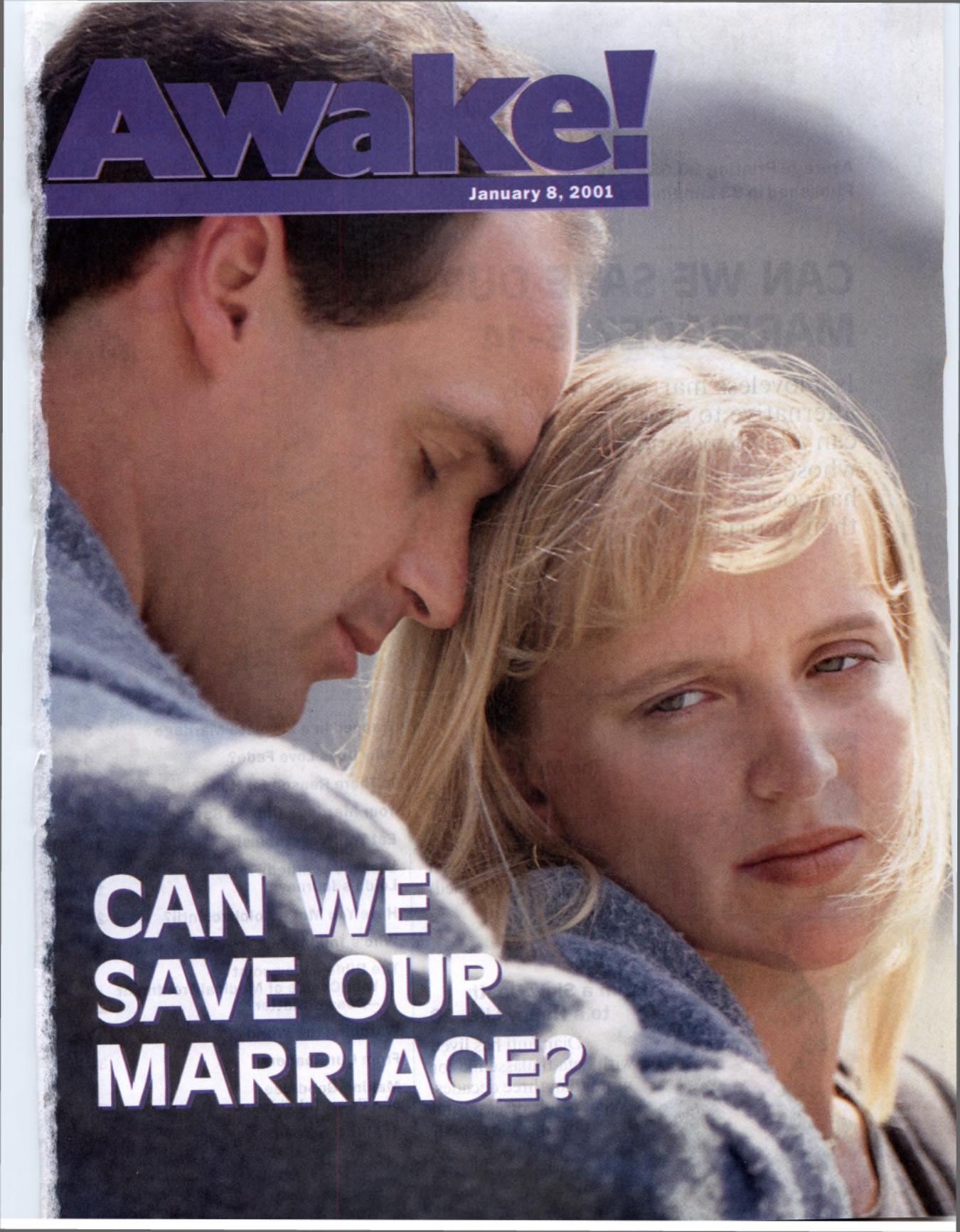


Awake!

January 8, 2001



CAN WE
SAVE OUR
MARRIAGE?

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CAN WE SAVE OUR MARRIAGE? 3-14

Is a loveless marriage the only alternative to divorce? How can a husband and wife whose relationship has cooled save their marriage?



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Diamánti has lived with beta-thalassemia for more than three decades. What is this disease, and how has she coped?



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Trapped in a LOVELESS MARRIAGE

"In a high-divorce society, not only are more unhappy marriages likely to end in divorce, but in addition, more marriages are likely to become unhappy."—COUNCIL ON FAMILIES IN AMERICA.

IT HAS been said that much of life's happiness and much of its misery emanate from the same source—one's marriage. Indeed, few things in life have the potential to provide as much ecstasy—or as much anguish. As the accompanying box indicates, many couples are having more than their share of the latter.

But divorce statistics reveal only part of the problem. For each marriage that sinks, countless others remain afloat but are stuck in stagnant waters. "We used to be a happy family, but the last 12 years have been horrible," confided a woman married for more than 30 years. "My husband is not interested in my feelings. He is truly my worst emotional enemy." Similarly, a husband of nearly 25 years lamented: "My wife has told me that she doesn't love me anymore. She says that if we can just exist as roommates and each go our separate ways when it comes to leisure time, the situation can be tolerated."

Of course, some in such dire straits terminate their marriage. For many, however, divorce is out of the question. Why? According to Dr. Karen Kayser, factors such as children, community stigma, finances, friends, relatives, and religious beliefs might keep a couple together, even in a loveless state. "Unlikely to divorce legally," she says, "these spouses choose to remain with a partner from whom they are *emotionally* divorced."

Must a couple whose relationship has cooled resign themselves to a life of dissatisfaction? Is a loveless marriage the only alternative to divorce? Experience proves that many troubled marriages *can* be saved—not only from the agony of break-up but also from the misery of lovelessness.

DIVORCE

AROUND THE WORLD

- **Australia:** The divorce rate has nearly quadrupled since the early 1960's.
- **Britain:** According to predictions, 4 out of 10 marriages will end in divorce.
- **Canada and Japan:** Divorce affects about a third of marriages.
- **United States:** Since 1970, couples getting married have no more than a 50-50 chance of staying together.
- **Zimbabwe:** Divorce ends about 2 out of every 5 marriages.

WHY DOES LOVE FADE?

"It seems much easier to fall into love than to stay in love."

—DR. KAREN KAYSER.

THE proliferation of loveless marriages is perhaps not surprising. Marriage is a complex human relationship, and many enter it with little preparation. "We are required to demonstrate some proficiency when obtaining a driver's license," observes Dr. Dean S. Edell, "but marriage licenses can be had for a signature."

Hence, while many marriages thrive and are truly happy, a number experience strain. Perhaps one or both spouses entered marriage with high expectations but lack the skills that are necessary for a long-term relationship. "When people first become close," explains Dr. Harry Reis, "they feel a tremendous sense of validation from each other." They feel as if their partner were "the only other person on earth who sees things as they do. That feeling sometimes fades, and when it does, it can take a heavy toll on the marriage."

Happily, many marriages do not come to that point. But let us briefly consider a few of the factors that in some cases have caused love to fade.

Disillusionment

—"This Is Not What I Expected"

"When I married Jim," says Rose, "I thought we'd be the local version of Sleeping Beauty and

Prince Charming—all romance and tenderness and consideration for each other." Yet, after a while, Rose's "prince" didn't seem so charming. "I ended up being terribly disappointed in him," she says.

Many movies, books, and popular songs paint an unrealistic portrait of love. While courting, a man and a woman may feel that they are experiencing a dream come true; but after a few years of marriage, they conclude that truly they must have been dreaming! Anything less than a storybook romance might make a workable marriage seem like an utter failure.

Of course, some expectations in marriage are entirely proper. For example, it is appropriate to expect love, attention, and support from one's mate. Yet, even these wishes may go unfulfilled. "I almost feel that I am not married," says Meena, a young bride in India. "I feel lonely and neglected."

Incompatibility

—"We Have Nothing in Common"

"My husband and I are about 180 degrees apart on virtually everything," says one woman. "Not a day passes that I don't bitterly regret my decision to marry him. We are just badly mismatched."

Awake!

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Usually it does not take long for a married couple to discover that they are not as much alike as they seemed to be during courtship. "Marriage often showcases characteristics that the partners had managed to hide from themselves throughout their single lives," writes Dr. Nina S. Fields.

As a result, after marriage some couples may conclude that they are completely incompatible. "Despite some similarities in taste and personality, most people enter marriage with major differences in style, habits, and attitudes," says Dr. Aaron T. Beck. Many couples do not know how to reconcile those differences.

LOVELESS MARRIAGES—SOME OTHER FACTORS

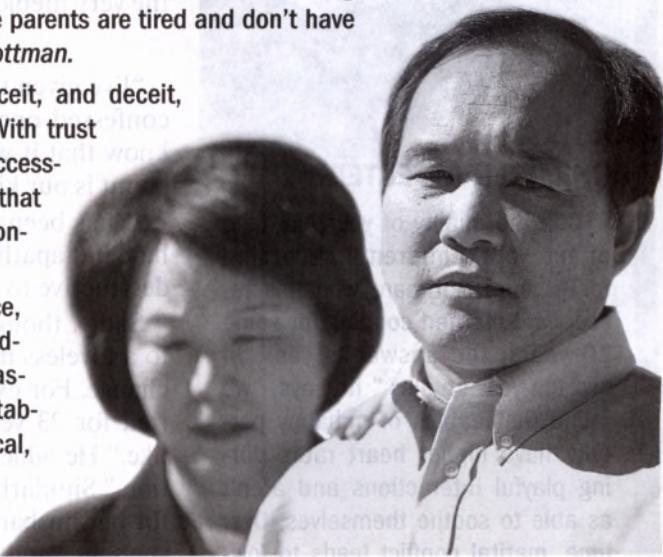
• **Money:** "One might imagine that budgeting would help unite a couple through the necessity of working together, pooling their resources for the basics of living, and enjoying the fruits of their labors. But here, too, what could bond a couple in a joint venture often serves to separate them."

—Dr. Aaron T. Beck.

• **Parenthood:** "We've found that 67 percent of couples experience a significant drop in marital contentment after their first child is born, and there is eight times more conflict. This is partly because parents are tired and don't have a lot of time for themselves."—Dr. John Gottman.

• **Deceit:** "Infidelity usually involves deceit, and deceit, pure and simple, is a betrayal of trust. With trust identified as a crucial component in all successful long-term marriages, is it any wonder that deceit can wreak havoc on a marital relationship?"—Dr. Nina S. Fields.

• **Sex:** "By the time people file for divorce, sexual deprivation of many years' standing is shockingly common. In some cases the sexual relationship was never established, and in others, sex was mechanical, merely a vent for one partner's physical needs."—Judith S. Wallerstein, clinical psychologist.



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HOW ARE CHILDREN AFFECTED?

Can the quality of your marriage affect your children? According to Dr. John Gottman, who has researched married couples for some 20 years, the answer is yes. "In two ten-year studies," he says, "we found that babies of unhappy parents have higher heart rates during playful interactions and aren't as able to soothe themselves. Over time, marital conflict leads to lower achievement in school, regardless of the children's IQ." In contrast, Dr. Gottman says, children of well-adjusted married couples "do better both scholastically and socially, because their parents have shown them how to treat other people with respect and handle emotional upsets."

Conflict—"We're Always Arguing"

"We were amazed at how much we were fighting—yelling even, or worse, steaming around in silence for days," says Cindy, reflecting on the early days of her marriage.

In marriage, disagreements are inevitable. But how are they handled? "In a healthy marriage," writes Dr. Daniel Goleman, "husband and wife feel free to voice a complaint. But too often in the heat of anger complaints are expressed in a destructive fashion, as an attack on the spouse's character."

When this happens, conversation is a battleground where viewpoints are defended with grim determination and words are weapons instead of tools of communication. Says one team of experts: "One of the most damaging things about arguments that are escalating out of control is that partners tend to say things that threaten the very lifeblood of their marriage."

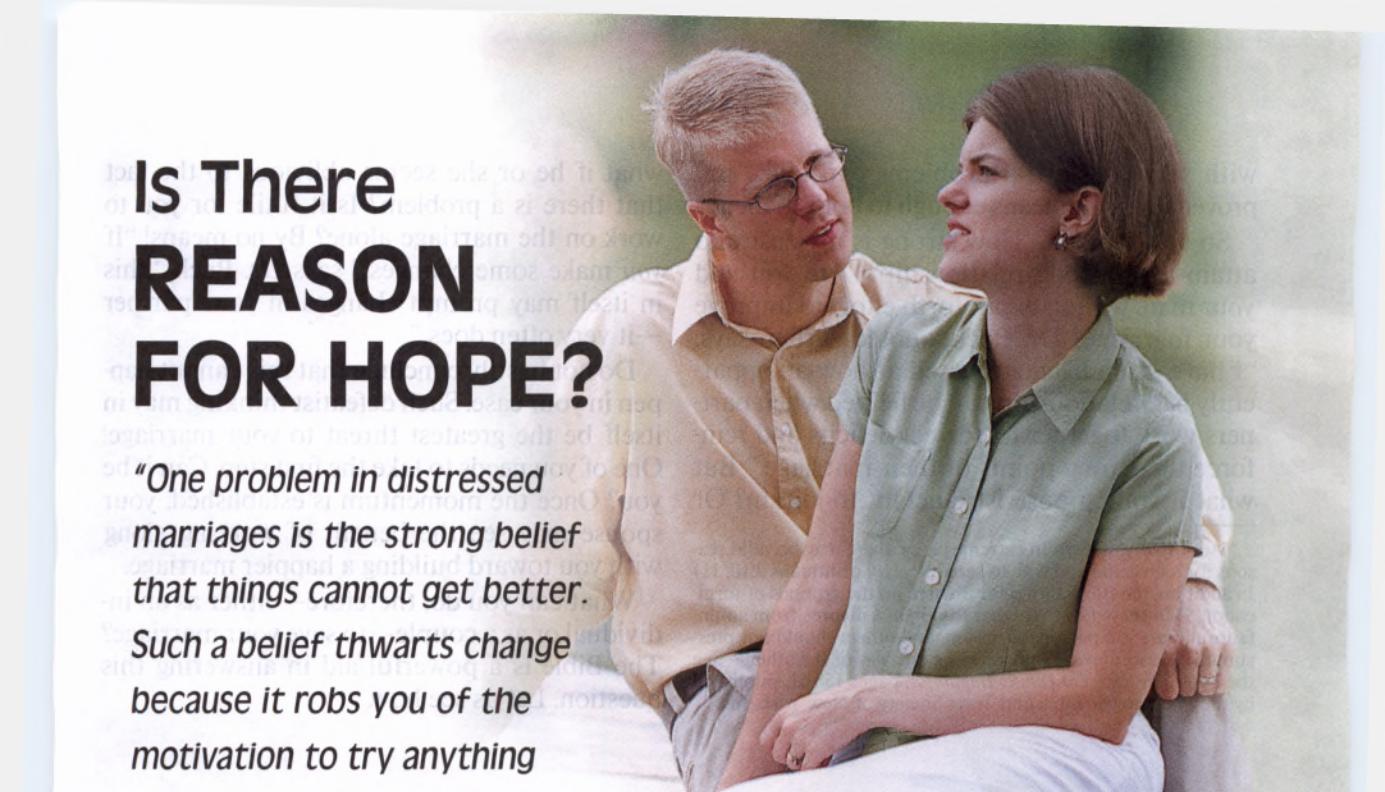
Apathy—"We've Given Up"

"I've given up on trying to make our marriage work," confessed one woman after five years of marriage. "I know that it will never work now. So all I'm concerned about is our kids."

It has been said that the true opposite of love is not hate but apathy. Indeed, indifference can be every bit as destructive to a marriage as hostility.

Sadly, though, some spouses become so accustomed to a loveless marriage that they give up all hope of any change. For example, one husband said that being married for 23 years resembled "being in a job you don't like." He added: "You do the best you can in the situation." Similarly, a wife named Wendy has given up hope for her husband of seven years. "I tried so many times," she says, "and he always let me down. I ended up in a depression. I don't want to go through that again. If I get my hopes up, I'll only get hurt. I'd sooner expect nothing—I won't enjoy things, but at least I won't get depressed."

Disillusionment, incompatibility, conflict, and apathy are just some of the factors that may contribute to a loveless marriage. Obviously, there are more—a few of which are noted in the box on page 5. Regardless of the cause, is there hope for spouses who seem to be trapped in a loveless marriage?



Is There REASON FOR HOPE?

"One problem in distressed marriages is the strong belief that things cannot get better. Such a belief thwarts change because it robs you of the motivation to try anything constructive."—DR. AARON T. BECK.

MAGINE that you are in pain and go to the doctor for a checkup. You are anxious—and understandably so. After all, your health—even your very life—may be at stake. But suppose that after the examination, the doctor gives you the good news that while your problem is by no means trivial, it *can* be treated. In fact, the doctor tells you that if you carefully adhere to a reasonable program of diet and exercise, you can expect a full recovery. You would undoubtedly feel greatly relieved and would gladly follow his advice!

Compare this scenario to the subject at hand. Are you experiencing pain in your marriage? Of course, every marriage will have its share of problems and disagreements. So just having some difficult moments in your relationship does not mean that you have a loveless marriage. But what if the painful situation persists for weeks, months, or even years? If so, you are rightly concerned, for this is no trivial matter. Indeed, the quality of your marriage can touch virtually every aspect of your life—and that of

your children. It is believed, for instance, that marital distress can be a major factor in such problems as depression, low worker productivity, and children's failure at school. But that is not all. Christians recognize that the relationship they have with their mate can affect their very relationship with God.—1 Peter 3:7.

The fact that there are problems between you and your spouse does not mean that the situation is hopeless. Facing the reality of marriage—that there *will* be challenges—can help a couple to put their problems in perspective and work toward solutions. A husband named Isaac says: "I had no idea that it was normal for couples to go up and down in their level of happiness over the course of a marriage. I thought there was something wrong with us!"

Even if your marriage has deteriorated to a loveless state, it *can* be saved. Granted, the wounds resulting from a troubled relationship may be deep, especially if problems have persisted for years. Still, there is strong reason for hope. Motivation is a crucial factor. Even two people

with serious marital problems can make improvements if it means enough to both of them.*

So ask yourself, 'How strong is my desire to attain a satisfying relationship?' Are you and your mate willing to put forth effort to improve your marriage? Dr. Beck, quoted earlier, says: "I have often been surprised at how an apparently bad relationship can be helped when partners work together to correct deficits and reinforce the strong points of their marriage." But what if your spouse is reluctant to join in? Or

* Admittedly, in certain extreme cases, there may be valid reasons for a husband and wife to separate. (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11) In addition, the Bible allows for divorce on the grounds of fornication. (Matthew 19:9) Whether to obtain a divorce from an unfaithful mate is a personal decision, and others should not pressure the innocent mate into deciding one way or the other.—See the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*, pages 158-61, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

what if he or she seems oblivious to the fact that there is a problem? Is it futile for you to work on the marriage alone? By no means! "If you make some changes," says Dr. Beck, "this in itself may prompt changes in your partner—it very often does."

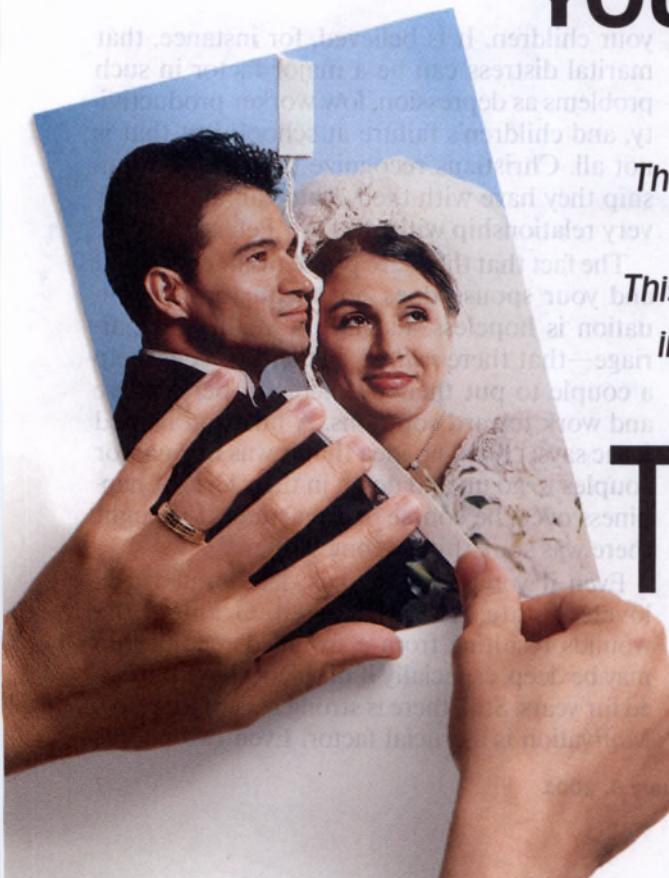
Do not hastily conclude that this cannot happen in your case. Such defeatist thinking may in itself be the greatest threat to your marriage! One of you needs to take the first step. Can it be you? Once the momentum is established, your spouse may see the benefit of working along with you toward building a happier marriage.

What can you do, therefore—either as an individual or as a couple—to save your marriage? The Bible is a powerful aid in answering this question. Let us see how.

YOUR MARRIAGE Can Be Saved!

*The Bible abounds with practical counsel
that can benefit husbands and wives.
This is hardly surprising, for the One who
inspired the Bible is also the Originator
of the marriage arrangement.*

THE Bible paints a realistic picture of marriage. It acknowledges that a husband and wife will have "tribulation" or, as the *New English Bible* renders it, "pain and grief." (1 Corinthians 7:28) Yet, the Bible also says that marriage can and should produce joy, even ecstasy. (Proverbs 5:18, 19) These two thoughts are not contradictory. They merely show that despite serious problems, a couple can attain a close and loving relationship.



Is that lacking in your marriage? Has pain and disappointment overshadowed the intimacy and joy that once characterized your relationship? Even if your marriage has been in a loveless state for many years, what was lost can be found. Of course, you have to be realistic. No imperfect man and woman are able to achieve a perfect marriage. Nevertheless, there are steps that you can take to reverse negative trends.

While reading the following material, try to identify which points particularly apply to your marriage. Instead of focusing on the shortcomings of your mate, select a few suggestions that *you* can put into practice, and apply the Scriptural counsel. You may find that there is more hope for your marriage than you realized.

Let us first discuss attitude because your view of commitment and your feelings toward your spouse are of utmost importance.

Your View of Commitment

A long-term view is essential if you are going to work on your marriage. After all, the marital arrangement was designed by God to link two humans inseparably. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5) Hence, your relationship with your spouse is not like a job that you can quit or an apartment that you can escape from by simply breaking the lease and moving out. Rather, when getting married you made a solemn promise to stick with your mate, come what may. A deep sense of commitment conforms to what Jesus Christ stated nearly 2,000 years ago: "What God has yoked together let no man put apart."—Matthew 19:6.

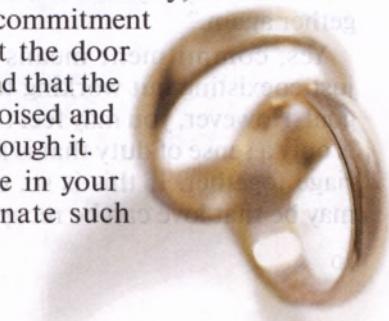


Some might say, 'Well, we're still together. Isn't this proof that we have a sense of commitment?' Perhaps. However, as noted at the outset of this series, some couples who stay together are stuck in stagnant waters, trapped in a loveless marriage. Your goal is to make your marriage enjoyable, not just durable. Commitment should reflect loyalty not only to the institution of marriage but also to the person whom you have vowed to love and cherish.

—Ephesians 5:33.

The things you say to your mate can reveal just how deep your commitment is. For example, in the heat of an argument, some husbands and wives make rash statements such as "I'm leaving you!" or "I'm going to find someone who appreciates me!" Even if such comments are not meant literally, they undermine commitment by implying that the door is always open and that the speaker is ever poised and ready to walk through it.

To restore love in your marriage, eliminate such





THROW THE BALL GENTLY

The Bible states: "Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt, so as to know how you ought to give an answer to each one." (Colossians 4:6) This certainly applies in marriage! To illustrate: In a game of catch, you toss the ball so that it can be caught easily. You do not fling it with such force that you injure your partner. Apply the same principle when speaking with your spouse. Hurling bitter remarks will only cause harm. Instead, speak gently—with graciousness—so that your mate can catch your point.

threats from your conversations. After all, would you decorate an apartment if you knew that any day you might be moving out of it? Why, then, expect your mate to work on a marriage that may not last? Determine that you will try earnestly to work toward solutions.

This is what one wife did after going through a turbulent period with her husband. "As much as I disliked him at times, I didn't think about getting out of the relationship," she says. "Whatever was broken, we were going to fix it somehow. And now, after two *very* rocky years, I can honestly say that we are quite happy together again."

Yes, commitment means teamwork—not just coexisting but working toward a common goal. However, you may feel that at this point it is only a sense of duty that is keeping your marriage together. If this is so, do not despair. It may be that love can be recaptured. How?

Honoring Your Spouse

The Bible states: "Let marriage be honorable among all." (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 12:10) Forms of the Greek word here translated "honorable" are rendered elsewhere in the Bible as "dear," "esteemed," and "precious." When we highly value something, we make painstaking efforts to care for it. Perhaps you have noted that to be true of a man who owns an expensive new car. He keeps his precious car shining and in good repair. To him even a minor scratch is a major catastrophe! Other people take similar care of their health. Why? Because they value their well-being, and so they want to safeguard it.

Show the same protective care for your marriage. The Bible says that love "hopes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Instead of giving in to defeatist thinking—perhaps writing off the potential for improvement by saying, "We

were never really in love," "We married too young," or "We didn't know what we were doing"—why not hope for better things and work toward improvement, waiting patiently for results? "I hear so many of my clients intone, 'I can't handle it anymore!'" says one marriage counselor. "Instead of dissecting the relationship to see which parts of it need improvement, they hastily junk the entire endeavor, including the values they *do* share, the history they've carefully assembled, and any potential for the future."

What history do you share with your mate? Regardless of the difficulties in your relationship, surely you can think of pleasant times, accomplishments, and challenges that you faced as a team. Reflect on these occasions, and show that you honor your marriage and your marriage mate by sincerely working to improve your relationship. The Bible shows that Jehovah God takes a keen interest in how marriage mates treat each other. For example, in the prophet Malachi's day, Jehovah censured Israelite husbands who dealt treacherously with their wives by frivolously divorcing them. (Malachi 2:13-16) Christians want their marriage to bring honor to Jehovah God.

Conflict—How Serious?

A chief factor in loveless marriages seems to be an inability of the husband and wife to manage conflict. Since no two people are exactly alike, all marriages will have occasional disagreements. But couples who are constantly at odds may find that over the years their love has cooled. They might even conclude, "We're just not well matched. We're always fighting!"

Yet, the mere presence of conflict does not have to be the death knell of a marriage. The question is, How is conflict handled? In a successful marriage, the husband and wife have learned to talk about their problems without becoming, as one doctor calls it, "intimate enemies."

The Power of the Tongue

Do you and your mate know how to talk about your problems? Both should be willing to talk them out. Truly, this is a skill—one that can be challenging to learn. Why? For one thing, all of us occasionally "stumble in word" because of being imperfect. (James 3:2) Then, too, some were raised in homes

where a parent's anger was unleashed on a regular basis. From an early age, they were, in a sense, trained to believe that temperamental outbursts and abusive speech are normal. A boy raised in such an environment may grow up to become "a man given to anger," one who is "disposed to rage." (Proverbs 29:22) Similarly, a girl with such an upbringing may become "a bitter-tongued and angry woman."



REMINISCE!

Read letters and cards from the past. Look at pictures. Ask yourself, 'What drew me to my partner? What qualities did I most admire? What activities did we share in? What made us laugh?' Then talk about these memories with your spouse. A conversation that starts with the phrase "Remember the time . . . ?" may help you and your spouse to revive the feelings that you once shared.

(Proverbs 21:19, *The Bible in Basic English*) It can be difficult to uproot strongly entrenched patterns of thinking and interacting.*

Managing conflict, then, involves learning new ways to express one's thoughts. This is no trivial matter, for a Bible proverb states: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Proverbs 18:21) Yes, simple as it may sound, how you talk to your spouse has the potential to destroy your relationship or to revive it. "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword," says another Bible proverb, "but the tongue of the wise ones is a healing."—Proverbs 12:18.

Even if your mate seems to be the prime offender in this regard, give thought to the things that *you* say during a disagreement. Do your words hurt, or do they heal? Do they provoke rage or mollify it? "A word causing pain makes anger to come up," says the Bible. In contrast, "an answer, when mild, turns away rage." (Proverbs 15:1) Words causing pain—even if they are spoken calmly—will inflame the situation.

Of course, if something disturbs you, you have a right to express yourself. (Genesis 21:9-12) But you can do so without resorting to sarcasm, insults, and put-downs. Set firm boundaries for yourself—some things that you will resolve *not* to say to your

* Parental influence does not excuse harsh speech directed at one's mate. However, it may help explain how such a tendency can become deeply ingrained and difficult to uproot.

mate, such as "I hate you" or "I wish we had never married." And although the Christian apostle Paul was not specifically discussing marriage, it is wise to avoid getting caught up in what he called "debates about words" and "violent disputes about trifles."* (1 Timothy 6:4, 5) If your spouse uses such methods, you do not have to respond in kind. As far as it depends upon *you*, pursue peace.—Romans 12:17, 18; Philippians 2:14.

Admittedly, when tempers flare, it is difficult to control one's speech. "The tongue is a fire," says the Bible writer James. "Not one of mankind can get it tamed. An unruly injurious thing, it is full of death-dealing poison."

* The original Greek word translated "violent disputes about trifles" can also be rendered "mutual irritations."

NEW MATE, SAME PROBLEMS

Some spouses who feel trapped in a loveless marriage are tempted to start all over with a new mate. But the Bible condemns adultery, stating that a person who engages in this sin "is in want of heart [is a senseless fool, *New English Bible*] and "is bringing his own soul to ruin." (Proverbs 6:32) Ultimately, the unrepentant adulterer loses God's favor—the worst kind of ruin possible.—Hebrews 13:4.

The utter foolishness of an adulterous course is shown in other ways too. For one thing, the adulterer who takes on a new spouse is likely to be confronted with the same problems that plagued his first marriage. Dr. Diane Medved brings up another factor to consider: "The first thing your new mate learned about you," she says, "was that you're willing to be unfaithful. He or she knows that you can be deceptive to one you've promised to honor. That you're great with excuses. That you can be distracted away from commitment. That sensory pleasure or ego gratification are bait that you'll follow. . . . How does spouse number two know that you won't be lured away again?"

(James 3:6, 8) What can you do, then, when anger begins to build? How can you speak to your mate in a manner that will quell the conflict rather than add fuel to it?

Defusing Explosive Arguments

Some have found that it is easier to slow down anger and address underlying issues if they put emphasis on their feelings rather than on their mate's actions. For example, "I feel hurt because of what you said" is much more effective than "You hurt me" or "You should know better than to say that." Of course, when expressing how you feel, the tone of your voice should not be laced with bitterness or contempt. Your objective should be to highlight the problem rather than attack the person.

—Genesis 27:46–28:1.

In addition, always remember that there is "a time to keep quiet and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:7) When two people are talking at the same time, neither one is listening, and nothing is accomplished. So when it is your turn to listen, be "swift about hearing, slow about speaking." Equally important, be "slow about wrath." (James 1:19) Do not take literally every harsh word that your mate utters; neither "hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended." (Ecclesiastes 7:9) Instead, try to perceive the feelings behind your mate's words. "The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger," says the Bible, "and it is beauty on his part to pass over transgression." (Proverbs 19:11) Insight can help a husband or wife look beneath the surface of a disagreement.

For example, a wife's complaint that her husband does not spend time with her is likely not simply about hours and minutes. It may have more to do with her feeling neglected or unappreciated. Similarly, a husband's grievance concerning an impul-

sive purchase that his wife made is probably not just about dollars and cents. It may be more about his feeling left out of the decision-making process. The husband or wife having insight will probe beneath the surface and get to the core of the problem.—Proverbs 16:23.

Is this easier said than done? Absolutely! Sometimes, despite the best of efforts, unkind words will be spoken and tempers will flare. When you see this start to happen, you may need to follow the advice of Proverbs 17:14: "Before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave." There is nothing wrong with postponing the discussion until feelings have cooled down. If it is difficult to talk without things



WISDOM FROM BIBLE PROVERBS

- **Proverbs 10:19:** "In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly."

When you are upset, you may say more than you mean to—and later regret it.

- **Proverbs 15:18:** "An enraged man stirs up contention, but one that is slow to anger quiets down quarreling." ***Stinging accusations will likely make your spouse defensive, whereas patient listening will help both of you work toward a resolution.***

- **Proverbs 17:27:** "Anyone holding back his sayings is possessed of knowledge, and a man of discernment is cool of spirit."

When you sense that anger is building, it is best to keep quiet so as to avoid a full-blown confrontation.

- **Proverbs 29:11:** "All his spirit is what a stupid one lets out, but he that is wise keeps it calm to the last."

Self-control is vital. A temperamental outburst of harsh words will only alienate your spouse.

getting out of hand, it may be advisable to have a mature friend sit down with the two of you and help you to sort through your differences.*

Maintain a Realistic Outlook

Do not be discouraged if your marriage is not what you envisioned it would be during courtship. Says one team of experts: "Unending bliss is just not what marriage is like for most people. It's wonderful at times and very hard at other times."

Yes, marriage may not be a storybook romance, but neither does it have to be a tragedy. While there will be times when you and your spouse will just have to put up with each other, there will also be occasions when you can put your differences aside and just enjoy being together, having fun, and talking to each other as friends. (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13) These are the times when you may be able to rekindle the love that has faded.

Remember, two imperfect humans cannot have a perfect marriage. But they can find a measure of happiness. Indeed, even with difficulties, the relationship between you and your spouse can be a wellspring of immense satisfaction. One thing is certain: If both you and your mate put forth effort and are willing to be flexible and seek the advantage of the other person, there is good reason to believe that your marriage *can* be saved.—1 Corinthians 10:24.

* Jehovah's Witnesses have the resource of congregation elders. While it is not their place to meddle in the personal affairs of married couples, the elders can be a refreshing aid to couples in distress.—James 5:14, 15.



Eat Your VEGETABLES!

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRAZIL

“They are bitter.” • “They taste bad.” • “I have never eaten them.”

THESE are just a few of the reasons why many refuse to eat vegetables. What about you? Do you eat vegetables daily? *Awake!* conducted interviews to discover why some people like vegetables and why others do not.

Those who eat vegetables said that their parents had taught them the importance of eating vegetables, legumes, and fruit. In contrast, many who do not like vegetables were not accustomed to eating them as children. Instead, they preferred junk food. Even these, however, agreed that vegetables are important in maintaining good health.

Parents, teach your children to eat vegetables! How? *Facts for Life*, published by the United Nations Children’s Fund, suggests that at least once a day after breast-feeding or bottle-feeding, babies of about six months should be given vegetables that have been boiled, peeled, and then mashed. The greater the variety of foods, the better for the child. Dr. Vagner Lapate, a Brazilian child specialist, says that while milk is the major food source for the first two years, introducing other foods “encourages the baby to discover new tastes.”

In the book *Medicina—Mitos y Verdades* (Medicine—Myths and Truths), Carla Leonel suggests that a small amount of orange juice, puree of fruits (such as banana, apple, and papaya), cereal, and vegetable soup can be introduced into the baby’s diet earlier than specified above. Of course, since opinions on this vary, it would be wise for you to consult your pediatrician.



The Mystery of NAN MADOL

*Who built this 'Venice of the South Seas'?
How did they do it? Why did they abandon it?*



DO YOU like a good mystery—one that is spiced with adventure? Then come and investigate the ruins of Nan Madol, a centuries-old enigma that has puzzled many visitors.

Nan Madol is an intriguing maze of man-made islets and canals built a thousand years ago on a shallow reef on the edge of the Micronesian island of Pohnpei.* As we approach by water, mangrove trees and dense tropical vegetation hide the ruins from view. Suddenly, as our boat eases around a bend, we are confronted by these triumphs of engineering.

Massive walls, some as long as a city block, appear first. These great walls, which sweep up to a gentle peak at their corners, were constructed of huge basalt columns stacked in criss-cross fashion.

The name Nan Madol means "Places in Between," and this

* Pohnpei is located near the equator, about 3,000 miles southwest of Hawaii.





◀ The dock and main entry of the fortress

▲ The massive outer wall

well describes the network of man-made canals that surrounds the islands. European sailors of the 1800's were likely the first outsiders to come upon Nan Madol. They were so awestruck by the sight that they dubbed this former political and religious center the Venice of the South Seas. But those sailors never witnessed the full splendor of Nan Madol, for it had been mysteriously abandoned about a century before they arrived.

Our two guides told us that Nan Madol covers about 200 acres. Each of its 92 islets, they explained, had a specific purpose. Some were used as residential centers. Others were set aside for such things as food preparation, canoe making, and ceremonial dancing. While the islands were built in various shapes and sizes, a typical one is rectangular and is about as big as a football field. Most of the islets are overgrown with vegetation, but what can be explored is fascinating.

Fortress of Kings

The imposing fortress called Nan Douwas is the best spot to contemplate the mystery of Nan Madol. Although it is possible to wade through seawater to explore these ruins, it is better to reach them by boat. Nan Madol was designed for water traffic, and its canals are as wide as four-lane highways. They are also quite shallow. At high tide the water is no more than waist deep, which, in centuries gone by, undoubtedly protected Nan Madol from invading ships. Our guides carefully steered through the waterways to avoid damaging boat propellers on the coral bottom.

Once docked at Nan Douwas, we stepped onto stairs leading directly into the ancient sanctuary. This noble entryway took us past walls 10 to 15 feet thick and 25 to 30 feet high. These sturdy towers have withstood tropical storms and even typhoons.

Inside the mammoth walls, a large courtyard guarding a stone vault awaited us. This solemn

setting is the royal mortuary, where kings were once mourned. Exploring further, we found what appeared to be an underground passage. Our guides encouraged us to squeeze through the narrow opening in the stones, and soon we were crouched in a small, dark underground chamber. "You are in jail," one guide explained. "This is where prisoners on Nan Madol were kept." Imagining how a prisoner must have felt when the jail "door" was sealed with a two-ton stone, we were glad to get back outside.

Unusual Building Blocks

Wandering through the ruins of Nan Madol helped us to appreciate the effort that must have gone into its construction. Coral rubble serves as foundations for the islets. These were designed to bear hefty stacks of long basalt columns. The columns are so striking in appearance that early visitors thought they had been shaped by hand. Later, it was found that they are naturally



▲ The central stone burial vault

Some of the 200 acres
of man-made canals ▶

prismlike, each having between five and eight sides.

Thousands of megalithic columns—some measuring up to 18 feet and weighing more than five tons—had to be brought in. One of the foundation cornerstones is estimated to weigh 50 tons! Since in shallow water a raft would sink under such weight, we are forced to wonder, 'How were these enormous rocks transported to Nan Madol and then lifted into place?' Why, the nearest source of basalt is miles away—nearly halfway around the island of Pohnpei!

Over the years, the mystery of Nan Madol has spawned some imaginative legends. One has it that many centuries ago two brothers were empowered by the gods with magical ability to "fly" heavy stones to the building site. According to another legend, Pohnpei was once inhabited by an advanced society that knew the secret of controlling sound waves, enabling them



to levitate the huge stones into place.

Our guides told us a more plausible explanation—that Nan Madol was built by a large human labor force and took centuries to complete. Most likely the basalt logs were hoisted into position with brute force, using inclined trunks of palm trees as supports. But still we ask, "How were the heavy stones transported to Nan Madol?"

Will the Mystery Be Solved?

No one can say exactly how Nan Madol was built or, perhaps even more intriguing, why it was

abandoned. Many claim that Nan Madol was attacked and conquered. Others say that foreigners brought disease to Pohnpei, decimating the population. Another theory is that a strong typhoon destroyed the island's food supply, forcing evacuation. Whatever the reason, Nan Madol has been deserted for at least 200 years.

Thus, this ancient wonder leaves us with many questions and few answers. As our boat pulled away, we could not help but ponder the question, Will anyone ever solve the mystery of Nan Madol?

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM **Loida's Journey**

THE article "Loida's Journey out of Silence" (May 8, 2000) elicited a wide response from our readers. Many hearts were deeply touched by this true story of a young girl with cerebral palsy who could not communicate until she was 18 years of age. Following are a few of the comments that were received.

"I couldn't stop crying when I read Loida's messages to her family when she was finally able to communicate. Her courage and strength despite her difficult circumstances are things that I am going to strive to imitate."—K. G.

"I have excellent health, yet at times I find myself complaining about various things. After reading about Loida, I said a prayer to Jehovah, apologizing for not appreciating what I have."—R. H.

"In 1980 my little brother was born with a multitude of health problems, including cerebral palsy, and he cannot talk. This experience encouraged my family never to give up, no matter how hard times may be."—L. W.

"I am a 14-year-old girl, and I always thought that I was the only one with problems. I would like to see Loida well and talk to her in Paradise. She is one of the people on my list to meet and be friends with forever."—R. K.

"This article touched my heart. I have had to endure all manner of mental and emotion-

al illnesses. To read about how much Loida is looking forward to God's new world makes me want to be there that much more."

—P. B.

"I too have cerebral palsy, but I have no trouble speaking. This article lets me know that Jehovah sees all that we experience and appreciates each of us for what we can individually contribute in serving him."—D. J.

"Most moving to me was reading about how Loida dedicated her life to Jehovah at a young age and also how she shares in the preaching work. Those of us who are more able-bodied can take a lesson from Loida in many ways."—A. R.

"Loida's experience has made me strive to think more of others and of what I can do for them. I refuse to take for granted my privilege of being able to speak to others about Jehovah God."—B. M.

"What an exceptional article! We know a couple in a neighboring congregation who have a daughter with cerebral palsy. I am going to send them a card today to let them know that I truly appreciate them and all that they do for her."—T. G.

"When I feel depressed, sometimes I become selfish, but Loida takes a special interest in others. That's what I'm trying hard to do. I also need to try harder to be like Loida and pray to Jehovah when I feel overwhelmed."—N. D.

"I am 14 years old, and I am asthmatic. I sometimes think my illness is the worst of all, but in reading this experience, I have learned that this is not so. Thank you for this sad but at the same time happy experience that gives us hope."—M. C.

From a Slow Death to a Happy Life

'I live a life with an expiration date.'

That thought kept running through my mind as I lay in a hospital bed with units of blood slowly dripping into my veins. For more than 20 years, I had been told that this was the only way I could keep living—if indeed this could be called living.

Soon after my birth in 1969 in Ierápetra, on the Greek island of Crete, my parents received ominous news. The doctors said that their baby girl had beta-thalassemia, or Cooley's anemia. Beta-thalassemia major is a severe inherited blood disease, which occurs most frequently among people of Greek, Italian, Middle Eastern, Southern Asian, or African ancestry.

As the doctors explained to my parents, when one has this condition, the red cells of the body do not produce enough hemoglobin, the protein that transports oxygen to the cells. As a result, my cells get insufficient oxygen. Red cells remain in my bloodstream for only a short time because my liver and spleen destroy and remove them. These organs are responsible for the destruction of abnormal or worn-out red cells.

My parents were told that the only known treatment for thalassemia was regular blood transfusions and the removal of the accumulated iron. As the doctors explained, however, treatment by transfusion is accompanied by the ongoing accumulation of iron in the heart and the liver, and this can be fatal. Transfusion—the treatment that prevents death in patients in their first ten years of life—usually provides the major component



AS TOLD BY DIAMÁNTI DATSERIS

of the iron poisoning that is so deadly later on. Chronically transfused thalassemia patients, like me, usually die of a cardiac disorder before 30 years of age.

Life With an "Expiration Date"

From my early childhood, death loomed heavily over me. Words do not suffice to describe how difficult it is to live with such a dire prospect. I had no plans for the future and no dreams of a normal adult life. My thalassemia, I felt, was like a time bomb waiting to go off.

My parents' concern for my health made them very cautious. I was brought up with an unending list of "don'ts" and other rules: "Don't run!" "Don't get excited!" "Be careful!"

My situation made my Greek Orthodox mother extremely religious. She sincerely sought help from religious icons. To improve my condition, she would take me to faraway monasteries with a reputation for faith healing and would supply me with various charms and amulets. Much money was spent on such agencies—but to no avail.

I believed in and loved God, although I did not know how to worship him. When in despair, I would tearfully pray: "God, if you really exist and love me, please help me."

A Desperate Quest for Comfort

As I grew up, my health deteriorated rapidly, largely because of the excess iron in my blood. As part of my treatment, I used a device that reduces blood iron. Every night I had to insert a needle just underneath the skin in my abdomen to let an iron chelator trickle into my body all night long. Every night I endured the same torturous ritual. Often during those sleepless nights, I wanted to die. I felt that God had ignored my pleas for help.

At the age of 16, I started associating with a group of youngsters who were immersed in heavy metal music. In a desperate quest for comfort, I found that music glorifying brutality, wanton violence, and Satanism provided a measure of escape. After all, since evil was everywhere around me, I agreed with the idea that an evil higher power controlled the universe. But soon the consequences of drugs and Satanism became evident. My associates were always on the run from the police.

My endless blood transfusions had left their mark on my body. Excess iron put black circles under my eyes and made my skin turn yellow. My appearance was not helped by my dress—the black clothes and leather jacket, adorned with hobnails and skulls, which were characteristic of the people I was associating with. Happily, I never took drugs.



I was desperately searching for comfort

As I continued listening to heavy metal music with its emphasis on death, drugs, demons, spiritism, and blood, I felt that Satan had me entangled. At night I was depressed and often wept. It was at this low point in my life that a beam of hope began to shine.

My Life Takes a Turn

One day, when I was 20 years old, a friend gave me a book that she had obtained from Jehovah's Witnesses. It was entitled *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?** She was not really interested in the book, but when I browsed through its pages, I was impressed. It clearly showed that Bible principles can improve a person's life. I was also impressed to learn about the persecution of the early Christians and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their beliefs. When I finished reading the book, I wanted to share these things with others. It was then that I met Manolis, a man who knew about Jehovah and the message of the Bible because some of his relatives were Jehovah's Witnesses. He took me to the local meeting place of Jehovah's Witnesses, and during the summer of 1990, I started studying the Bible with them.

Through my Bible study, I learned that our Creator truly cares for us and that he is not responsible for the sickness and pain that afflict many of us. (1 Peter 5:7) I learned that it was Satan who introduced sin and death into this world and that Jehovah will soon undo the works of Satan by removing this old system and replacing it with a perfect new world. (Hebrews 2:14) Under paradise conditions, God-fearing people will be restored to human perfection. Then, no one will say, "I am sick."—Isaiah 33:24.

At the same time, I learned that the Bible tells us to 'abstain from blood.' (Acts 15:20, 29; Genesis 9:4) As my conscience started

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

to be molded and trained by the lofty standards and principles of the Bible, I was motivated to make a personal decision regarding blood transfusions. I decided that I would not accept them anymore.

For more than 20 years, I had been led to believe that the only way I could keep alive was to receive regular blood transfusions. Would I by obeying the Bible's command be signing my own death warrant? What would my parents think of my rejection of blood? Would my doctors and the other medical staff try to pressure me?

Making Critical Decisions

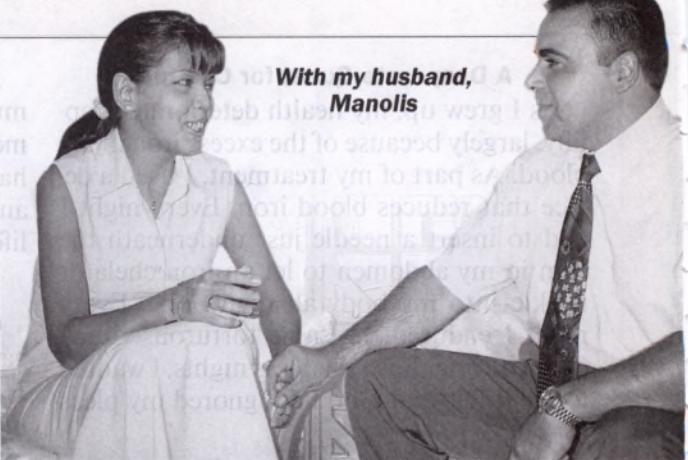
Through fervent prayer I threw all my anxieties on Jehovah. (Psalm 55:22) I also decided to pursue other medical solutions. After much study, I found out that I could possibly replace blood transfusions with a carefully selected diet rich in iron and vitamins. Above all else, I was determined to conform to God's law as it is expressed in the Bible.

Understandably, my parents were quite upset. Since my infancy they had done their best to keep me alive, and here I was saying no to blood transfusions! Eventually, though, they said that they would respect my personal decision in the matter.

I then explained my religious stand to the medical staff at the hospital, also informing them that I would vigorously pursue alternative methods to blood transfusion. The doctors reluctantly agreed to abide by my wishes.

While receiving blood transfusions in the past, I had made friends with some other thalassemic youngsters. Now they were puzzled over my stand on blood. One of them sarcastically told me that soon I would "be carried away by four"—a Greek expression meaning that I would die. Sadly, she later was among five patients who died as a re-

**With my husband,
Manolis**



sult of being transfused with contaminated blood!

Since August 1991, I have not had a blood transfusion. Contrary to all predictions, I am alive and reasonably well. Following a diet rich in vitamins and iron, I have been able to maintain adequate health, despite occasional complications and chronic limitations caused by my thalassemia.

Best of all, however, I have a life with purpose, a life enriched by an intimate relationship with my Creator, Jehovah God. In July of 1992, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. Manolis, that cherished friend who brought me in contact with the vital support of the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, was baptized on that same day. About 18 months later, we were married. Later, I had the joy of seeing my mother and my sister become baptized servants of Jehovah. My father's opinion of Jehovah's Witnesses has changed, and he occasionally attends congregation meetings.

I have learned that although death is an enemy, it is not an enemy to be feared. (Psalm 23:4) Whether we live or die, it is to Jehovah. Our life is in his hands. (Romans 14:8) I will always be thankful to him for saving me from a life with only the prospect of a slow death. Indeed, he has led me to the hope of eternal life!—Revelation 21:1-4.

Have You Met a *Xoloitzcuintli*?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

THE first time I touched a *Xoloitzcuintli**—*Xolo* for short—I was amazed. Its black, hairless body felt so soft and hot! This champion show dog paraded majestically behind its owner, giving us a chance to admire its slim figure graced by a white “paint-brush” tip on the tail—such a contrast to its smooth black body!

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, dogs were highly valued as pets in Mesoamerica. Some were buried with their owners, as ‘companions in the after-life.’ *Xolos* enjoyed a special place in society. It was believed that they had medicinal value. Yes, physical contact with this hot little companion seemed to help those who suffered from rheumatism. Of course,

* Pronounced sō-lo-ēts-kwēnt'lē.



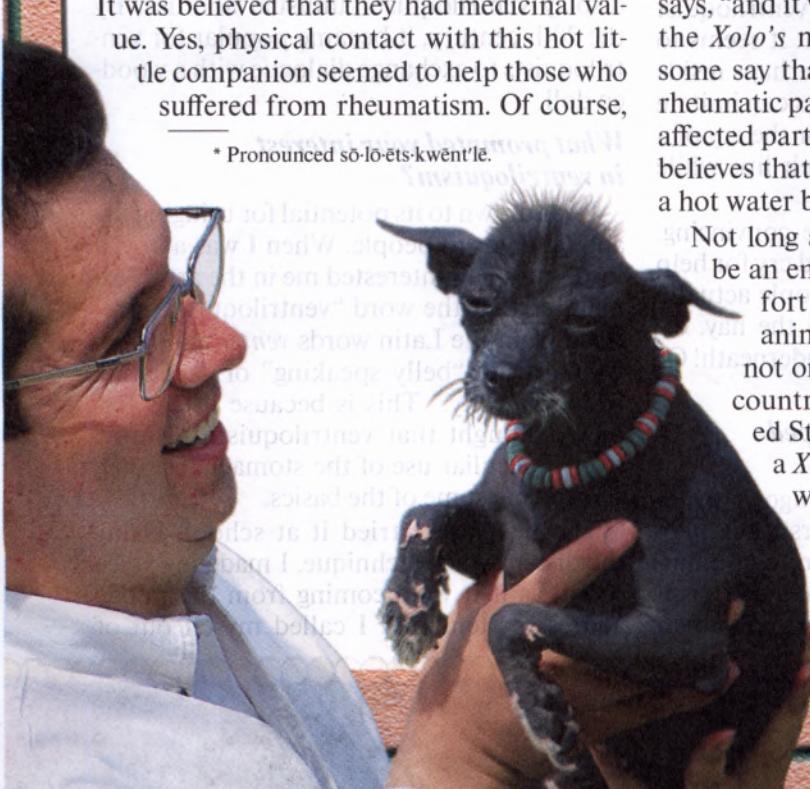
a *Xolo* could also keep your feet warm on a cold night!

Today, many find the *Xolo* to be the perfect pet. Like many other breeds, the *Xolo* can be trained and comes in different sizes—including a toy variety. Best of all, no hair means no fleas, and the *Xolo* is an ideal choice for those who are allergic to dog hair. Caring for a *Xolo* is quite easy. To keep the dog’s skin soft, it is necessary to

rub it once in a while with some skin cream or oil. Miguel Ángel Moreno, a breeder, points out another advantage of the *Xolo*: “It takes only one minute to give it a bath,” he says, “and it will be dry in two.” What about the *Xolo*’s medicinal value? Even today, some say that they have found relief from rheumatic pain by holding a *Xolo* against the affected part of the body. Moreno, however, believes that the *Xolo* is only as effective “as a hot water bottle.”*

Not long ago the *Xolo* was considered to be an endangered species, but much effort has been made to preserve this animal. Today, *Xolos* can be found not only in Mexico but also in other countries, such as Peru and the United States. So would you like to meet a *Xoloitzcuintli*? If you ever do, you will not forget your encounter with this unique dog.

* The *Xolo*’s temperature is not really much higher than that of any other dog, but its lack of hair makes it feel hotter to the touch.



Who's Talking?

THE curtain rises on the performer and his doll. As they exchange jokes, the doll seems to be alive, with a voice and personality all its own. Of course, it is actually the performer—a ventriloquist—who is producing the doll's "voice," ever careful not to move his own lips while doing so.

Would you like to learn more about this unusual art form? *Awake!* interviewed Nacho Estrada, who has been a professional ventriloquist for some 18 years.

What are the various types of ventriloquism?

In what is called near ventriloquism, the performer's voice seems to come from nearby, such as from a doll on his knee. In distant ventriloquism, the performer's voice seems to come from far away. A ventriloquist can also muffle his voice so that it seems to come from an enclosed area—perhaps inside a closed box. Some ventriloquists can imitate sounds, such as an animal call or the cry of a baby. And they do not move their lips while performing.

A good ventriloquist is quite convincing. One reportedly uttered a muffled cry for help as a hay cart was passing by. People actually stopped the cart and unloaded the hay, expecting to find a poor victim underneath! Of course, nobody was found.

How has ventriloquism developed over the years?

It is believed that many years ago ventriloquism was used to deceive superstitious people into believing that they were communicating with the dead. In time, ventriloquism was exposed as nothing more than a human



skill. It thereafter found a respectable place in the field of entertainment, and today it is sometimes even used for educational purposes.

Through the centuries various settings have been employed to amuse audiences and display ventriloquists' unusual abilities. By the 20th century, it became popular for ventriloquists to exchange dialogue with a wooden doll.

What prompted your interest in ventriloquism?

I was drawn to its potential for bringing joy and laughter to people. When I was a boy, a local salesman interested me in the art by explaining that the word "ventriloquist" is derived from the Latin words *venter* and *loqui*, which mean "belly speaking" or "speaking from the belly." This is because it was formerly thought that ventriloquism resulted from a peculiar use of the stomach. He then showed me some of the basics.

The next day I tried it at school. Using the distant-voice technique, I made my voice sound as if it were coming from the public address system, and I called myself out of

class. It worked! Later, I learned more about ventriloquism through a correspondence course and then took it up professionally.

What does your work as a ventriloquist involve?

Although I have occasionally performed at banquets and ventriloquist conventions and have even made a few appearances on television, most of my time is spent teaching children at school assemblies. Humor is very much a part of the show. For example, during a program on personal hygiene, I point out to Maclovio, my wooden doll, that because he has not brushed his teeth, I can see that he had eggs for breakfast that morning. Maclovio answers, "You're wrong—it was yesterday!"

How is ventriloquism accomplished?

It is often said that a ventriloquist throws his voice, but this is only an illusion. We use a special tongue position to produce alternate sounds for letters that require lip movement, and a technique of breathing from the diaphragm produces the misimpression of distance.

Ventriloquism works because most people have not trained their ears to recognize the source and distance of sound. They need the help of their eyes. To illustrate: At the sound of a siren, your ear tells you that an emergency vehicle is approaching and that it is coming from far

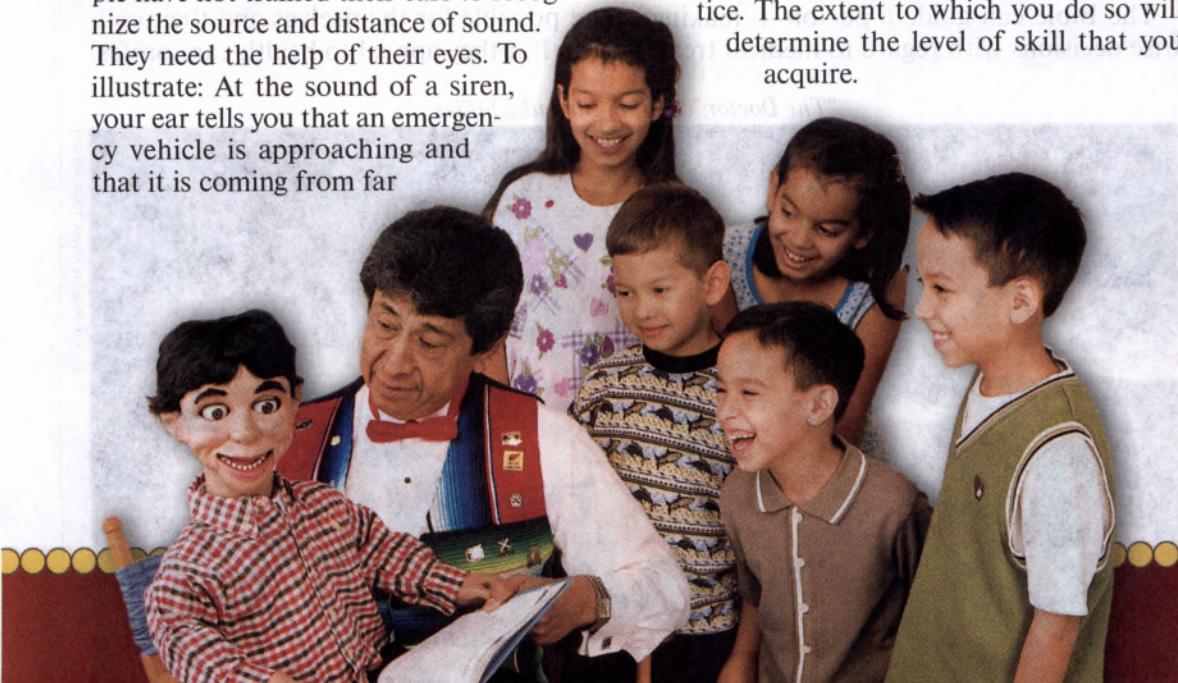
away. But *how far away* is the vehicle? *From what direction* is it approaching? To answer these questions, likely you will have to look for the vehicle's flashing lights.

A ventriloquist takes advantage of this by producing a sound at the appropriate volume and by directing the attention of the audience to the source that he wants them to think the sound is coming from.

What suggestions would you give to a person who is interested in learning the art of ventriloquism?

First, know your purpose, and be prepared to avoid anything that conflicts with it. I mention this because like many other forms of entertainment, ventriloquism is sometimes used for unwholesome purposes. Personally, I am drawn to ventriloquism for its potential to engender love and fun. I limit my work to material and events that serve that purpose.

To become proficient at ventriloquism, you will need three things—technique, imagination, and practice. Technique can be learned from a how-to book or video. Next, use your imagination to develop a believable personality for your doll or puppet, and learn how to make him or her seem lifelike. Finally, practice. The extent to which you do so will determine the level of skill that you acquire.



Your Choice of Medical Treatment—Does It Matter?

SICKNESS, disease, and injury are all too common to humankind. When confronted with these enemies of well-being, many seek relief through medical treatment. Jesus Christ recognized the potential benefit of such efforts, acknowledging that “those who are healthy do not need a physician, but those who are ailing do.”—Luke 5:31.

The Bible writer who penned those words, Luke, was himself a physician. (Colossians 4:14) Perhaps during their travels together, the apostle Paul benefited from Luke’s medical expertise. But do the Scriptures provide guidelines as to what types of medical care are acceptable for Christians? Does your choice of medical treatment matter?

Scriptural Guidelines

The Bible can guide a person in making wise decisions with regard to medical treat-

ment. For instance, Deuteronomy 18:10-12 makes clear that practices such as divination and magic are “detestable” to Jehovah. The “practice of spiritism,” which Paul warned against, would include these forbidden acts. (Galatians 5:19-21) Hence, true Christians avoid any diagnostic or therapeutic procedure that clearly involves spiritism.

The Bible also reveals the high value that the Creator places on the sanctity of life and blood. (Genesis 9:3, 4) Determined to heed the injunction to ‘keep abstaining from blood,’ Jehovah’s Witnesses object to medical procedures that violate the Bible’s command to abstain from blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) This does not mean that they reject all medical treatment. Rather, they seek the best care possible for themselves and their children. But they appeal to health-care profes-

“The Doctor,” 1891, by Sir Luke Fildes



Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY

sionals to provide treatment that is in accord with their religious convictions.

Consider Your Steps

King Solomon warned that “anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps.” (Proverbs 14:15) Even when a medical decision is not in direct conflict with Bible principles, a person should ‘consider his steps.’ Not all forms of medical treatment are helpful. When Jesus said that ‘those who are ailing need a physician,’ he was not sanctioning all the medical treatments that were available in his day. He knew that some forms of medical practice were sound and that some were fallacious.*

Likewise today, some treatments may be useless, even fraudulent. Lack of good judgment could expose a person to unnecessary risks. It should also be acknowledged that a treatment that is helpful to one person could be ineffective—even harmful—to another. When facing a medical decision, a prudent person would weigh his options carefully instead of ‘putting faith in every word,’ even when receiving advice from well-meaning friends. He would display “soundness of mind” by seeking reliable information so as to be in a position to make an informed choice.—Titus 2:12.

Be Realistic and Reasonable

It is proper to be concerned with the state of one’s health. Giving balanced attention to physical wellness shows appreciation for the gift of life and its divine Source. (Psalm 36:9) Although seeking to obtain suitable medical treatment, Christians would want to be balanced in matters of health. For example, if a reasonably healthy person becomes obsessively preoccupied with health and fitness,

* For example, in the first-century medical encyclopedia of Dioscorides, a purported remedy for jaundice was the drinking of a potion consisting of wine and goat dung! Of course, we now know that such a prescription would have been more likely to add to the sufferer’s woes.

this could cause him to lose sight of “the more important things.”—Philippians 1:10; 2:3, 4.

A desperately sick woman in Jesus’ day “spent all her resources” seeking the help of physicians for treatment of her chronic ailment. What was the result? Rather than being cured, her condition worsened, which must have caused her much frustration. (Mark 5:25, 26) She did everything in her power to gain relief, but nothing worked. Her experience highlights the limits of the medical science of her time. Even today, despite advances in medical research and technology, many people find themselves in a similar situation. So it is important to have a realistic view of what medical science can accomplish. Perfect health is unattainable at present. Christians recognize that God’s time for “the curing of the nations” is yet future. (Revelation 22:1, 2) Therefore, we must develop a balanced view of medical treatment.—Philippians 4:5.

Clearly, the choices that we make matter. For that reason, when confronted with decisions about medical treatment, our choice should reflect both our desire for good health and our desire to maintain a healthy relationship with God. As we do so, we can continue to look with confidence to the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise that in the glorious new world to come, “no resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”—Isaiah 33:24.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Comfort for the Sick

What if My Parents Think I'm Too Young to Date?

Fire! Which Extinguisher Should You Use?

Oxygen-Starved Eyes

Some contact-lens wearers may be starving their eyes of oxygen, reports *The Globe and Mail*. "Vascularization occurs when the cornea [the eye's transparent cover] can't get the oxygen it needs through surface contact with the air and begins growing blood vessels to compensate." Impaired vision or even blindness can result. Dr. Raymond Stein, chief of ophthalmology at a Toronto hospital, says that the "worst scenario is when a patient fails to take care of his or her lenses and does not come in for follow-up." Optometrists encourage patients to consult an eye-care professional to make sure that they have the right contact lenses for their particular eyes and then to follow the recommended wear schedule and lens-care instructions.

Brazilian Friendship in Decline

Brazilians now cultivate friendships with less frequency than they did ten years ago, reports *O Globo* newspaper. According to mental-health expert Maria Abigail de Souza of the University of São Paulo, fierce competition in the job market, the struggle to maintain a certain life-style, and a reduction in leisure time are all contributing factors. César Vasconcelos de Souza, medical director at the Adventist Healthy Life Center, São Paulo, says: "To have true friends, we must share our feelings, open our heart, and let out

happy and sad things, hard and easy things. That requires time and a deepening of emotional ties. Most people would like to share their feelings with others but are afraid to do so. To avoid risks they prefer shallow friendships."

Grieving and Depression

A survey of men and women between the ages of 70 and 79 shows that some widows and widowers experience high levels of depressive symptoms up to two years after the loss of their spouse. Those taking part in the study were divided into six groups, based on the amount of time that had passed since the death of their spouse. Both interviews and questionnaires were used to measure symptoms of depression. Of the respondents, 38 percent were men, and 62 percent were women. The study found that the rate of depression among the newly bereaved is nine times higher than among married individuals who had not suffered a similar bereavement.

Hooked on Internet Pornography

Researchers have found that "at least 200,000 Internet users

are hooked on pornography sites, X-rated chat rooms or other sexual materials online," reports *The New York Times*. The study was conducted by psychologists at Stanford and Duquesne universities and is one of the first to have estimated the number of Internet "cybersex compulsives." The researchers said that these individuals visit X-rated Web sites more than 11 hours a week. The newspaper quoted the researchers as saying: "This is a hidden public health hazard exploding, in part, because very few are recognizing it as such or taking it seriously."

AIDS Devastates Africa

In the past year, AIDS has killed more people in Africa than has warfare, according to Kofi Annan, secretary-general of the United Nations. This includes the wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Almost two thirds of the world's 36 million AIDS sufferers live in sub-Saharan Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, AIDS kills one teacher every school day, and in Botswana, life expectancy has dropped from 70 years to 41. Zimbabwe expects that by the year 2005, HIV and AIDS will consume 60 percent of its health budget, and even that will be inadequate. The subject of AIDS is avoided in Malawi and Zambia, where rates of infection are extremely high;

and in South Africa sufferers are shunned, reports London's newspaper *The Guardian*. "None of us has yet begun to grasp the full impact of this horror—on the quality of life in Africa, its economic potential and its social and political stability," stated Mr. Annan.

Cities Alter Climate

"Explosive urban growth is creating 'heat islands' so intense that they are establishing their own local weather systems," reports *The Times* of London. The cities trap heat during the day and radiate it back into space at night. Temperatures in cities such as Beijing and Atlanta are thus raised 10 degrees Fahrenheit or more. In the past 19 years, Atlanta has lost 380,000 acres of tree cover to roads and housing. The urban sprawl increases air pollution, causes unseasonal thunderstorms, and reduces the photosynthetic productivity of farmland. Commenting on the effects of these "heat islands," Dr. Marc Imhoff, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientist, said: "Human survival depends on the ability of the landscape to produce food. If the capacity of the landscape to carry out photosynthesis is substantially reduced, the ability of the planet to support human life must also be diminished." In most cases it is prime agricultural land that is sacrificed for urban expansion.

Pollution Kills the Demand for Whales

Pollution may have become an unlikely ally in the fight

to save the whale. Recent investigations have shown that whales and dolphins caught off the coast of Japan are highly contaminated by DDT, dioxin, PCBs, and methylmercury. One test showed that eating just one and a half ounces of contaminated dolphin meat could cause a significant health risk to a person. Such news, some expect, may kill the demand for whale meat.

profile. But added to this is the effect of the hydrophobic, or water-hating, wax crystalloids with which the plant is covered. The researchers say that this "lotus effect" drastically reduces the adhesion of water and dirt particles, and they add that the plant can regenerate waxes in spite of adverse environmental conditions. This, they say, makes the lotus' natural efficiency far superior to man-made waterproof paint or washing detergents.

"Self-cleaning" Lotus



Why does the lotus plant, long held sacred in Eastern religions, always look so clean? German scientists now claim to have found the answer to this question that has intrigued biologists for ages. "Water-repellency of plant surfaces has long been known," say the scientists W. Barthlott and C. Neinhuis. "But the self-cleaning properties . . . had been completely overlooked." As explained in *The Sunday Times of India*, "the water droplets rolling off a lotus leaf carry away contaminating particles, thus cleaning the surface perfectly." This is not because the surface is smooth. Seen under a microscope, the leaf has a rough surface of "knobs, folds and buttons" with "convex or dome-shaped water-shedding"

Fit to Drink?

A study by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warns that "preventive measures must be taken" before the water quality in France reaches "a point of no return." According to WWF, France's underground and surface waters are being contaminated by pesticides and nitrates. Nitrate contamination primarily occurs when pig and cattle manure is carried into the water supply. The report says that "the feces of the eight million pigs in the Brittany region are comparable to the waste produced by a city of 24 million inhabitants without any sewage treatment plant!" Moreover, "the massive use of fertilizers for large-scale farming" also pollutes the water supply with nitrates, says WWF. Additionally, the heavy use of pesticides in corn production has resulted in raising pesticide levels over 40 percent higher than established standards. The WWF report recommends that wetlands and wooded embankments be rebuilt to act as natural filters.

FROM OUR READERS

Cocoon The article "When Love Is Blind" (March 22, 2000) refers to the moth emerging from its chrysalis. However, it is butterflies that make a chrysalis. Moths make cocoons.

V. L., United States

According to "Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary," the term "chrysalis" can be applied broadly to mean "an insect pupa." Admittedly, it is more common to use the word in connection with butterflies. However, some sources do apply the term to moths.—ED.

Vasa I want to express my appreciation for the article "The Vasa—From Disaster to Attraction." (April 8, 2000) As a historian who has done some work on this subject, I can confirm that the article was extremely well researched. It did an excellent job of explaining the events in a balanced way.

T. W., Germany

Legal Victories I've recently gone to court for custody of my children, and my ex-husband has made an issue of my religious beliefs. It has been hard. When I read the article "The Battle Is Not Yours, but God's" (April 22, 2000), tears ran down my face.

D. B., United States

After I read the article, I shared it with local attorneys. I did not get a single rejection. Some even invited me into their offices for coffee and further discussion. A number asked for extra copies for their associate attorneys. All the attorneys were astounded when I showed them that Hayden Covington

had won 36 out of 45 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

C. M., United States

Teenage Fathers I am writing to express my profound appreciation for the article "Young People Ask . . . Fathering Children—Does It Make One a Man?" (April 22, 2000) I am 28 years old and single, and I serve as a special pioneer, or full-time evangelizer. In this part of West Africa, someone my age without a wife or girlfriend is considered uncivilized and impotent. I am often mocked and looked down on because of this. However, my determination to remain chaste was strengthened by your article.

A. E., Ghana

I lost my virginity as a teenager and committed fornication with one boy after another. I was left feeling filthy each time, and I was often taken advantage of. This led to my becoming depressed. Jehovah helped me to clean up my life, and I am now happily married to a fine man. But it's good that you publish such articles to help young men realize that what they do can hurt a girl for the rest of her life.

F.A.S., Germany

I feel moved to thank you for putting at least half the responsibility for unwed mothers where it belongs—with the fathers! Too many people believe that since only women get pregnant, nature indicates that it's the women's problem and that men do not have to take any responsibility. Continue sensitizing young men to the way God wants women to be treated.

J.M.O., Italy

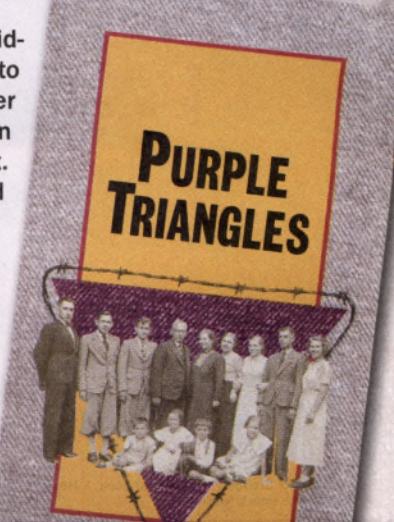


MAKING GOOD USE OF A POWERFUL VIDEO

WHEN she was just 12 years old, Tillie took advantage of an opportunity to give a witness at school. The class was studying World War II, and the subject of the Holocaust arose. Tillie told her teacher that not only Jews but also Jehovah's Witnesses were tortured and killed during this horrendous period. The teacher agreed to let Tillie bring the video *Purple Triangles* to class. Before showing the video, the teacher said to the class: "Because of the great number of Jews who were killed during the Holocaust, many others who were persecuted have been overlooked. Jehovah's Witnesses are among such groups."

The teacher was so impressed by the video that she lent it to another teacher to use in her class. Tillie remembered that her fourth grade teacher's brother had been killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. She took the video to that teacher too, and he viewed it that very evening.

In all, more than 60 people got to see *Purple Triangles*, and much interest was aroused. All of this took place because a young girl had the courage to speak up about her religion.—Psalm 8:2.



'It Fills the Need'



Even a glimpse into the complex world and intricate functions of each body cell leads to the question, How did all of this come about?

That was the conclusion of a woman from Osaka, Japan, regarding the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* She wrote:

"This book teaches one to get acquainted with the Creator through creation and the Bible. Up to chapter 5, it considers various facts about things created and shows that there is law and order evident among them, suggesting the need for an intelligence behind them."

"I have wanted some material that explains in more detail the wonders of creation. This book fills the need. . . . When reading about the cooperation between proteins and nucleic acid molecules in the cells, I felt that the precision is nothing short of a miracle."

