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,⁺⁺ Japanese,⁺⁺ Canada, Kirghiz, Korean,⁺⁺ Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian,⁺⁺ Polish,⁺⁺ Portuguese,⁺⁺ Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,⁺⁺ Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,⁺⁺ Swahili, Swedish,⁺⁺ Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu.

⁺ CD also available.

⁺⁺ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

⁺ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address. **America, United States of:** 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. **Australia:** PO Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** PO Box N-1247, Nassau, NP. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Zweigbüro, Am Steinfels, 65618 Selters. **Guam:** 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. **Guyana:** 352-360 Tyrell St, Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. **Hawaii:** 2055 Kamehameha IV Road, Honolulu, HI 96819-2619. **Jamaica:** PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. **Puerto Rico:** PO Box 3980, Guayanabo, PR 00970. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Kruksdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

forget how debilitating their symptoms were before they started their medication.

Consider: Suddenly terminating medical treatment without consulting a doctor can have serious and even life-threatening consequences.

Though the Bible is not a medical textbook, its Author, Jehovah God, is our Creator. The next article will examine the comfort and guidance God's Word provides both for those who suffer from depression and for their caregivers.

Help From 'the God of Comfort'

KING DAVID was a man who experienced much anguish and many "disquieting thoughts." Yet, he never doubted that the Creator understands us in every way. "O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me," he wrote. "You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up. You have considered my thought from far off. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, look! O Jehovah, you already know it all." —Psalm 139:1, 2, 4, 23.

We too can be certain that our Creator understands us and the debilitating effect that depression can have on our imperfect minds and bodies. He knows what causes depression and how we can best cope under present circumstances. Furthermore, he has revealed how he will cure depression forever. We could wish for no one better to help us than our compassionate "God, Who comforts and encourages and refreshes and cheers the depressed." —2 Corinthians 7:6, *The Amplified Bible*.

But depressed ones may wonder how God can help them when they experience distressing emotions.

■ Is God accessible to the depressed?

God is so close to his depressed servants that it is as if he *resided with* the "crushed and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly ones and to revive the heart of the ones being crushed." (Isaiah 57:15) How comforting to know that "Jehovah is *near* to those that are

broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves"!—Psalm 34:18.

■ How can the depressed get comfort from God?

At any time of the day, God's worshippers have approach to the "Hearer of prayer," who can help us to cope with distressing feelings and circumstances. (Psalm 65:2) The Bible urges us to pour out our hearts to him: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

■ What if feelings of unworthiness make us think that our prayers are not being heard?

Depression may cause us to conclude that our attempts to please God are not adequate. However, our heavenly Father is sensitive to our fragile emotions, "remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14) Even if "our hearts may condemn us," we can "persuade our hearts" that "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." (1 John 3:19, 20, footnote) Therefore, you can use expressions in your prayers that you glean from such Bible passages as Psalm 9:9, 10; 10:12, 14, 17; and 25:17.

■ What if we are too distraught to put our feelings into words?



"SPEAK CONSOLINGLY TO THE DEPRESSED"

When Barbara's depression and feelings of worthlessness are more than she can bear, she and her husband phone Gerard, a family friend who is a Christian overseer. He always listens patiently as Barbara sobs uncontrollably and repeats the same anguished thoughts she has expressed before.

Gerard has learned to listen without being judgmental, argumentative, or condemning. (James 1:19) As the Bible advises, he has learned to "speak consolingly to the depressed." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Patiently he reassures Barbara that she is very precious to Jehovah God, to her family, and to her friends. He usually reads one or two comforting passages from the Bible, even though he has read some of them to her before. Then, without fail, he offers to say a prayer with her and her husband over the phone, something they

always find very consoling.
—James 5:14, 15.

Gerard is very aware that he is not a trained physician, and he never tries to take over the role of Barbara's doctors. He does, however, complement her medical treatment with something few doctors give—consoling scriptures and comforting prayers.

To "speak consolingly to the depressed"

You might say: "I just wanted to let you know that I've been thinking of you. I know you don't always feel very well. How have you been lately?"

Remember: Speak sincerely and listen with empathy, even if the depressed

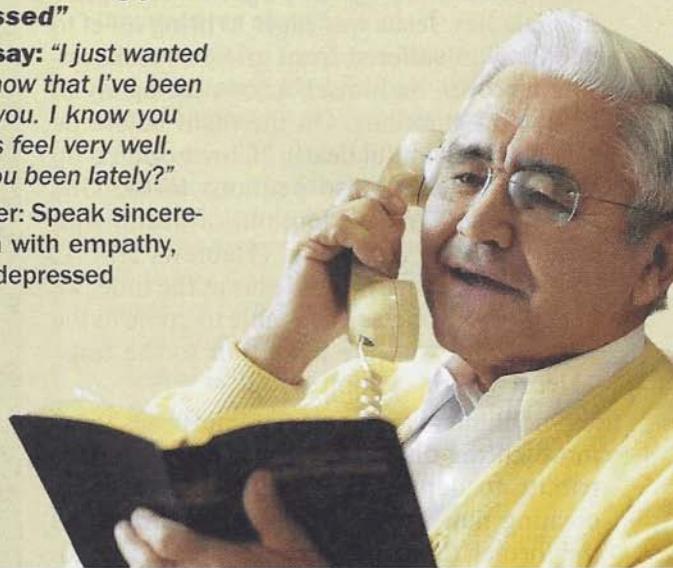
person says the same things he or she has said before.

You might say: "I am amazed at what you are able to do (or "I am impressed by the Christian qualities you display") despite your health limitations. Even if you wish you could do more, Jehovah loves and appreciates you, and so do we."

Remember: Be compassionate and kind.

You might say: "I came across this encouraging scripture." Or "I thought of you when I reread this favorite Bible verse of mine." Then read or quote the verse.

Remember: Avoid a preachy tone.



When painful emotions are so overwhelming that rational speech is difficult, do not give up! Keep approaching "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort," knowing that he understands your feelings and needs. (2 Corinthians 1:3) Maria, mentioned earlier in this series, says: "At times,

when I feel very confused, I do not know what to pray about. But I know that God understands and helps me."

■ **How does God answer our prayers?**

The Bible does not suggest that God removes all our difficulties now. However, God does impart the strength to cope with "all

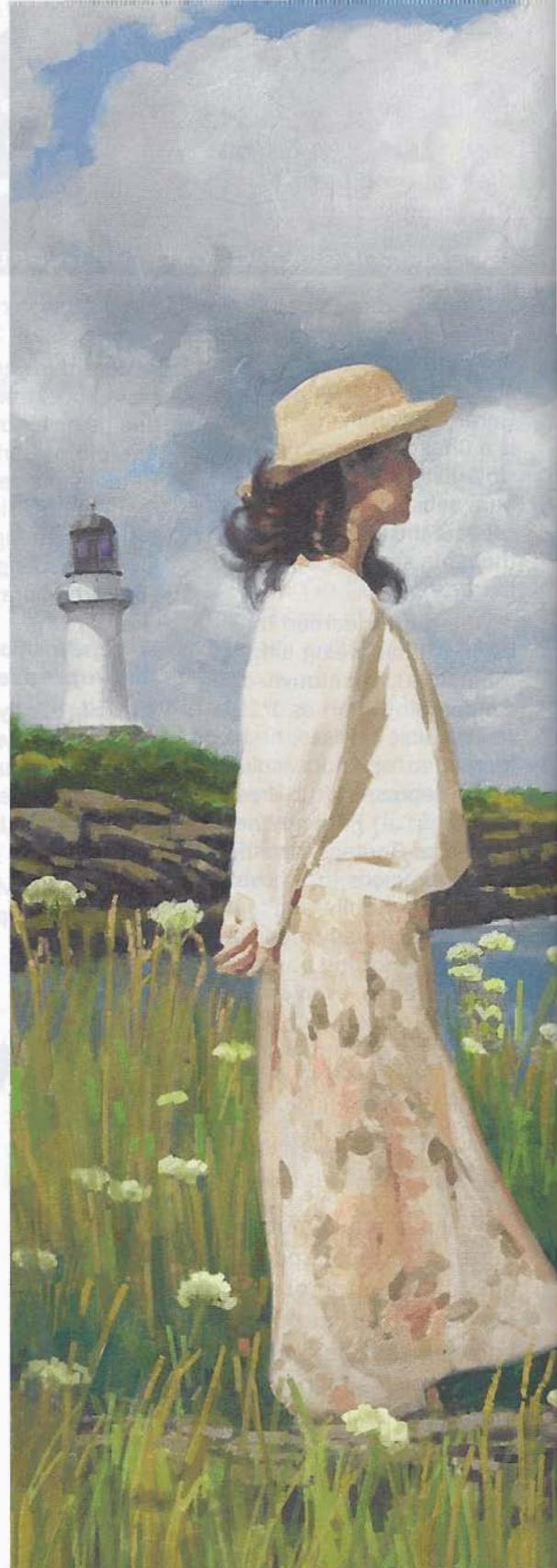
things”—including depression. (Philippians 4:13) “When I first suffered from depression,” admits Martina, “I prayed for Jehovah to heal me immediately because I thought I would not be able to bear it any longer. Now I am content to pray for strength each day.”

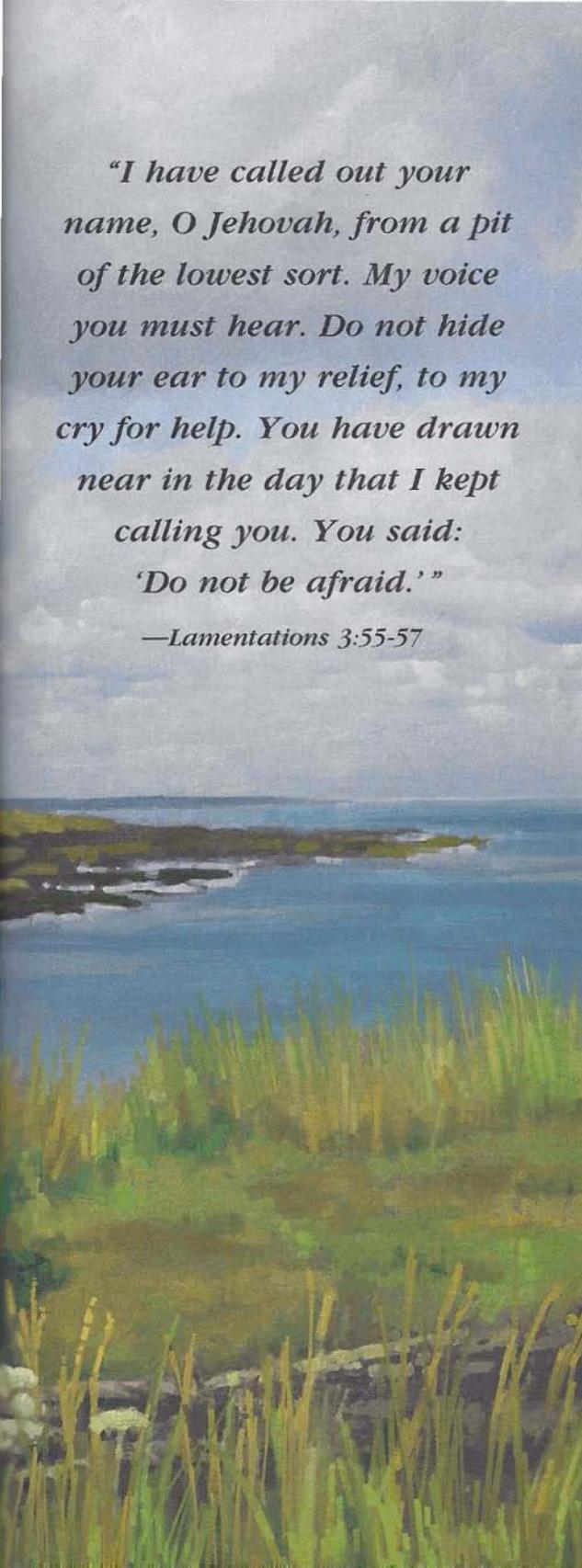
The Scriptures are a vital source of spiritual strength to help afflicted individuals to cope with depression. Sarah, who has battled depression for 35 years, personally experienced the practical value of daily Bible reading. She relates: “I truly appreciate what the medical profession has done for me. Above all, though, I realize the spiritual and practical value of reading God’s Word. I have made a habit of reading it.”

No More Depression—Ever!

When Jesus Christ was on earth, he demonstrated his God-given power to cure painful maladies. Jesus was eager to bring relief to people who suffered from grievous sicknesses. Moreover, he himself knows the agony of distraught emotions. On the night before he was to die a painful death, “Christ offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears.” (Hebrews 5:7) As distressing as that was to Jesus at the time, we benefit now because “he is able to come to the aid of those who are being put to the test.” —Hebrews 2:18; 1 John 2:1, 2.

The Bible reveals that God purposes to remove all the distressing conditions that contribute to depression. He promises: “I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. But exult, you people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating.” (Isaiah 65:17, 18) The “new heavens,” God’s Kingdom, will restore the “new earth,” a society of righteous people on earth, to perfect physical, emotional, and spiritual health. All sicknesses will be wiped out permanently.





"I have called out your name, O Jehovah, from a pit of the lowest sort. My voice you must hear. Do not hide your ear to my relief, to my cry for help. You have drawn near in the day that I kept calling you. You said: 'Do not be afraid.'"

—Lamentations 3:55-57

Consolation From the Scriptures

Lorraine is strengthened by Jehovah's promise found at Isaiah 41:10: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you. I will really keep fast hold of you with my right hand of righteousness."

Álvaro says that the words of Psalm 34:4, 6 often console him: "I inquired of Jehovah, and he answered me, and out of all my frights he delivered me. This afflicted one called, and Jehovah himself heard. And out of all his distresses He saved him."

Naoya says that reading Psalm 40:1, 2 always comforts him: "I earnestly hoped in Jehovah, and so he inclined his ear to me and heard my cry for help. . . . He firmly established my steps."

Psalm 147:3 reassures **Naoko** that Jehovah "is healing the brokenhearted ones, and is binding up their painful spots."

Jesus' words recorded at Luke 12:6, 7 help **Eliz** trust in Jehovah's care: "Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your heads are all numbered. Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Other Bible verses:

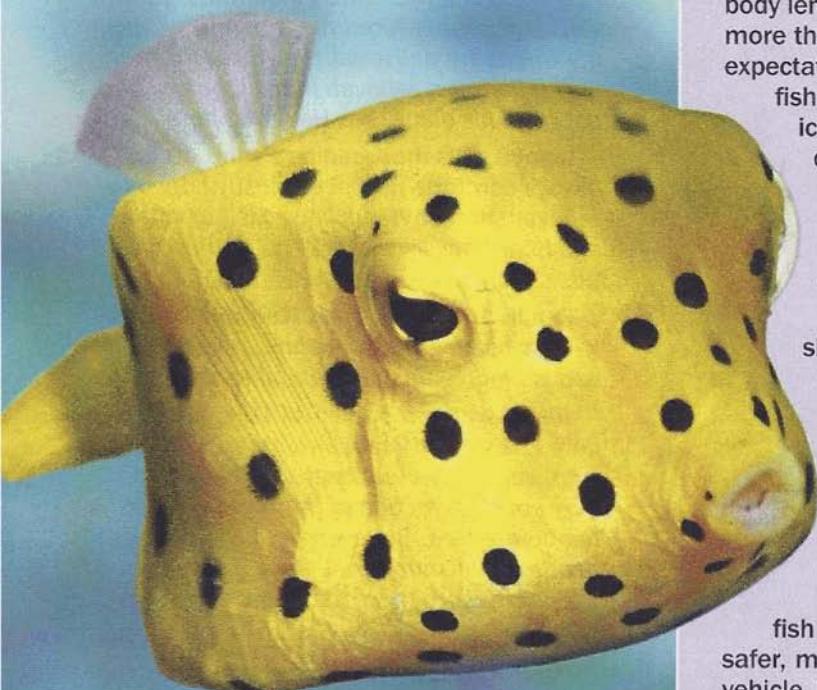
Psalm 39:12: "Do hear my prayer, O Jehovah, and to my cry for help do give ear. At my tears do not keep silent."

2 Corinthians 7:6: God "comforts the depressed."—"New American Standard Bible."

1 Peter 5:7: "Throw all your anxiety upon [God], because he cares for you."

WAS IT DESIGNED?

The Energy-Efficient Boxfish



To produce a car that is sturdier, more energy-efficient, and environmentally friendly, designers looked to an unlikely place for inspiration—under the sea! The boxfish, found near coral reefs in tropical waters, provides an excellent model for a vehicle with lightweight construction and astounding aerodynamics.

Consider: The boxfish can swim fast—covering a distance of up to six times its body length each second. But this speed is more than a feat of strength. Contrary to expectations, the cubelike shape of the fish actually enhances its aerodynamic qualities. In fact, engineers who constructed a model of the boxfish and tested it in a wind tunnel found this design to slip through the air far more efficiently than compact cars do.

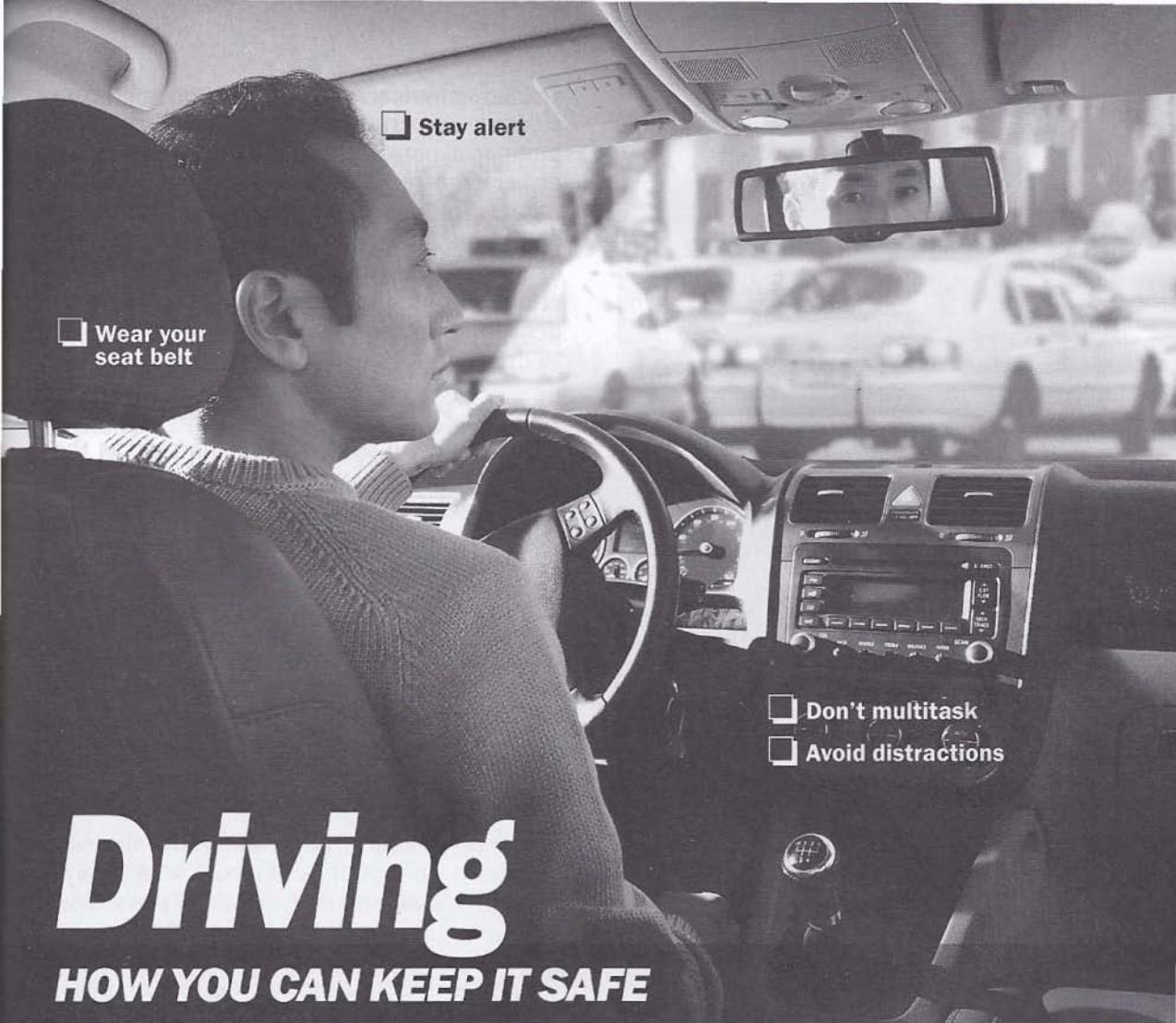
The boxfish has a bony outer skin that gives it maximum strength with minimal weight.

Tiny vortices form in the water surrounding the fish, stabilizing the creature when it encounters turbulence. Thus, the boxfish has outstanding maneuverability and protection from injury.

Engineers believe that the boxfish provides the secret to producing a safer, more fuel-efficient, yet lightweight, vehicle. "Quite frankly," says research and development chief Dr. Thomas Weber, "we were surprised when this clumsy-looking fish, of all things, became our model for designing an aerodynamic and fuel-efficient car."

What do you think? Did the energy-efficient boxfish come about by chance? Or was it designed?

Boxfish: © Hal Beral/V&W/SeaPics.com;
car: Mercedes-Benz USA



Driving

HOW YOU CAN KEEP IT SAFE

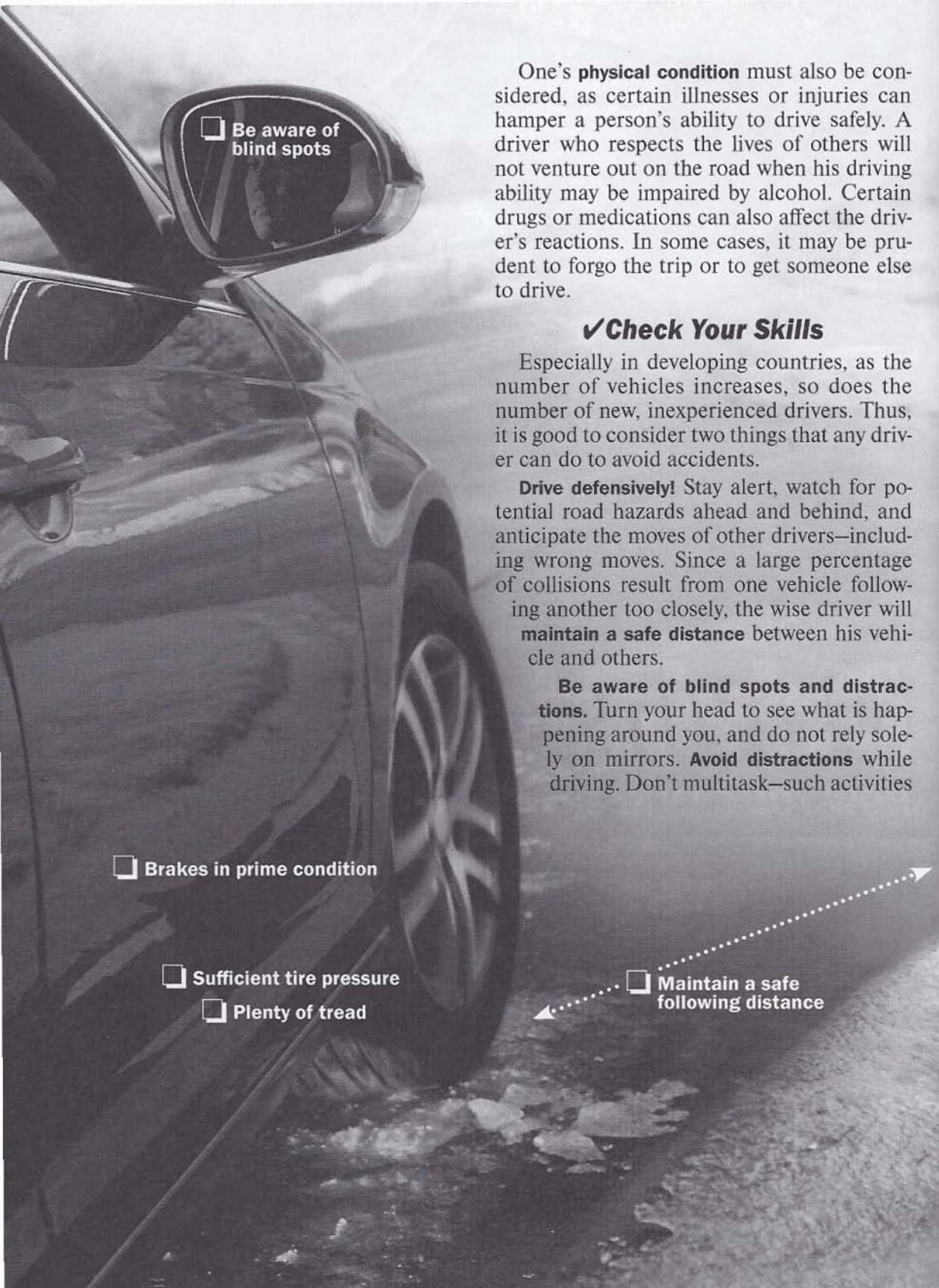
THOUGH driving a motor vehicle is viewed as a necessity by millions of people today, driving comes at a price. It has been estimated that over 1,200,000 people lose their lives in traffic accidents worldwide each year! Thus, would it not be worth our while to learn how to drive safely? Let us look at some practical steps that we can take.

4. False.
- 15:17, 20. 3. Cushan-nishathaim.—Judges 3:8.
1. Jerusalem.—Acts 2:5. ■ Galleee.—Acts 2:7. ■ They thought they were drunk.—Acts 2:13. 2. Judeah.—Joshue

ANSWERS TO PAGE 31

✓Check Yourself

A report in the *Australian Journal of Social Issues* noted that one of the most significant steps a driver can take to reduce the risk of fatalities is to improve his behavior at the wheel. Therefore, before setting out, a driver might want to ask himself, 'Am I in the proper condition and mood to drive?' **Fatigue** can dull one's mind and slow responses. The Land Transportation Office of the Philippines lists **anger**, **anxiety**, and **excitement** as emotions that affect driving habits and that can lead to unwise decisions and even violent road rage.



One's **physical condition** must also be considered, as certain illnesses or injuries can hamper a person's ability to drive safely. A driver who respects the lives of others will not venture out on the road when his driving ability may be impaired by alcohol. Certain drugs or medications can also affect the driver's reactions. In some cases, it may be prudent to forgo the trip or to get someone else to drive.

✓Check Your Skills

Especially in developing countries, as the number of vehicles increases, so does the number of new, inexperienced drivers. Thus, it is good to consider two things that any driver can do to avoid accidents.

Drive defensively! Stay alert, watch for potential road hazards ahead and behind, and anticipate the moves of other drivers—including wrong moves. Since a large percentage of collisions result from one vehicle following another too closely, the wise driver will **maintain a safe distance** between his vehicle and others.

Be aware of blind spots and distractions. Turn your head to see what is happening around you, and do not rely solely on mirrors. **Avoid distractions** while driving. Don't multitask—such activities

as talking on the phone or operating gadgets are distracting.

If you drive a motorcycle: Some authorities say that per mile, a motorcyclist is 37 times more likely to die in a crash than the occupant of a car. What protective steps can you take? Both of the preceding steps also apply to the motorcyclist. In addition, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation in the United States says: "**Be visible.**" Make sure others can see you. Keep your headlights on. Stay out of blind spots of other vehicles. "**Dress for safety.**" Wear a helmet and bright, thick, protective clothing. "**Ride extra defensively.**" Assume that others cannot see you, and drive accordingly.

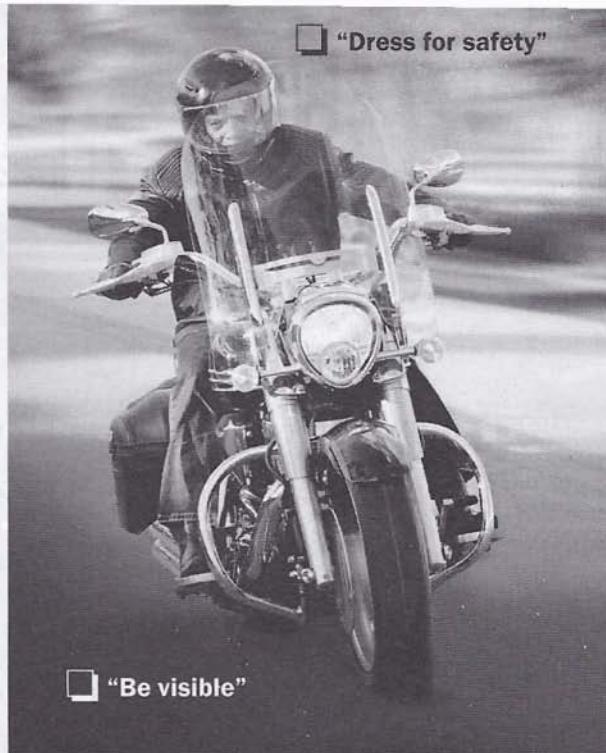
✓ Check Your Vehicle

The driver should be safety conscious, and his vehicle should be in good condition. **Brakes** should be in prime condition, as should all working parts. **Tires** should have plenty of tread to reduce the possibility of sliding or hydroplaning. **Sufficient tire pressure** will improve handling and braking. Most vehicles today have **seat belts**. These do little good if they are not worn.

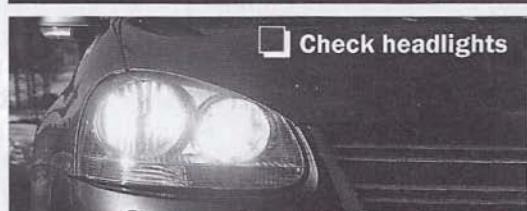
Drive your vehicle according to conditions. Wet roads, and especially those with ice or snow, affect **stopping distances** and steering ability. For night driving, **headlights** should be kept in good condition and speeds should usually be lowered. Since life is a gift from God, it is only proper that we do what we can to protect our lives, including learning to drive safely.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

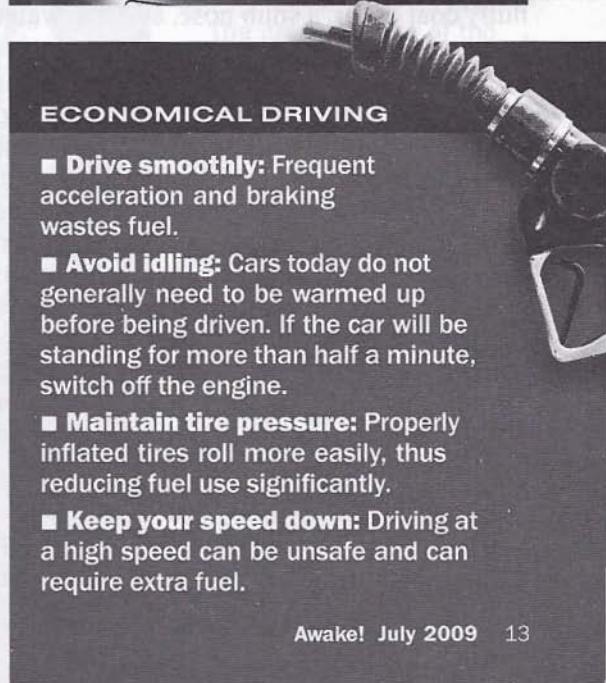
- Prejudice and Discrimination
—Why? How Can You Cope?
- A Universe Full of Surprises
- Should There Be a Clergy-Laity Distinction?



"Be visible"



Check headlights



ECONOMICAL DRIVING

- **Drive smoothly:** Frequent acceleration and braking wastes fuel.
- **Avoid idling:** Cars today do not generally need to be warmed up before being driven. If the car will be standing for more than half a minute, switch off the engine.
- **Maintain tire pressure:** Properly inflated tires roll more easily, thus reducing fuel use significantly.
- **Keep your speed down:** Driving at a high speed can be unsafe and can require extra fuel.

The Lazy Life of a SLOTH

HURRY and get your camera!" I called to my sister as I spotted a green sloth on the jungle path in front of me. We laughed when we realized that there was no reason to hurry—the sloth is one of the world's slowest animals.

To learn more about this mammal, I visited Zoo Ave in La Garita de Alajuela, Costa Rica. More than just a zoo, it is a center for the rescue, rehabilitation, and return to the wild of native animals. There I met biologist Shirley Ramírez, who was Zoo Ave's enthusiastic research director. She took me to meet the zoo's resident sloth, Pelota, which in Spanish means "ball." Sloths, in fact, may curl up into a tight ball to sleep. Pelota is a two-toed sloth the size of a small dog, with a fluffy coat of fur, a snub nose, and big, watery brown eyes.

My research told me that sloths are solitary animals and that they give birth to a single offspring about once a year. The baby sloth clings to its mother for the first four to six weeks until weaned but may ride on her belly for five to eight months afterward. During that time the mother feeds her baby tender, easily digestible leaves from her lips. Later, the baby reaches out to grab its own leaves without ever releasing its grip on its mother. During their time together, the mother sloth also familiarizes her little one with the small home range in which it will live.

Two-Toed, Three-Toed, Green, and Cold

I learned that the sloth I had seen in the jungle was a three-toed sloth. It had a black

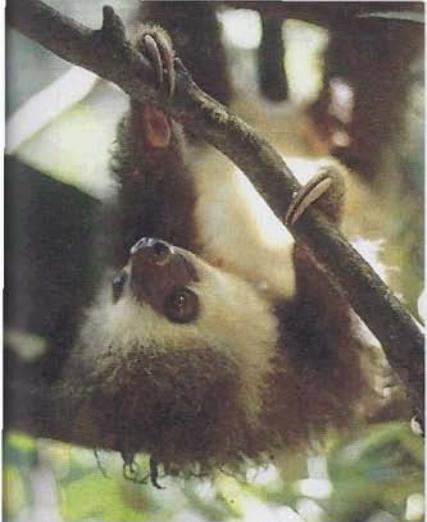
mask around its eyes, a stubby tail, a coat of wiry hair, forelimbs that are much longer than its hind limbs, and a yellow-gold patch between its shoulders. This kind of sloth has nine vertebrae in its neck, allowing it to rotate its head 270 degrees in search of its favorite leaves. But why did it appear to be green? Shirley answers, "That greenish tinge is algae that grows on the sloth's coat."

In contrast with their longer-armed, three-toed cousins, the two-toed species have forelimbs that are about the same length as their hind limbs. Their hair is long, brownish-gold, and soft to the touch.

The sloth spends its days sunning itself high up in the forest canopy. Its body temperature can fluctuate from an ambient 75 degrees Fahrenheit at night to 91 degrees Fahrenheit during the day—a temperature range greater than that of any other mammal. The sloth has so little muscle mass that it cannot shiver to stay warm. That is why it often sleeps curled up in a ball, to conserve heat. Its undercoat of short, fine hairs helps to insulate it. And yes, the sloth can sleep for 20 hours a day!

Lingering Over Lunch

Since digestion requires body heat for bacterial activity and fermentation, the sloth's low body temperature gives it an incredibly low metabolic rate. Leaves may take up to a month to go through the stages of digestion in a sloth's multichambered stomach before passing into the small intestine. During a rainy season with many successive cool days,



THE "PERFECT HOST"

The greenish cast of the sloth's shaggy fur is caused by symbiotic algae that grow in grooves running along the length of each of the mammal's outer hairs. The sloth hosts the algae, and the algae return the favor by providing nutrients that the sloth either ingests by licking its fur or absorbs through its skin. The grayish-green color makes the sloth look just like a clump of dry leaves hanging from a branch—the perfect jungle camouflage! And the longer a sloth lives, the greener it gets!

Top right: © Michael and Patricia Fogden;
bottom: © Jan Sevcik

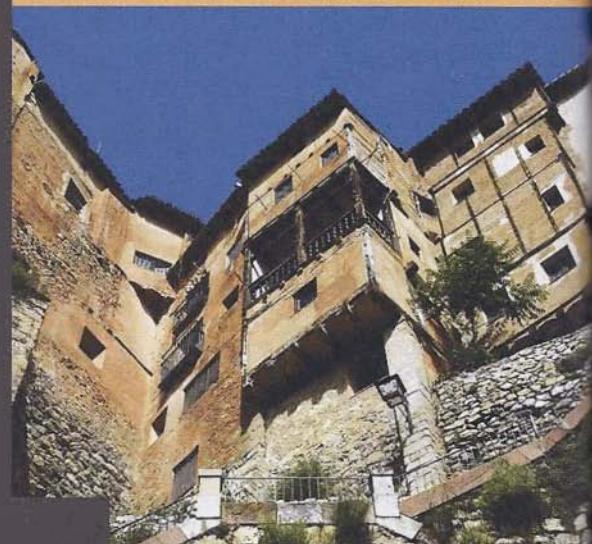
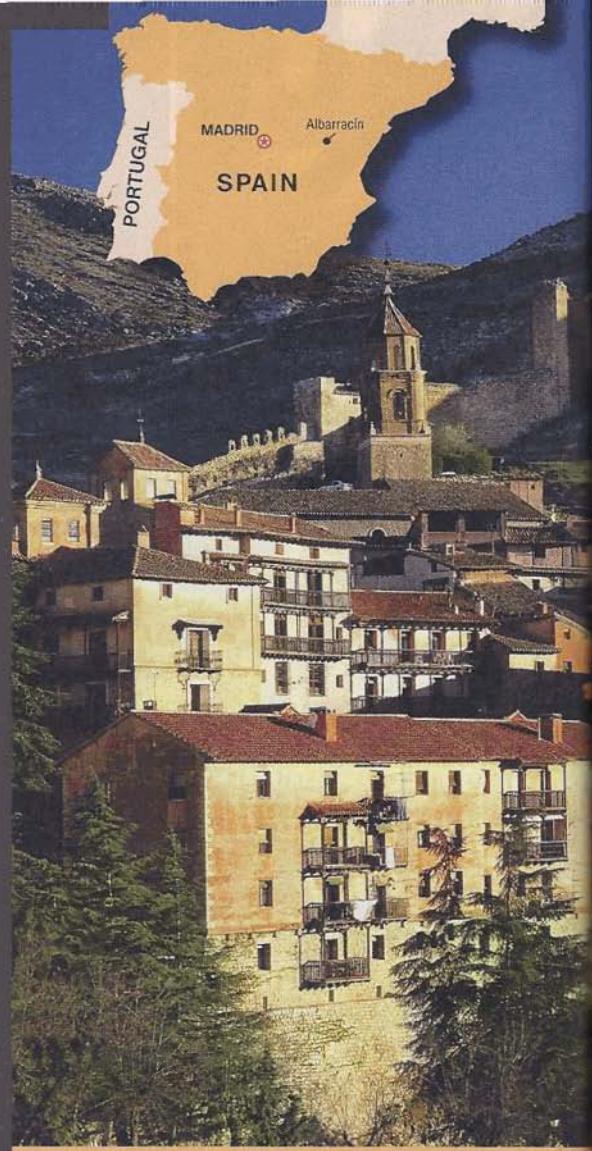
sloths can die of starvation with a stomach full of food. "For sloths," explains Shirley, "the sun's warmth is indispensable to digestion."

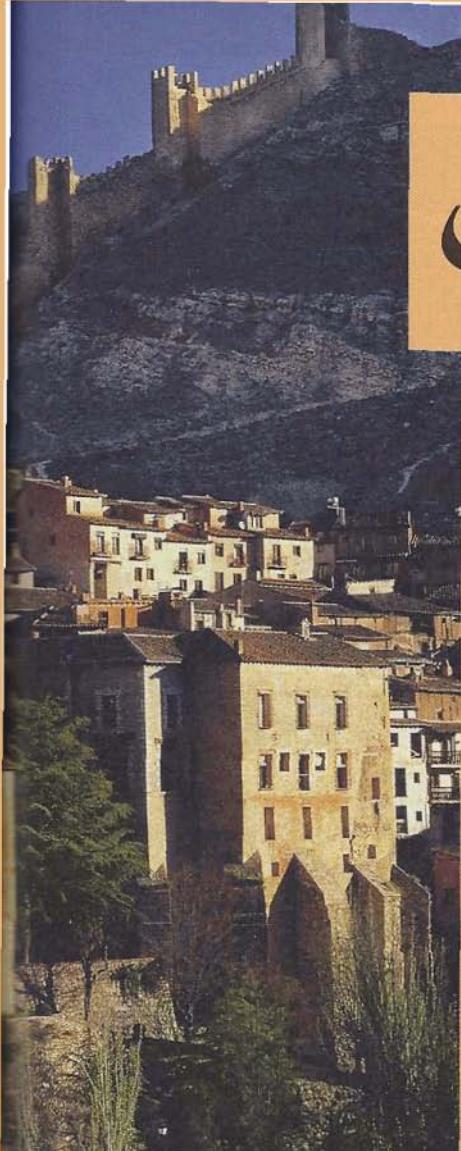
Shirley adds: "As a zookeeper who handles the animals and cleans their cages, I have to say that my favorite thing about sloths is that they only defecate and urinate once a week! When they do, they go down to the ground, dig a hole, and bury their excrement. It is the only thing they do on the ground."

Designed for Life Upside Down

Almost everything else sloths do—eat, sleep, mate, and give birth—they do suspended in trees. The little mammals were ingeniously designed by their Creator for life in an upside-down world. The animal hangs by its fingers and toes, which are equipped with three-inch-long claws that hook and lock over branches and vines. To prevent the sloth's skin from getting soaked by tropical downpours, even its hair grows upside down! Its hair parts on the belly and grows down around the back—just the opposite of the hair of other land-based animals—so the rain runs right off. Though on the ground the sloth is awkward and clumsy, when in the branches above, it is the epitome of leisurely grace. Surprisingly, the sloth is also an excellent swimmer!

What else did I learn about this quiet denizen of the treetops? Two things stand out. First, the sloth has an amazing ability to survive injuries and even doses of poison that would be lethal to other mammals. Severe wounds heal quickly, and they rarely become infected. Hence, a better understanding of the sloth's immune defenses would be helpful to medical research. And second, people who are constantly rushing and under stress might find it beneficial to imitate, at least to some extent, the sloth's relaxed pace and easygoing nature.—Contributed.





Albarracín

AN "EAGLE'S NEST" WITH A DIFFERENCE

*"Visit one of the most beautiful towns in Spain,
visit Albarracín."*—José Martínez Ruiz, Spanish

writer also known as Azorín, 1873-1967.

ALBAARRACÍN is a unique town. What makes it so? First of all, its geography, then its history, and finally its delightful surroundings. For these reasons, in 1961 the Spanish government declared this small town in the province of Teruel a national monument. And in 2005, a group of tourist representatives selected Albarracín as "the most beautiful town in Spain."

Nestled in the mountains of central Spain, Albarracín is an ancient town of some 1,000 inhabitants. Surrounding it are green meadows watered by several rivers and a mountain range that shares its name—Sierra de Albarracín.

A Source of Food and Water

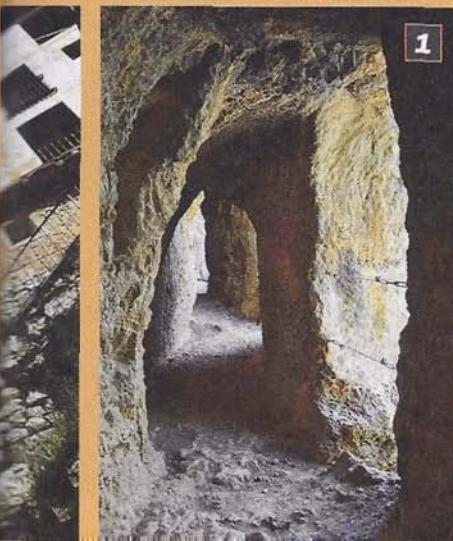
In ancient times, the abundance of game in the Albarracín area attracted settlers, whose cave paintings show that they were fine artists and keen observers of nature. They drew many huge bulls and other animals, which they colored using a white pigment that has been seen only in this area. Scholars think that these caves, where scenes of daily life were portrayed, were used as meeting places for religious or social activities.

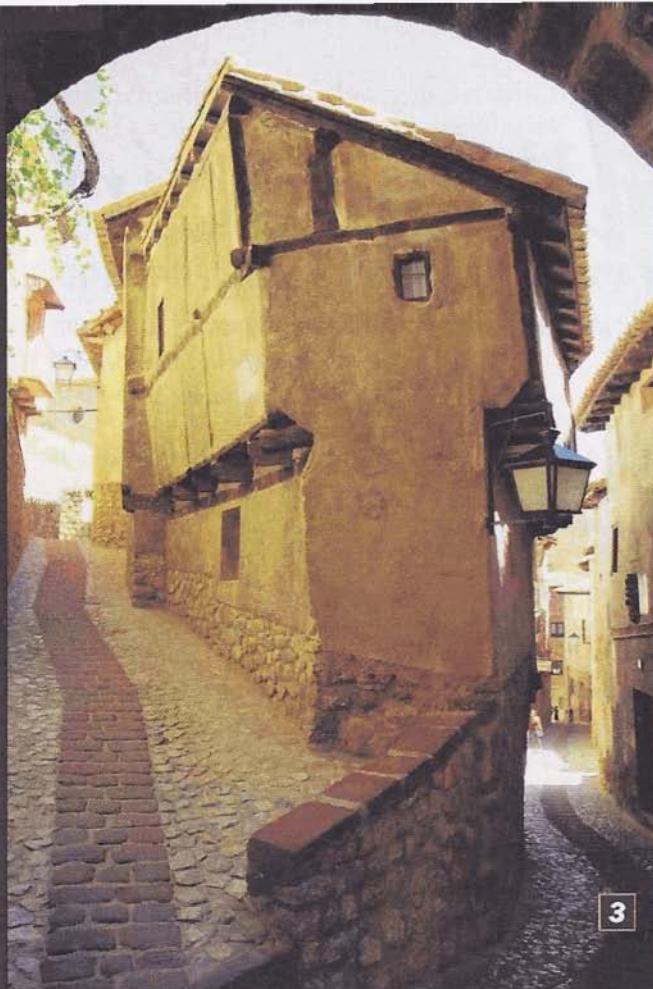
Even today, deer, wild boar, and small game abound in the nearby reserve of Montes Universales. And the Guadalaviar (Arabic for "White River") is one of the best trout rivers in Spain.

In 133 B.C.E., the Romans subjugated the local Celtiberian tribes and founded several villages in the Albarracín region. In the first century C.E., Roman engineers built a 12-mile-long **aqueduct** (1). It is considered to be one of the most complex of the Roman public works projects in Spain. Roman religion too left its mark. A carving on a Roman gravestone found in the town of Albarracín indicates that emperor worship was practiced here.

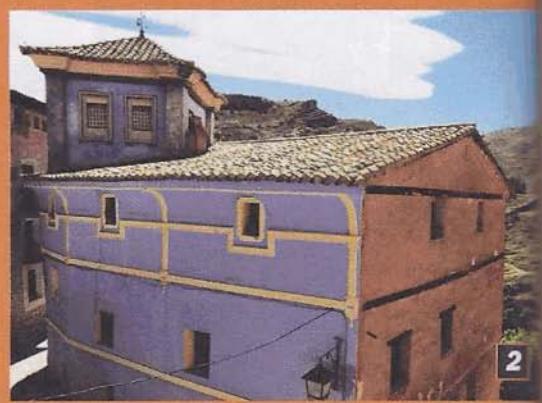
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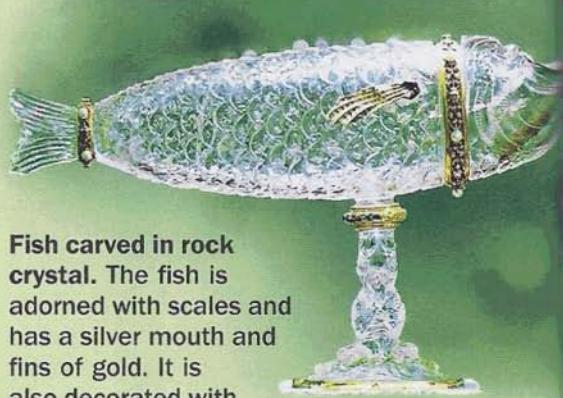


4

ARTISTIC TREASURES DISCOVERED AT ALBARRACÍN



Silver ointment jar. Moorish King Abdeelmelic had this jar made for his wife Zahr, meaning "Flower" in Arabic. A gold engraving on it says in part: "Perennial blessing . . . , divine help, and guidance toward goodness and justice." It is considered one of the best silver treasures of Hispano-Arabic art.



Fish carved in rock crystal. The fish is adorned with scales and has a silver mouth and fins of gold. It is also decorated with pearls and rubies. So intricate is the carving that experts believe one craftsman could not have completed it in his lifetime.

Jar: Museo de Teruel. Foto Jorge Escudero;
crystal: Sta. M^a de Albarracín Foundation

Prosperity Under Muslim Rule

The Moors had overrun this region by the ninth century, and it is believed that the name Albarracín is derived from the name of the Muslim settlers who came here, the Berber clan Banu Razin. In the Middle Ages, Moors, Jews, and nominal Christians lived together with mutual respect and tolerance. As a result, this was the most prosperous period of Albarracín's history.

Artisans of Albarracín produced beautiful objects, and evidently the practice of medicine also flourished here. A set of surgical tools that was unearthed indicates that local surgeons even operated on cataracts. Albarracín continued under Muslim rule until the end of the 12th century, when it passed to Roman Catholic hands. It is noteworthy that this seems to be the only occasion in Spanish history when such a political change occurred peacefully.

How does Albarracín look today? A visitor can still meander through the medieval town, since no modern sections have been added.

An Astonishing Silhouette

Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) described Albarracín as "the city that thrusts its astonishing silhouette into the heights." This description is apt, since the town is perched on an outcrop of rock that stands some 4,000 feet above sea level and is surrounded by a deep gorge, which serves as a defensive moat. This natural fortress has protected the town throughout the centuries and has earned Albarracín the nickname Eagle's Nest.

While strolling through the narrow, cobble streets of the town, the visitor will spot fascinating architecture of a bygone age. Some of the best examples are the Corner Balcony, the **Blue House (2)**, and the **Julianeta House (3)**. The latter almost appears to perform a balancing act at the junction of two streets.

Houses from the period are constructed of wood and plaster, materials that weigh much less than stone—an important factor if you are building on top of a hill. Their small windows with lace curtains and **iron grilles (4)** also attract a visitor's attention. The overlapping eaves, carved wooden balconies, and unusual door knockers, often shaped in the form of animals, add a further touch of distinction.

Any who suffer from vertigo should be careful not to look down when entering one of the hanging houses. Because the town was built on an outcrop of rock and building space was limited, inhabitants built some of their houses right on the edge of the cliff.

A Moorish castle crowns the hill above the town, where the original nucleus of Albarracín once lay. The Torre del Andador is part of the original wall built by the Arabs in the tenth century. Later constructions were the Gothic cathedral, dating from the 16th century, and the horseshoe-shaped town hall, with its rounded-arch porticoes.

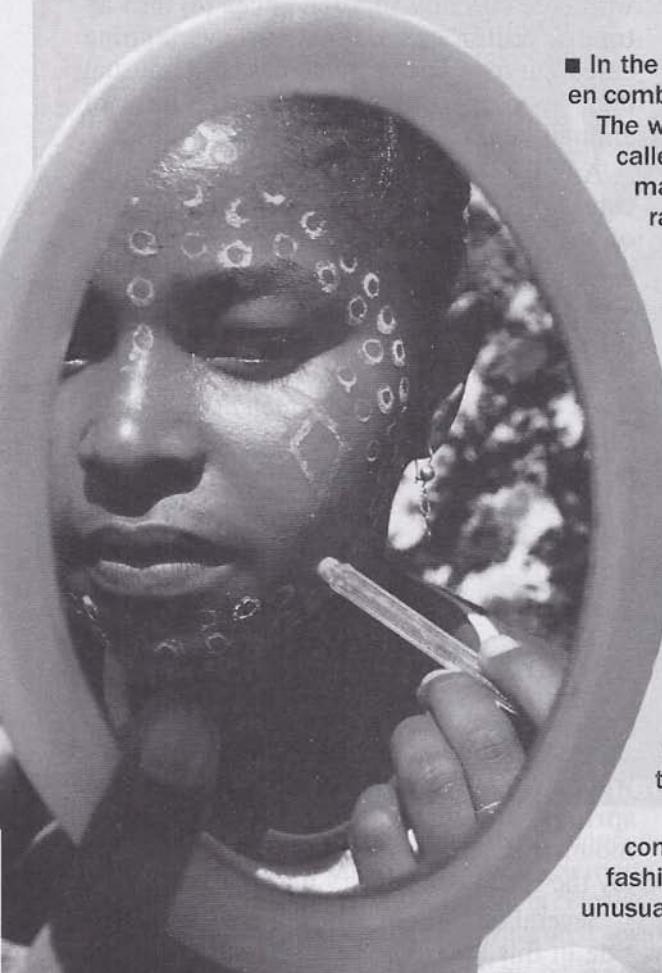
Natural Treasures in the Vicinity

For nature lovers Albarracín has even more to offer. The surrounding mountain range has a great diversity of ecosystems, with abundant flora and fauna. Fountains, springs, and waterfalls grace the wooded mountains. And those who camp here can enjoy the spectacular starry nights.

Several families of Jehovah's Witnesses reside in this area. The beautiful surroundings they live in remind them of the Bible promise that under God's Kingdom obedient mankind will live in a worldwide paradise. This is the good news that they endeavor to share with their neighbors.—Psalm 98:7-9; Matthew 24:14.

Each year more than a hundred thousand tourists walk through the narrow streets of Albarracín. If you come to Spain, why not visit this unique "eagle's nest" hidden in the mountains?

TABÀKY A Beauty Treatment From Wood



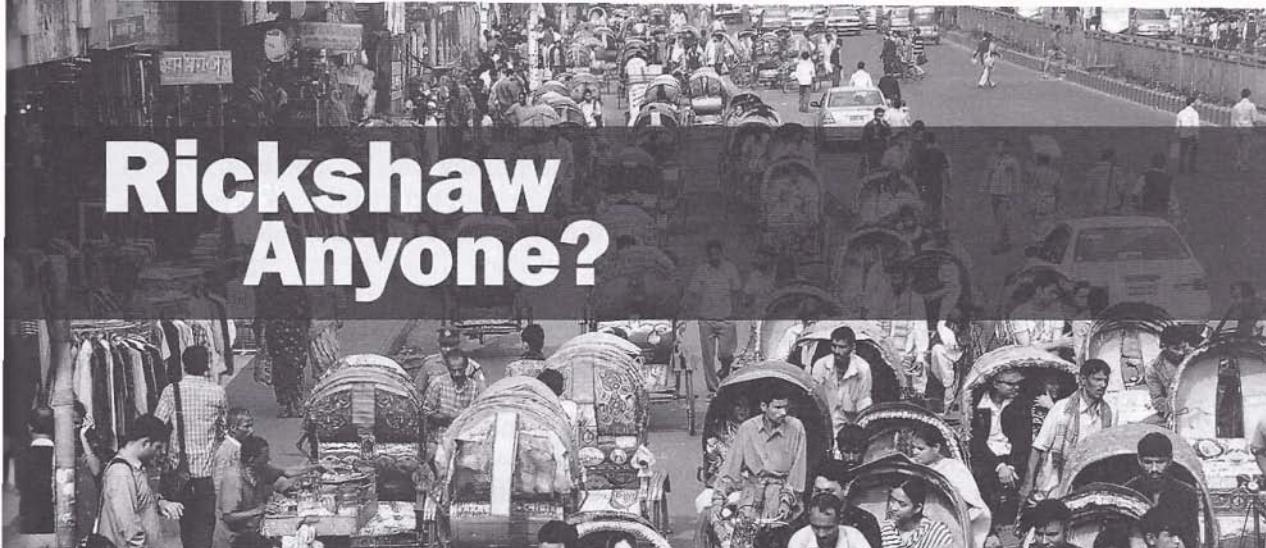
■ In the arid southwest portion of Madagascar, women comb the beach in search of shells to sell to tourists. The women's faces are covered with a white paste called tabaky. This fascinating multipurpose face mask not only protects the skin from the harsh rays of the sun but also serves as a cosmetic.

Tabaky is made from the sapwood of the *masonjoany* and *fihamy* (also called *aviavy*) trees. The procedure is simple: A woman rubs a small piece of sapwood against a flat stone, slowly adding a few drops of water at a time to form a paste. She may then dab a small wooden or plastic stick with a rounded end or a fine point into the paste and draw a design on her face.

Some women apply tabaky to the entire face, leaving just a small space around the eyes. Others prefer to apply it only to the forehead, cheeks, or chin. Tabaky can be used to hide blemishes or control oily skin, or it can be used as a cosmetic. Sometimes other ingredients are used, so the possibilities for creating combinations of shapes, colors, and textures are endless.

Who would think that a beauty product could come from wood? In Madagascar, far from the fashion centers of Paris and New York, tabaky is an unusual, yet practical, beauty treatment.

Rickshaw Anyone?



UPON arriving in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, a visitor immediately notices something different. Amid the sea of people is an army of cycle rickshaws! Endless streams of these conveyances flood the streets and alleys, carrying people and goods.

In Dhaka, the rickshaw remains a popular means of transportation. While the number of registered rickshaws is about 80,000, most feel that there are many more than that number on the roads every day. In fact, Dhaka has been dubbed the rickshaw capital of the world!

Early Rickshaws

While earlier versions of a mobile chair were in use during the reign of Louis XIV of France (1638-1715), the invention of the original human-drawn rickshaw is sometimes credited to Jonathan Gable, an American missionary in Japan in the 1870's. It is said that he designed an innovative vehicle for his frail wife and that it was the first one called in Japanese *jinrikisha*, meaning a vehicle pulled by human power. The word eventually developed into "rickshaw" in English. Over time, various styles of rickshaws became prevalent throughout Asia as an inexpensive means of transport. When Charles Taze Russell (right), who took a zealous lead in the work of the Bible Students (as Jeho-

vah's Witnesses were then called), visited Japan in 1912, his delegation used rickshaws in their travel within the country.

In Dhaka, three-wheeled rickshaws made their debut in the late 1930's. Unlike the rickshaw drawn by a man using two poles attached to the body of the vehicle, these looked similar to a big tricycle. The rickshaw wallah, or driver, pedaled the cycle at the front of the rickshaw. This allowed him to take his passengers or cargo farther, steering more easily through bustling traffic and congested roads.



Rickshaw Art

The rickshaws in Dhaka appear to have every square inch covered with decorations. Where did the tradition of decorating rickshaws come from? When rickshaws first appeared in Dhaka, they had to compete with *tomtoms*, horse-drawn wagons that carted passengers and goods. Perhaps to lure customers to the new means of transport, rickshaw owners began decorating their vehicles. The paintings and advertisements were eventually turned into distinctive art.

The overall effect of rickshaw art is spectacular. This is art on wheels. In fact, Syed Manzoorul Islam, a Bangladeshi art critic, describes rickshaws in Dhaka as "moving picture galleries." Every possible surface of the vehicle is decorated with colorful designs, pictures, and patterns. Twirling tassels, tinsel, and shiny beads hang from its sides or on its folding canopy.

Individual artists have their own styles and favorite subjects. Some artwork looks more or less like a billboard, with scenes from the Indian and Bangladeshi cinema, past and present. The art reflects nostalgia for village life and rural landscapes and, at times, social and political issues. Animals, birds, hunting, and lush country scenes are common themes.

In the 1950's, only a handful of rickshaw painters existed. Today, between 200 and 300 artisans produce these unique pieces of art. The rickshaws are assembled piece by piece in specialized workshops, with parts often made from recycled materials. For example, taking a piece of tin cut from a drum of cooking oil or some other discarded item, the artist uses enamel paint to create a spectacular scene in full color. Rickshaw art is the folk art of Bangladesh. It has assumed an identity and a charm all its own.

The Rickshaw Driver

As you can well understand, the rickshaw driver leads a strenuous life. Imagine spend-

ing your whole day cycling with heavy loads of people or goods. The customers may include housewives, schoolchildren, businessmen, or shoppers with packages. Often, two, three, or more individuals are crowded onto a rickshaw. The rickshaw may also be used to carry sacks of rice, potatoes, onions, or spices for a merchant to sell at the market. Sometimes a passenger will be perched high up on top of his mound of possessions. To a bystander, it may appear impossible for a driver to pull such heavy loads. Yet, in the heat of the sun or in the rains of the monsoon, the humble rickshaw driver is hard at work without complaint.

The majority of drivers have come to the city from poor rural areas where they are unable to eke out a living as farmers. Not able to find higher-paying jobs, many leave their family behind to become rickshaw wallahs. Using their physical strength and energy, they may earn the equivalent of a few dollars (U.S.) each day.

A Unique Means of Transportation

Rickshaws continue to flourish in Dhaka because of the flat terrain and countless alleys and lanes that defy other forms of public transportation. Many people consider this nonpolluting mode of travel to be both beneficial and enjoyable.

In most Asian cities, rickshaws have become an "endangered species." There, the desire for mass transportation and a modern lifestyle has made the rickshaw almost obsolete. However, while many people may view them as out-of-date, there is an effort to preserve the rickshaw through improved designs.

When traveling in Dhaka, you may choose from many forms of public transportation — bus, taxi, motorbike, auto rickshaw, or the colorful cycle rickshaw. But you will never forget it if you experience a leisurely ride through the crowded streets of Dhaka on a cycle rickshaw!





YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

Why am I afraid to share my faith?

"There have been some great opportunities to talk about my beliefs at school. But I let them pass."

—Kaleb.*

"Our teacher asked the class what we thought about evolution. I knew this was a perfect chance to share my faith. But I completely froze and said nothing. Afterward, I felt really bad." —Jasmine.



IF YOU are a Christian youth, perhaps you can relate to the experiences of Kaleb and Jasmine. Like them, you may love the Bible-based truths you have learned and want to share them with others. Still, you might *dread* the thought of speaking up. But you can develop more courage. How? Take the following steps as you prepare for each school year:

1. Define your fears. When you think about sharing your faith, it's easy to imagine the worst-case scenario! Sometimes, though, you can reduce your fears simply by putting them into words.

* Some names in this article have been changed.

Complete the following sentence.

■ If I talk about my beliefs at school, this is what might happen:

.....

If it's any comfort, your fears may be a lot like those of other Christian youths. For instance, 14-year-old Christopher admits, "I'm afraid kids will make fun of me and tell everyone I'm weird." And Kaleb, quoted at the outset, says, "I was worried someone would ask a question and I wouldn't know the answer."

2. Accept the challenge. Are your fears completely unfounded? Not necessarily. "Some kids pretended they were interested

plan your response

Suggestion: Discuss this chart with your parents and friends. Complete the chart. Then see if you can think of other questions your classmates may ask.

Clip this!

question	answer	next question	research	answer
What's your stand on homosexuality?	I don't hate homosexuals, but I can't approve of their conduct.	Isn't that viewpoint prejudiced?	1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work, Volume 2, chapter 28.*	No, because I'm against all forms of immorality—homosexual or otherwise.
Why don't you date?	I've decided not to get into a relationship until I'm older.	Is it because of your religion?	Song of Solomon 8:4; Young People Ask, Volume 2, chapter 1.	Yes. We date only with a view to marriage, and I know I'm not ready for that yet!
Why don't you salute the flag?	I respect the land I live in, but I don't worship it.	So you wouldn't fight for your country?	Isaiah 2:4; John 13:35; What Does the Bible Really Teach? pages 148-151.*	No, and millions of Jehovah's Witnesses in other lands wouldn't fight against this country either.
Why won't you accept blood transfusions?	I accept safe transfusions—the kind that don't carry the risk of AIDS. But the Bible says to abstain from blood, so that's where I draw the line.	But what if you were going to die? Wouldn't God forgive you?	Acts 5:28, 29; Hebrews 11:6; Bible Teach book, pages 129-131.
So-and-so is a member of your religion, and he did such-and-such. Why can't you?	We're taught God's requirements, but we're not brainwashed! We all have to make our own choices.	Isn't that a double standard?
Why don't you believe in evolution?	Why should I believe in evolution? Scientists don't even agree on it, and they're supposed to be the experts!

WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

"I've had some kids laugh at me for expressing my faith. But usually they leave me alone once they realize that their teasing doesn't bother me."—Francesca, Luxembourg.

"If you don't tell people that you're a Christian, you can lose touch with who you are and start acting like everyone else. You can't let yourself be a follower; you have to remain your own person."

—Samantha, United States.

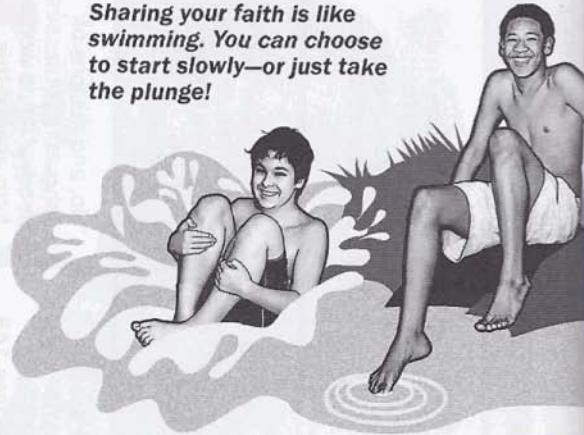
"When I was younger, I didn't want to be different from other kids. But then I began to appreciate how my faith contributes to a better quality of life. That realization boosted my confidence—it made me feel proud of what I believe."—Jason, New Zealand.

TO THINK ABOUT

■ Could these be the thoughts of someone at *your* school?

'I know you're one of Jehovah's Witnesses. You might think I'm going to ridicule you, but really I respect you. How do you remain so calm amid all the problems in the world? I'm scared. Will there be another war soon? Will my parents divorce? Will I make it through school today without getting shot or stabbed? I've got so many questions, but you seem to have life all figured out. Is that because of your religion? I'd like to discuss it, but I'm afraid to bring up the subject. Will you please start the conversation?'

Sharing your faith is like swimming. You can choose to start slowly—or just take the plunge!



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- "What are your plans for the summer?" [After response, mention your spiritual plans, such as attending a convention or expanding your ministry.]
- Mention a news item, and then ask: "Did you hear about that? What do you think of it?"
- "Do you think that the world's financial situation [or another problem] is likely to improve? [Allow for response.] Why do you feel that way?"
- "Do you belong to a religion?"
- "Where do you see yourself five years from now?" [After response, share your spiritual goals.]



in my beliefs," says Ashley. "But later they turned my words against me and teased me in front of others." Nicole, 17, had this experience: "A boy compared a verse in his Bible with the same verse in mine, and the wording was different. He said that my Bible had been changed. I was stunned! I didn't know what to say."*

Situations like these can seem pretty scary! But instead of running away, accept such challenges as a normal part of your life as a Christian. (2 Timothy 3:12) "Jesus said his followers would be persecuted," says 13-year-old Matthew, "so we can't expect everyone to like us or our beliefs."—John 15:20.

3. Think of the benefits. Can any good come out of a seemingly bad experience? Amber, 21, thinks so. "It's hard to explain your faith to people who don't respect the Bible," she says, "but it helps you to understand your own position better."—Romans 12:2.

Look again at the scenario you described at Step 1. Think of at least two good things that could come out of that situation, and write them below.

- 1
2

Hint: How might making known your faith lead to less peer pressure? How will your doing so affect your self-confidence? Your feelings for Jehovah God? His feelings for you?—Proverbs 23:15.

4. Be prepared. "The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer," says Proverbs 15:28. Besides meditating on what you'll say, try to anticipate questions others may ask. Research those topics, and plan out answers you feel comfortable giving.—See the chart "Plan Your Response," on page 25.

5. Get started. Once you're ready to talk about your beliefs, how should you start? You have options. In a sense, sharing your faith is like swimming: Some people ease their way

* Bible translations use different wording. However, some are more faithful to the original languages in which the Bible was written.

into the water; others jump right in. Likewise, you could start the conversation on a non-religious subject and gradually test the waters, so to speak. But if you find yourself worrying too much about what might go wrong, your best option may be to 'jump right in.' (Luke 12:11, 12) "Thinking about sharing my faith was always harder than actually *doing* it," says 17-year-old Andrew. "Once a conversation was started, it was much easier than I thought it would be!"*

6. Be sensible. Just as you wouldn't dive into shallow waters, be careful not to jump into pointless arguments. Remember, there's a time to speak and a time to keep quiet. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7) At times, even Jesus refused to answer questions. (Matthew 26:62, 63) And remember this principle: "Sensible people will see trouble coming and avoid it, but an unthinking person will walk right into it and regret it later."—Proverbs 22:3, *Today's English Version*.

So if you sense an argument coming on, don't "walk right into it." Instead, give a brief and discreet reply. For example, if a classmate taunts, 'Why don't you smoke cigarettes?' you could simply say, 'Because I'm not into body pollution!' Depending on the response, you can decide whether or not to explain your beliefs further.

The above steps can help you to be "always ready to make a defense" of your faith. (1 Peter 3:15) Of course, being ready doesn't mean that you'll never feel nervous. But Alana, 18, observes: "When you explain your beliefs *despite being scared*, it makes you feel as if you've accomplished something—you've overcome your fear and taken the risk that it might not go well. And if it *does* go well, you'll feel even better! You'll be glad you had the courage to speak up."

* See the box "Conversation Starters," on page 26.

Is It Wrong to Change Your Religion?

When Avtar began studying the Bible, her Sikh family was upset. "In my homeland," she says, "changing your religion cuts you off from the community. Even our names have religious meaning. To change your religion is viewed as rejecting your identity and disrespecting your family."

AVTAR eventually became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Was she wrong to change her religion? Perhaps you identify with her family. You may feel that your religion is inextricably linked with family history and culture and should not be changed.

Honoring one's family is important. The Bible says: "Listen to your father who caused your birth." (Proverbs 23:22) But it is more important to seek to know the truth about our Creator and his purposes. (Isaiah 55:6) Is such a search possible? If so, how important is this search to you?

Searching for Religious Truth

The world's religions teach conflicting ideas. Logically, those teachings cannot all be true. As a result, there must be many people who, as the Bible says, "have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) Yet, as recorded at 1 Timothy 2:4, the apostle Paul says that it is God's will that "all sorts of men . . . come to an accurate

knowledge of truth." How can such accurate knowledge be found?

Consider reasons for examining the Bible. Paul, who was an inspired Bible writer, stated: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16) As part of your search for truth, examine the evidence that the Bible's claim is true. Investigate for yourself its unparalleled wisdom, historical accuracy, and fulfilled prophecy.

Instead of presenting all religions as equal approaches to God, the Bible tells its readers not to believe everything they hear but to "test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) For example, any teaching that truly originates with God must be in harmony with his personality, including his dominant quality of love. —1 John 4:8.

The Bible assures us that God wants us to "really find him." (Acts 17:26, 27) Since our Creator wants us to search for truth, it cannot be wrong to act on the evidence that we find—even if this means changing our religion.

But what about the problems that this may bring?

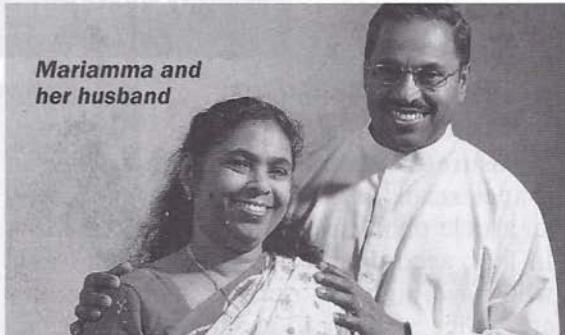
Balancing Family Loyalty

When people change their beliefs, they may decide that they will no longer share in certain religious rituals or holidays. Understandably, this can result in strong feelings within the family. Jesus acknowledged this. He told his followers: "I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law." (Matthew 10: 35) Did Jesus mean that Bible teachings were designed to be an unavoidable cause of contention? No. He simply foresaw what could happen when family members react negatively to one who takes a firm stand for beliefs different from theirs.

Should family conflict be avoided at all costs? The Bible teaches that children should be obedient to parents and that wives should be in subjection to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22; 6:1) However, it instructs those who love God to "obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Thus, at times, loyalty to God may result in your making a decision that is unpopular with some family members.

Although the Bible makes a clear distinction between true and false teachings, God allows each person the freedom to choose how he or she will respond. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) No one should be forced to worship in a way that he finds unacceptable or be made to choose between his beliefs and his family. Does study of the Bible lead to family breakup? No. In fact, the Bible encourages a husband and wife who practice different religions

Mariamma and her husband



to remain together as a family.—1 Corinthians 7:12, 13.

Overcoming Fears

You may fear how the community will react if you study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Mariamma says: "My family was worried that I would not be able to find a suitable husband who could provide for me. So they opposed my Bible study." Mariamma put her trust in Jehovah God and continued studying. (Psalm 37:3, 4) You can do

The Bible's message changes lives and personalities for the better

the same. Rather than fear the results, consider the benefits. The Bible's message changes lives and personalities for the better. People learn to show unselfish love for their family. Bad habits, such as verbal and physical violence and abuse of alcohol and drugs, can be overcome. (2 Corinthians 7:1) The Bible promotes such wholesome traits as loyalty, honesty, and industriousness. (Proverbs 31:10-31; Ephesians 4:24, 28) Why not study the Bible and see the benefits of applying its teachings in your life?

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Why examine your religious beliefs?—Proverbs 23:23; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.
- How can you identify true teachings?—2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:1.
- Should family opposition prevent you from studying the Bible?—Acts 5:29.

TV Affects Sexual Behavior

"There is increasing evidence that youth exposure to sexual content on television shapes sexual attitudes and behavior," says an article published in the journal *Pediatrics*. In fact, according to one study, adolescents who have high exposure to such programs are "twice as likely to experience a pregnancy" than those who view little of such material. One possible explanation is that TV creates the perception that sexual behavior is relatively risk-free, in that unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases are not portrayed realistically enough. Of course, TV is just one medium that shapes adolescents' sexual behavior. Researchers also suggest that critical attention should be given to magazines, the Internet, and music.

New Cases of Leprosy

Three thousand people in the United States are receiving treatment for leprosy, also called Hansen's disease. Approximately 150 new cases are diagnosed annually. Many sufferers are from other countries. However, the National Hansen's Disease Program, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, "sees approximately 30 cases each year among residents in southern Louisiana and the Gulf Coast of Texas who were born in the U.S. and who have never visited an endemic country," says the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. Researchers

■ A clam dredged from the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean has been dubbed "the longest-lived animal ever known." Scientists counted the growth layers of its shell and determined that the clam was 405 years old.—*SUNDAY TIMES, BRITAIN*

■ "In an economic downturn, even those whose net worth is in the billions feel the squeeze. Just ask their psychologists."—*THE NEW YORK TIMES, U.S.A.*

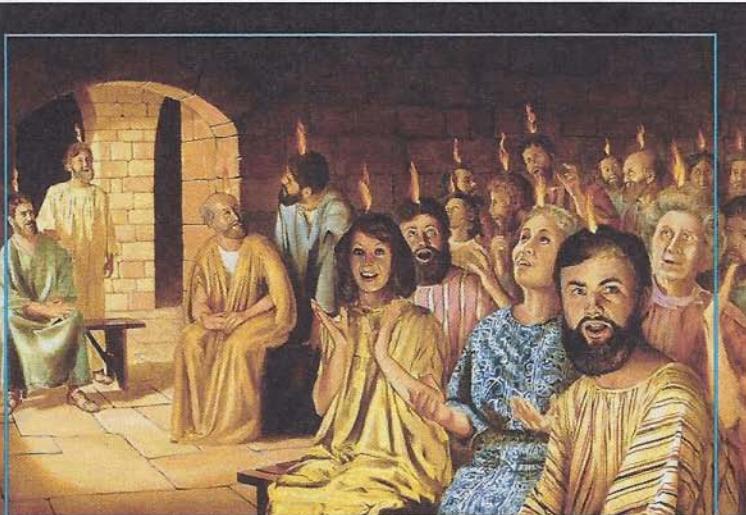
still do not fully understand how the disease spreads. If diagnosed early, leprosy is fully treatable. However, once the disease has taken hold, nerve damage cannot be reversed.

Thefts of Radioactive Material

"The possibility of terrorists obtaining nuclear or other radioactive material remains a grave threat," says Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency. "The number of incidents reported to the Agency involving the theft or loss of nuclear or radioactive material is disturbingly high—nearly 250 in the first half of 2008 alone. Equally troubling is the fact that much of this material is not subsequently recovered." It is not clear whether this phenomenon is a result of an increasing demand for radioactive materials or of member states' more accurate reporting of losses.

Ancient Writing Found in Israel

Israeli archaeologists have found an ancient text that appears to predate the Dead Sea Scrolls by 1,000 years. The document, five lines of text written in ink on a pottery fragment, was uncovered in excavations of a 10th-century B.C.E. Judean fortress at Khirbet Qeiyafa, Israel. The document has not yet been fully deciphered, but it seems to be a legal text that was written by a trained scribe and contains "roots of the words 'judge,' 'slave' and 'king,'" says a press release from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Where Did It Happen?

1. In which city did this event take place?

CLUE: Read Acts 2:1-13. Circle your answer on the map.



■ Where did most of the disciples come from?

■ Why did some people mock the disciples?

FOR DISCUSSION: What are the similarities and the differences between this incident and the one recorded at Genesis 11:1-9?

What Do You Know About Judge Othniel?

Read Judges 3:7-11. Now answer the following questions.

2.....

He was from which tribe?

CLUE: Read Joshua 15:17, 20.

3.....

He delivered Israel from which ruler?

4.....
True or false? He lived before Moses.

FOR DISCUSSION: What good example did Othniel's uncle Caleb set? CLUE: Read Numbers 14:6-9. Name a relative of yours that you admire, and explain why you are impressed by that person.

■ Answers on page 11

From This Issue

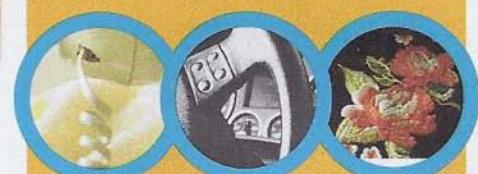
Answer these questions, and provide the missing Bible verse(s).

PAGE 4 What can swallow up a person?
2 Corinthians 2:_____

PAGE 6 What will the peace of God do?
Philippians 4:_____

PAGE 28 Some have a zeal for God but lack what?
Romans 10:_____

PAGE 29 Whom should we obey? Acts 5:_____



Children's Picture Search

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



■ 'It answers our questions.' That is what young people are saying about the new book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 2. "I was feeling confused and unsure of myself," wrote Jessicah, in Texas, U.S.A. "This book really encouraged me. It was beneficial for me to know that there are many teens like me who encounter obstacles along their journey of trying to serve God. The book answered just about every question that I had about being a youth."

Breann, in Colorado, said: "Your book is having its intended effect of encouraging dialogue between parents and children. When I want to talk to my mom, I bring out the book and read right from it. A friend of mine is also preparing to talk with her parents simply because of reading this book."

The first chapters of the book address questions about an issue particularly on young people's minds—relationships with the opposite sex. Katrina, in New Jersey, wrote: "The book made my convictions so strong that no matter what anyone else says, I'm not ready to date. Besides, being single gives one the opportunity to do so many great things! I don't want to give them up right now. And when I'm ready to date, I will have a better idea of what to look for in a mate and how to proceed."



'It answers our questions'

