

Awake!

JUNE 2009



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Abortion

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World Youth Day 2008—the largest gathering ever held in Australia—was viewed worldwide on TV by some 500 million people. What light did it shed on the faith of young people?

Abortion

Not a trouble-free solution

BILL had grown up to believe that abortion was a serious sin, tantamount to murder. But his firm, decades-long stand softened in 1975 when this issue became personal. His girlfriend, Victoria, became pregnant, and Bill could not face the commitment of marriage and parenthood. "I quickly opted for the convenient solution," admitted Bill, "and told Victoria that she had to have an abortion."

What Bill called a convenient solution to an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy is not uncommon. A 2007 global study reported that in 2003 there were an estimated 42 million induced abortions worldwide. Women who have abortions come from every race and nationality, from a variety of religious backgrounds, and from every level of income, education, and age between puberty and menopause. If you were facing an unwanted pregnancy, how would you react? Why do so many choose abortion?

'All I Could See Was One Option'

"I had just gone through a scary pregnancy and a hard birth, and there was a mountain of monetary and family stress," explained a 35-year-old woman. "Then six weeks after the birth, I was pregnant again. We decided for abortion. In my heart I felt it was wrong, but all I could see was this one option."

Women seek abortions for a variety of reasons, ranging from financial problems to a failed, perhaps abusive, relationship that results in their not wanting any further ties with the man. Or the pregnancy may simply

not fit into the plans of the woman or the couple.

At times, abortion is chosen to protect a reputation. Such was true of the case reported on by Dr. Susan Wicklund in her book *This Common Secret—My Journey as an Abortion Doctor*. A patient of hers who was seeking an abortion confessed: "My parents are very religious. . . . If I have a baby out of wedlock, it would be a mark on them. It would say to all their friends that their daughter has sinned."

Dr. Wicklund then asked: "Okay, so you've sinned in their eyes, but how do they feel about abortion?" The girl confided: "Oh, abortion. That's totally unforgivable. But it's the lesser evil because it would be a secret. If I have an abortion, [my parents'] friends in church will never know."

Regardless of the situation, usually the decision to terminate a pregnancy deliberately is not an easy one. It is often intensely painful. But is abortion a trouble-free solution?

Consider the Consequences

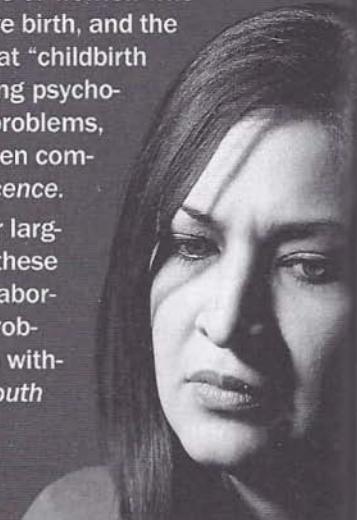
A 2004 research study of 331 Russian and 217 American women who had an induced abortion revealed that about half of both groups felt bad after the abortion. Nearly 50 percent of the Russians and almost 80 percent of the Americans felt "guilt" over the procedure. More than 60 percent of the American women were 'unable to forgive themselves.' Since guilt is such a pervasive problem—even among those who do not consider themselves religious—why do so many young women still have abortions?



GIVING BIRTH VERSUS HAVING AN ABORTION

A 2006 study reviewed the life history of scores of women who became pregnant as teenagers. Half of them gave birth, and the other half had abortions. The study concluded that "childbirth was associated with a lower likelihood of receiving psychological counseling services, less frequent sleep problems, and a lower probability of smoking marijuana when compared to abortion."—*Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

Another report provided "the results of the four largest record based studies in the world." What did these studies reveal? "Women with a known history of abortion experience higher rates of mental health problems of various forms when compared to women without a known abortion history."—*Report of the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion—2005*.



They often come under intense pressure to have an abortion. Parents, a mate, or well-meaning friends may encourage abortion as a lesser of two evils. This can lead to a hasty, ill-informed decision. "However, after the stressfulness of the decision and the procedure have ended," explained Dr. Priscilla Coleman, an expert on the mental-health risks of abortion, "women's cognitive abilities return to normal, often ushering in feelings of pronounced guilt, sadness, and regret."

This regret often centers on the question: Did the abortion terminate a life that already existed? A report by the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion concluded that many pregnant women considering an abor-

tion "were misled into thinking that nothing but 'tissue' was being removed, and relate that they would not have had an abortion if they were told the truth."

After an evaluation of the "stunning and heart-wrenching testimony" of 1,940 women who had abortions, the study concluded: "Many of these women are angered by grief at the loss of a child they were told never existed." It also stated that "the psychological harm of knowing she killed her child is often devastating."

But what is the truth? Does an abortion merely remove some tissue from a pregnant woman's body? Is an unborn child actually a living person while in the womb?

Awake!®

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

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When does a human life begin?

MY BIOLOGICAL mother was 17 years old and 7 1/2 months pregnant when she made the decision to have a saline abortion," explained Gianna.* She added: "I am the person she aborted. I lived instead of died."

This testimony was given by 19-year-old Gianna in 1996 before a U.S. government committee hearing on the subject of abortion. By the time Gianna had been inside her mother's womb for seven and a half months, her body parts were clearly developed. You probably agree that she was actually a *person*, since she continued her life as a person outside the womb.

Well, then, what about Gianna when she was a *five-week-old* embryo, measuring a third of an inch in length? True, her body parts were not yet fully formed, but the foundation for her nervous system, including her brain, had been established. She had a heart beating 80 times a minute that forced blood through vessels. So if Gianna was a person after seven

* A saline abortion involves the injection of a toxic salt solution into the mother's womb, which the baby swallows, usually causing death within two hours. The mother goes into labor about 24 hours later and delivers a dead or—in a few cases—dying baby.

and a half months in the womb, might one not logically conclude that she was a person at five weeks—although not as developed?

The Miracle of Conception

The development of all the parts of an embryo begins at conception, when the ovum, or egg cell, of the woman is fertilized by a sperm cell of the man. New advances in technology have enabled scientists to observe the amazing changes that take place in the nucleus of this one-celled fertilized egg. The molecules making up the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) of the father and mother combine to create a human life that never existed before.

That original single cell begins the truly miraculous process of constructing a fully formed human. The nature of this "construction" project is determined by our genes, which are segments of DNA. These control virtually everything about us. They determine our height, facial features, eye and hair color, and thousands of other traits.

Afterward, as that original cell divides, the complete genetic "blueprint" is duplicated into *every new cell*. Amazingly, each of these is programmed to develop into whatever kind of cell is needed. This includes heart tissue,

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

⁺ Audiocassettes also available.

⁺⁺ CD also available.

^{**} MP3 CD-ROM also available.

^o 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:** 65617 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, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsay Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

A five-week-old human embryo is not a mere piece of tissue—it has within it the foundation for all the organs of a grown person



(actual size)

brain cells, bone, skin, and even transparent tissue for our eyes. The initial programming within the original cell for the development of a unique new person has understandably often been referred to as "a miracle."

"The human being is fully programmed for human growth and development for his or her entire life at the one cell age," reported Dr. David Fu-Chi Mark, a celebrated molecular biologist. He concluded: "There can no longer be any doubt that each human being is totally unique from the very beginning of his or her life at fertilization."

A Person Inside the Womb?

From the time of conception in the womb, the child is, not just another part of the mother's tissue, but a separate person. Her body views it as a foreign object. It would be quickly rejected were it not for the "protected world" created in the mother's womb. This new human life—separated from the mother by protective housing—is a person with a unique DNA fingerprint.

Some argue that a woman's body spontaneously aborts many fertilized eggs because of abnormalities, so why shouldn't a doctor be able to abort a pregnancy? Yet, there is a big difference between spontaneous death and deliberate homicide. In one South American country, 71 out of 1,000 children die within

their first year. But just because so many die prematurely, would it be acceptable to kill a child under the age of one? Of course not!

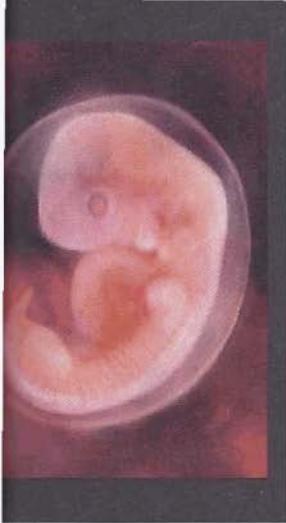
Significantly, the Bible describes a human life as existing in the womb. The psalmist David wrote concerning God: "Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing." (Psalm 139:16) David does not simply say "*an embryo*" but "*the embryo of ME*," thus accurately revealing that David's life began when he was conceived, long before his birth. Under inspiration by God, David also revealed that at conception the development of his body parts was according to a plan, or detailed 'written' instructions, which made him the person he was.

Please note also that the Bible does not say that a woman conceives a piece of tissue. Instead, it states: "*An able-bodied man has been conceived!*" (Job 3:3) This too indicates that according to the Bible, a child exists as a person from the time of his conception. Yes, that is when human life begins.

Why we did not have an abortion

VICTORIA, mentioned in the first article, told her boyfriend, Bill, that she would not have an abortion. "I felt there was a life inside of me," Victoria said. "Realizing that if I stayed with Bill, he would not support me during my pregnancy, I left."

Later, however, Bill altered his thinking and asked Victoria to marry him. But caring for their newborn son seemed overwhelming. "We had no car, no money, few clothes, and very little of anything," explained Victoria. "Bill had a low-paying job, and we were stuck



in low-rent housing, but we persisted."

Others have also faced difficult circumstances because of an unintended pregnancy. Yet, they too have refused to get an abortion. What enabled them to remain resolute and deal with the stress of rearing an unplanned or even unwanted child? The key

was following pearls of wisdom from the Bible.

Avoid Haste—Make Practical Plans

The Bible wisely observes: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage, but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." —Proverbs 21:5.

For Connie, a mother of three boys, including one who was disabled, the thought of another child seemed overwhelming. "We didn't need another mouth to feed," she said. "So we considered an abortion." But before making a hasty decision, she confided in Kay, a workmate. Kay helped her to see that she was carrying an unborn person, a realization that changed her thinking.

Connie, however, needed practical help to form a plan. Since Connie had an aunt in the area, Kay suggested that Connie contact her. When the aunt was reached, she was glad to help. In addition, Connie's husband took on some extra work, and they moved to a less expensive apartment. They thereby managed to care for this new arrival.

Kay also helped Connie to locate some agencies that provide assistance to those who experience an unplanned pregnancy. In many countries, there are such agencies that provide help for new mothers in need. The Internet or local phone directories, which are usually available in most public libraries, can be

used to locate these. Seeking help may take real effort, but it is "the plans of the *diligent one*" that bring success.

Face the Reality of a Human Life

"As regards anyone wise," says the Bible, "his eyes are in his head; but the stupid one is walking on in sheer darkness." —Ecclesiastes 2:14.

A truly wise woman does not shut her eyes to reality and 'walk in the dark,' so to speak. She uses the 'eyes in her head,' which in effect serve her intellectual powers. This enables her accurately to evaluate the consequences of her actions. Thus, in contrast with one who closes her eyes to the reality of what is taking place in her womb, the wise woman acts with heartfelt compassion to protect her living embryo.

Stephanie, a pregnant girl who was considering an abortion, was shown a sonogram of the two-month-old child within her. "I burst into tears," said Stephanie. "I thought: Why would I want to kill something that's living?"

Another pregnant but unwed young woman, named Denise, also faced the reality that she carried within her a living person. When her boyfriend gave her money and told her to "take care of it," Denise responded: "An abortion? I could never do that!" So she refused to kill her baby.



Seeing a sonogram of the two-month-old child within her helped Stephanie decide

(Outline added)

What Fear of People Can Do

If pressured by others to have an abortion, those who may initially consider terminating their pregnancy are wise to reflect on the Bible proverb: "Being afraid of people can get you into trouble, but if you trust the *LORD*, you will



Victoria and Lance

**Victoria and Bill today,
with Lance and his family**

be safe.”—Proverbs 29:25, New Century Version.

Seventeen-year-old Monica became pregnant by her boyfriend just as she was about to start business school. Her mother, a widow with five children, was devastated. She had wanted her daughter to learn a trade so she could rise out of their poverty. In desperation, the mother insisted that Monica have an abortion. “When the doctor asked if I wanted to go through with the abortion,” explained Monica, “I told him ‘No!’”

Bewildered at seeing Monica’s promising future disappear and contemplating the stress of another child, her mother forced her to leave home. Monica was able to stay with an aunt. After a few weeks, her mother relented and allowed her to return home to have her child. Monica’s mother helped her to care for Leon, the new arrival, and grew to love the little boy deeply.

The pressure on a married woman named Robin came from a different source. “When I became pregnant, my doctor treated me for a kidney infection before checking for pregnancy,” said Robin. “I was told there was a good chance that the baby would be born severely retarded.” The doctor then urged her to have an abortion. “I explained to him the Bible’s view of life,” Robin related. “I told him that I could not possibly have an abortion.”

While the doctor’s concern was understandable, there was no immediate threat to Robin’s life.* “When my daughter was born and tests were taken,” added Robin, “they showed that she was only slightly retarded with mild cerebral palsy. She functions quite well. Now at age 15, she is reading better and better. She means so much to me, and I thank Jehovah many times a day for her.”

Friendship With God Has Power

The Bible states: “*The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him.*”—Psalm 25:14, American Standard Version.

What influences the decision of many who refuse to have an abortion is their consideration of how their Creator feels about the matter. Enjoying friendship with God, and doing what pleases him, is their paramount concern. This concern is what strongly influenced Victoria, mentioned earlier. “I firmly believed that God gives life,” she said, “and I didn’t have the right to take the life he had given.”

When Victoria began to study the Bible in earnest, her friendship with God grew. She noted: “Making the decision to keep my child

* If at the time of childbirth a choice must be made between the life of the mother and that of the child, it is up to the individuals directly involved to make that choice. However, advances in medical procedures in many lands have made this situation very rare.

made me feel much closer to God and made me want to please him in all aspects of my life. When I prayed for his direction, everything else just fell into place."

Friendship with God, the Source of life, deepens our respect for the life in the womb. (Psalm 36:9) Moreover, God can provide "power beyond what is normal" to help a woman and her family cope with any unplanned pregnancy. (2 Corinthians 4:7) Looking back, how do those who showed respect for God's view of life feel about their decision?

No Regrets

These parents are not plagued by feelings of guilt or an unresolved sense of sadness and loss. In time, they truly viewed "the fruitage of the belly" as a reward, not a curse! (Psalm 127:3) Connie, mentioned earlier, acknowledged this just two hours after giving birth! Excitedly, she called her workmate Kay and told her how thrilled she was with the prospect of rearing her little girl. Bursting with joy, Connie added: "It is so true that God blesses those who do what pleases him."

Why is acting in harmony with God's view of life so beneficial? Because as the *Source of life*, God sets out his laws and standards in the Bible "for [our] good," or "for [our] own well-being."—Deuteronomy 10:13; *New Revised Standard Version*.

According to Victoria and Bill, whose experience introduces both this article and the opening one, the decision *not* to have an abortion was the turning point of their lives. They explain it this way: "We were heavy into drug abuse and probably would have died had we continued. But respecting the life of our unborn child made us stop and think about our own lives. With the help of Jehovah's Witnesses, we changed."

Lance, their son, is now nearly 34 years old and has been married for over 12 years. Lance explains: "From childhood, my parents taught me to make decisions based on

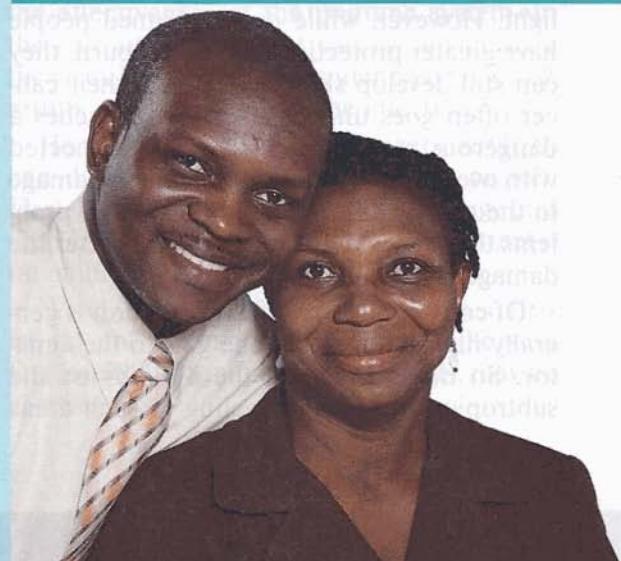
the Bible. This has benefited me, my wife, and my child to the point of feeling that we couldn't be happier." His father, who initially wanted Victoria to have an abortion, said, "We shudder when we realize how close we came to not having our precious son."

Consider again Monica, who refused an abortion in spite of her mother's pressure. "Two weeks after my son's birth," she reports, "I was contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses and learned how to bring my life into full harmony with God's laws. I soon began to teach my son Leon the value of obeying God, and over time he developed a strong love for God. Leon is now a traveling minister of Jehovah's Witnesses."

Reflecting on what his mother did, Leon said: "Knowing that she had so much love for me that she allowed me to live despite the pressure she was under made me want to use my life in the best way I could to show my appreciation to God for this wonderful gift."

Many who have come to understand God's view of life have no regrets for their decision to preserve the life of the child they now treasure. They can say from hearts brimming with gratitude, "We did *not* have an abortion!"

Monica and her son Leon are deeply thankful that she resisted the pressure to abort him 36 years ago





SHOULD YOU WORRY ABOUT Sun Exposure?

"As ozone depletion becomes more marked and as people around the world engage more in sun-seeking behaviour, the risk of developing health complications from over-exposure to UV [ultraviolet] radiation is becoming a substantial public health concern."—DR. LEE JONG-WOOK, FORMER DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

MARTIN, a fair-skinned man from Northern Europe, fell asleep in the shade of a beach umbrella on the Italian coast. When he awoke, he found that the shade had moved and that his legs were no longer white but an angry red. "I had to go to the hospital emergency room," Martin explains. "My legs were as stiff and swollen as two sausages. In the two or three days that followed, I was in terrible pain. I could neither stand nor bend my legs. The skin was so tight that I was afraid it would burst."

Many believe that only light-skinned people like Martin need to fear exposure to sunlight. However, while darker-skinned people have greater protection against sunburn, they can still develop skin cancer. And their cancer often goes undetected until it reaches a dangerous stage. Other dangers connected with overexposure to the sun include damage to the eyes and to the immune system, problems that may not appear until years after the damage is done.

Of course, the level of UV radiation is generally higher the closer one gets to the equator. So those living in the Tropics or the subtropics and those traveling to such areas

should take extra precautions. One reason for doing so is that the atmosphere's protective ozone layer has reportedly become thinner in recent years. Let's examine some of the potential dangers posed by overexposure to the sun.

Eye Damage

As many as 15 million people earth wide are blind because of cataracts, the world's leading cause of blindness. Cataracts form when proteins in an eye's lens unravel, tangle, and accumulate pigments that cloud the lens. Cataracts are one of the long-term effects of exposure to UV radiation. In fact, it is estimated that up to 20 percent of cataracts are caused or worsened by chronic sun exposure.

Sadly, the so-called cataract belt near the equator includes developing countries where the majority of people are poor. Thus, millions of poor people in Africa, Asia, Central America, and South America are blind because they cannot afford to have an operation to remove their cataracts.

Damage to the Skin

One third of all cancers diagnosed worldwide are skin cancers. Some 130,000 new

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Limit your exposure during the midday hours between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., when UV radiation is particularly intense.
- Try to stay in the shade.
- Cover your arms and legs with tightly woven, loose-fitting clothes.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your eyes, ears, face, and the back of your neck.
- Good-quality wraparound sunglasses, or sunglasses with side panels, that provide 99 to 100 percent UVA and UVB (categories of ultraviolet light) protection will greatly reduce the risk of eye damage.
- Use—and liberally reapply every two hours—a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 15.
- Since sunlamps, sun beds, and tanning parlors use UV radiation, which may damage the skin, WHO recommends avoiding them.
- Be careful to protect babies and young children, whose skin is particularly delicate.
- Never fall asleep in the sun.
- If you develop a mole, a freckle, or a spot that you are concerned about, see your doctor.

cases of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, are reported each year. And between two and three million new cases of other skin cancers, such as basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas, occur. It is estimated that some 66,000 people die each year from skin cancer.*

How does sunlight damage your skin? The most common and best-known acute effect of overexposure to the sun is sunburn, or erythema. Its immediate effects can last for days and may include blistering and peeling.

When sunburn occurs, UV radiation kills most of the cells in the outer layer of the skin and damages deeper layers. Any change in the color of a person's skin as a result of sun exposure is a sign of damage. Cancer can result when damage occurs to the DNA of genes that control the growth and division of skin cells. Sunlight also alters the texture of the skin and weakens its elasticity. This leads to premature wrinkling and sagging, as well as easy bruising.

* For a discussion of skin cancer, see *Awake!* of June 8, 2005, pages 3-10.

Immune-System Damage

Studies have shown that when the skin absorbs too much UV radiation, the activities of certain parts of a person's immune system are adversely affected. This may reduce the body's ability to defend itself against some diseases. Even moderate sun exposure has been known to increase the risk of bacterial, fungal, parasitic, or viral infections. Many people notice that being in the sun causes them recurrent eruptions of cold sores, or herpes simplex. A World Health Organization (WHO) report explains that one category of ultraviolet light, known as UVB, "appears to reduce the effectiveness of the immune system—in the case of cold sores it can no longer keep the virus Herpes simplex under control which results in re-activation of the infection."

Hence, when it comes to cancers, sunlight can deliver a devastating one-two punch. First, by directly provoking DNA damage and then by reducing the immune system's natural ability to deal with such damage.

Wisely, we need to take precautions so that we do not overexpose ourselves to the sun. Our health, and indeed our very lives, may be at stake.

Thirty Years of Underground Translation

AS TOLD BY ONA MOCKUTĖ

In April 1962, I was on trial in a packed courtroom in Klaipeda, Lithuania, accused of crimes against society. The previous October, I had been arrested and charged with religious activity that was considered a crime against the Soviet State. Let me explain what led up to my arrest and subsequent imprisonment for doing underground translation of publications of Jehovah's Witnesses.



My trial was featured in a Soviet newspaper in 1962

I WAS born in 1930 in western Lithuania, not far from the Baltic Sea. Mother had prayed before giving birth to me that her child would become a nun. Yet, she once told me: "In no way can I pray in front of St. Peter or other lifeless idols." Remembering this, I avoided kneeling in church, although I would do so before a crucifix when I was on the road going home from school.

Later, during World War II—from 1939 to 1945—I saw indescribable brutality, and it weighed heavily on my heart. One day during the German occupation, I was berry picking in the forest with my aunt. We happened upon two large pits where we saw recently spattered blood. Knowing that a group of Jews, including my school friends Tese and Sara, had recently been murdered, we concluded that we had stumbled upon their mass grave. Stunned, I cried out: "God, you are so good! But why do you allow such horrible atrocities?"

In 1949, I graduated from high school in Klaipeda near our home, and after that I con-

tinued my study of music. In 1950, I joined a student underground political movement but was soon betrayed and arrested along with 12 others. I was imprisoned in Klaipeda, and while there, I first met one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Learning Bible Truths

A middle-aged woman was shoved into our prison cell. She smiled kindly at us seven young women. I asked her: "My dear lady, prisoners are usually sad when they are put into prison, but you are smiling! May I ask why you are here?"

"Because of the truth," she answered.

"But what is truth?" I asked.

The woman's name was Lydia Peldszus. She was a German who had been arrested because of her faith as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. We had many spiritual discussions. The heartwarming Bible truths Lydia taught us not only changed the course of my life but also the lives of three others who shared the cell with us.

How My Bible Knowledge Grew

For my underground political activities against the Soviet occupation, I was sentenced to 25 years in prison, as well as another 5 in exile. Through the Witnesses I met during my years in prisons, as well as in work camps in the Siberian expanse, my knowledge about God and his purposes grew. These Witnesses, like Lydia, had been punished for their beliefs.

Besides growing in Bible knowledge during those years, I also shared my faith with others. Although I did not have opportunity to get baptized in symbol of my dedication to God, other inmates and prison officials considered me to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1958, after serving eight years of my sentence, I was released. I returned to Lithuania in poor health, yet strong in my faith in Jehovah.

Underground Translation Begins

There were then only a few Witnesses left in Lithuania. The others were in prison or in exile in Siberia. In 1959, two Witnesses returned from Siberia and suggested that I translate our Bible publications into Lithuanian. I gladly accepted the challenge, viewing it as a privilege.

In March 1960, I began translating, and in July, I was secretly baptized in the Dubysa River. Because of opposition from the KGB (Soviet State Security Committee), I couldn't find work to support myself, so I lived with my parents, who were favorable toward my beliefs. I cared for cows that belonged to my father and to other neighbors. While looking after the animals, I also did translating. I had a beautiful office as I sat on a stump of a tree surrounded by a carpet of green grass. The ceiling over my head was the blue sky, and my lap served as my desk.

However, I came to see that translating in the open pasture wasn't safe, since I might easily be noticed by KGB agents or their informants. So when hideouts became available

in which I could do translating, I moved out of my father's house. Sometimes I worked inside barns where farm animals were on one side of an enclosure and I was on the other side hammering away on my typewriter.

There was no electricity, hence I worked while there was daylight. To camouflage the plunking of the manual typewriter, a specially built windmill whirred away outside the barn. When it got dark, I would go inside the house to eat supper. Then I returned to the barn and slept on a bed of hay.

In October 1961, along with two other Witnesses, I was arrested when my work promoting religious activity was discovered. This led

The heartwarming Bible truths Lydia taught four of us while we were in prison changed our lives

to the trial in 1962 that I mentioned at the beginning of this account. The authorities granted us a public hearing, and we rejoiced to be able to give a witness to many observers. (Mark 13:9) I received a three-year sentence and was sent to a prison in Tallinn, Estonia. To my knowledge, I was at that time the only person incarcerated there for my faith. City administrators visited me, and I shared my beliefs with them.

Resuming Translation Work

Upon release from prison in Estonia in 1964, I returned to Lithuania. There I continued translating our publications, generally from Russian into Lithuanian. The workload

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- Depression—Help for Sufferers
- The Lazy Life of a Sloth
- Is It Wrong to Change Your Religion?

Some of the Bible literature I translated at the risk of my freedom

was considerable. Although others helped, I served as the sole full-time translator for the Lithuanian language. I often worked seven days a week from sunrise to sunset. Without Jehovah's help, I would never have had the strength to do that.

Realizing how vital the work was, I always tried to be cautious. Christian brothers and sisters often risked their own safety, as well as that of their family, to hide me, provide me with physical sustenance, and protect me. Such cooperation drew us very close together. While I was working, the family with whom I was staying would be on the lookout for those who might report me. As a warning signal, someone would hit the heating pipes twice with an iron object. Upon hearing that warning, I quickly hid anything that might give away the work I was doing.

If we found that the house where I was working was being watched, I quickly moved to another location. Having a typewriter without official approval was then a serious crime, so someone else would take my typewriter to the new workplace. Then, usually during the night, I would leave for that new location.

Jehovah truly protected me. Officials, although unable to come up with any evidence, knew what I was doing. For example, in 1973, when eight of Jehovah's Witnesses were on trial, the prosecutor called me in for questioning. He asked me straight out, "Mockuté, how

much literature have you printed throughout the years?"

I replied that I couldn't answer that question. He then asked, "Well, to what kind of question can you give an answer?"

"To a question that is not related to this work," I replied.

Winds of Change

Toward the end of the 1980's, the situation in Lithuania began to change. It was no longer necessary to hide from government agents. So, in 1990, others began to do the translating work. Then, on September 1, 1992, a small translation office was established in Klaipeda, the city I ultimately settled in.

Altogether, I worked as a translator for 30 years in 16 locations. I didn't have a home of my own. But how delighted I am to see the fruitage of our work! Today there are about 3,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lithuania. And the work of translating that I once did while hiding in barns and lofts is now carried on in the comfortable Lithuania branch office near the city of Kaunas.

I still remember the remarkable encounter in that cold prison cell almost 60 years ago in Klaipeda. It changed my life! I will always be thankful to our great Creator, Jehovah, that I found the truth about him and his purposes and that I dedicated my life to him to do his will.

Lydia introduced
me to Bible truths
in prison



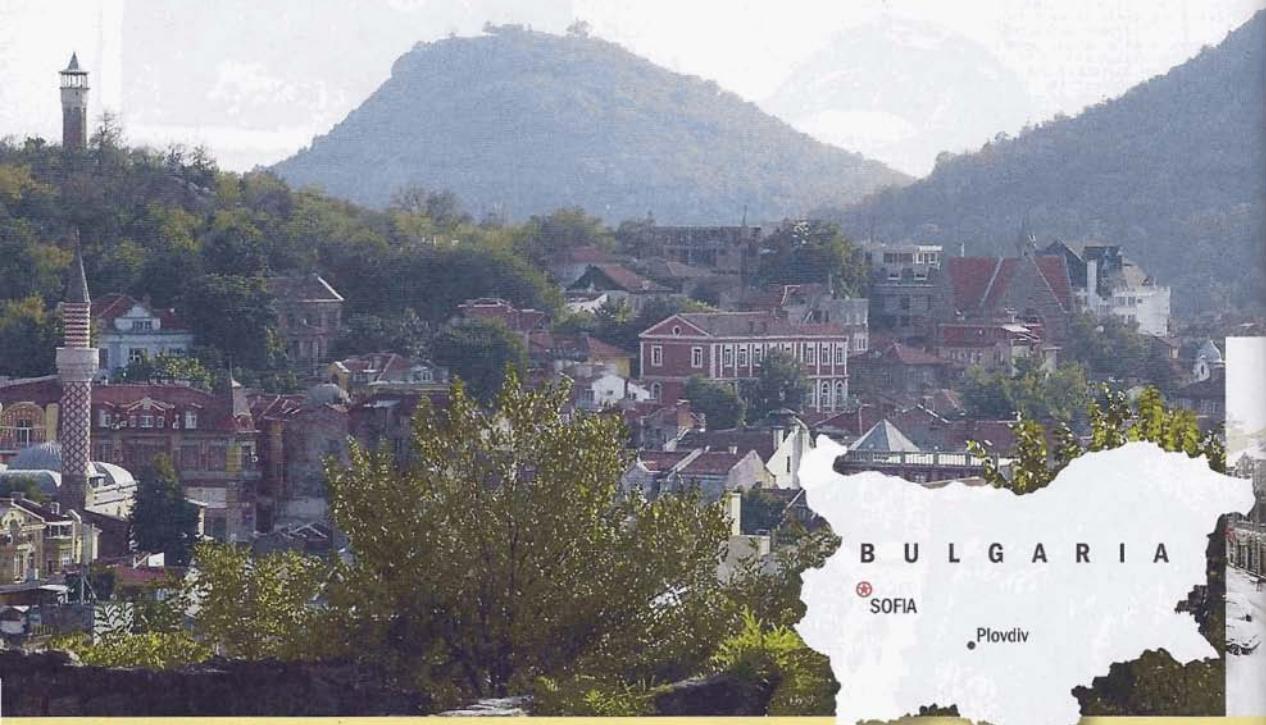
Two Witnesses (at left) taught me more
about God while in a prison camp in
Khabarovsk region, Russia, 1956

A typewriter I used when
working under ban



Plovdiv A MODERN CITY WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BULGARIA



PLOVDIV is older than Rome, Carthage, or Constantinople. Some 350,000 people live in this city, which sprawls over seven hills in south-central Bulgaria.

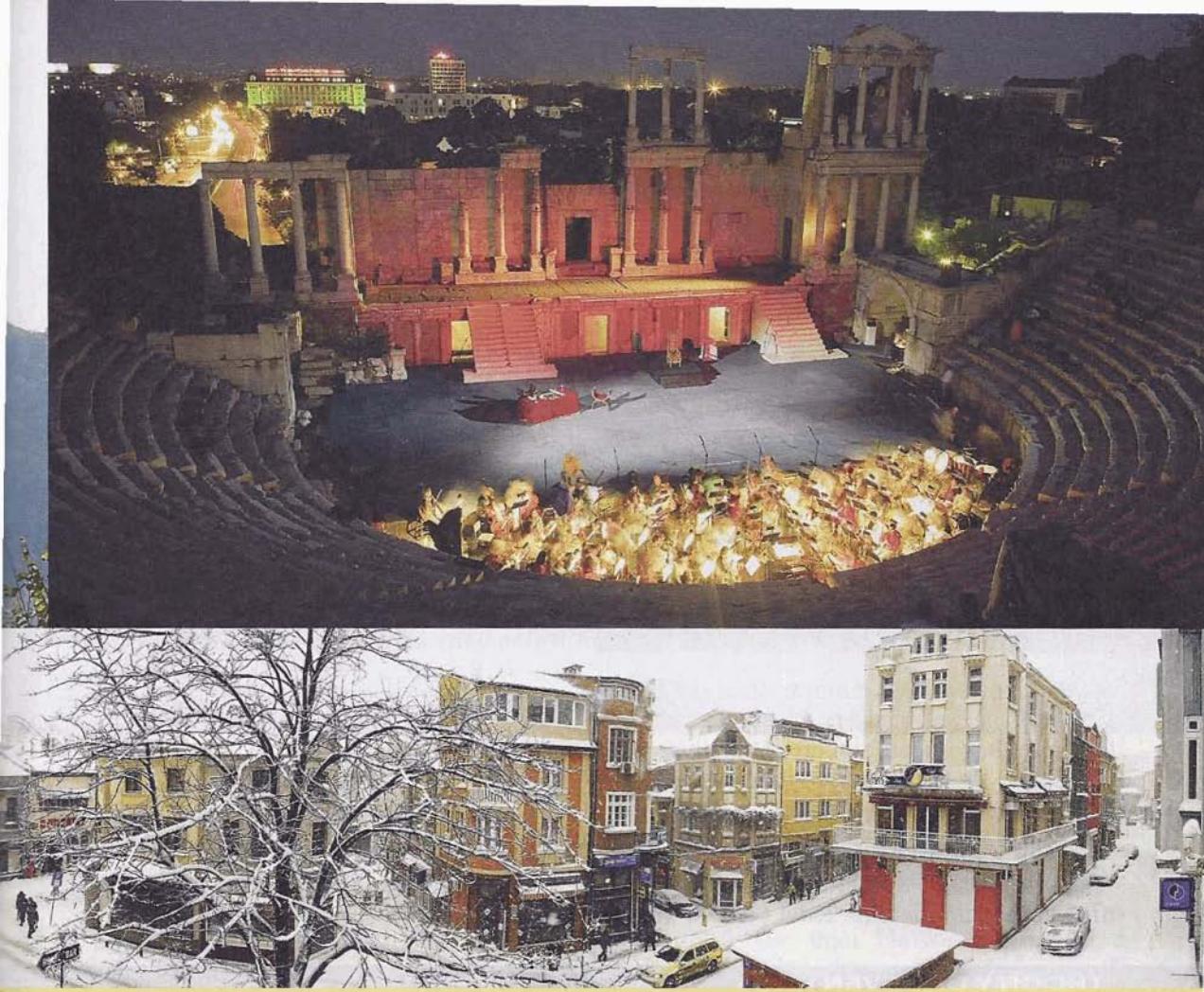
Walk down the city's ancient streets, and you will see abundant evidence of its glorious, tumultuous past. Edifices built by the Thracians, a feared race that lived hundreds of years before the Common Era, can be seen, as well as Greek pillars, Roman theaters, and Turkish minarets.

The “Loveliest of All Cities”

Archaeological discoveries in and around the city reveal that it was inhabited well be-

fore the first millennium B.C.E. Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that before the fourth century B.C.E., a Thracian fortified settlement named Eumolpias existed at the site of present-day Plovdiv. In 342 B.C.E., Eumolpias was conquered by Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Philip changed the city's name to Philippopolis.

When the Romans gained control of the city in 46 C.E., they called the city Trimontium and made it the capital of Thrace. The Romans were eager to hold this city because it straddled the Via Diagonalis, an important crossroad of the Balkan region. The Romans



added a stadium, an amphitheater (seen above), numerous baths, and many other typically Roman buildings.

Lucian of Samosata described the natural beauty of this city, which was set among three hills at the base of the Rhodope Mountains. (See the box "The City of Seven Hills," on page 18.) It lay near the Maritsa River, with the fertile Thracian plain spreading out before it. Lucian wrote that Trimontium was "the greatest and loveliest of all cities!"

After the decline of Rome in what came to be called the Dark Ages, Slavic peoples settled the area. Over the next few centuries, crusaders looted the town on four separate

occasions. Then, in the 14th century, a political change took place when the city fell to the Turks. They renamed the city Philibé and remained the city's masters until 1878. The Jumaya Mosque with its minaret and sundial still stands as a reminder of that time.

When Russia defeated Turkey in 1878, the city's name was changed from Philibé to Plovdiv. The city was given an economic boost in 1892 when it hosted a trade fair. From then on, Plovdiv became the main trading center of Bulgaria. During the second world war, the Nazis briefly controlled the city but were ousted by the Soviets in 1944. Then, in 1989, Plovdiv slipped from the grip



of yet another mighty empire when the Soviet Union collapsed. Some of Plovdiv's past masters may have been sincere; still, they were hampered by the imperfections that characterize human rule.

The Good News Comes to Plovdiv

As early as 1938, a local corporation with the name Nabludatelna Kula (Watch Tower)

was formed and registered. It printed and distributed Bibles and Bible literature in Bulgaria. Despite efforts by the Communist government to oppress them, Jehovah's Witnesses kept on sharing the good news of a coming perfect heavenly government with the residents of Plovdiv. (Matthew 24:14) A few began to respond to the message. Now, there are over 200 in Plovdiv who have taken an active stand for Jehovah, and they are organized into two congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The majority of these Witnesses are Bulgarians. But, true to the multinational history of this city, among them are also people from many other nations. There are Americans, British, Canadians, Italians, Moldovans, and Poles. Together, these tell their neighbors about the prospect of being ruled by a perfect administration. At that time, not only the inhabitants of Plovdiv but people of the whole world will enjoy security, "each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."

—Micah 4:4.

"THE CITY OF SEVEN HILLS"

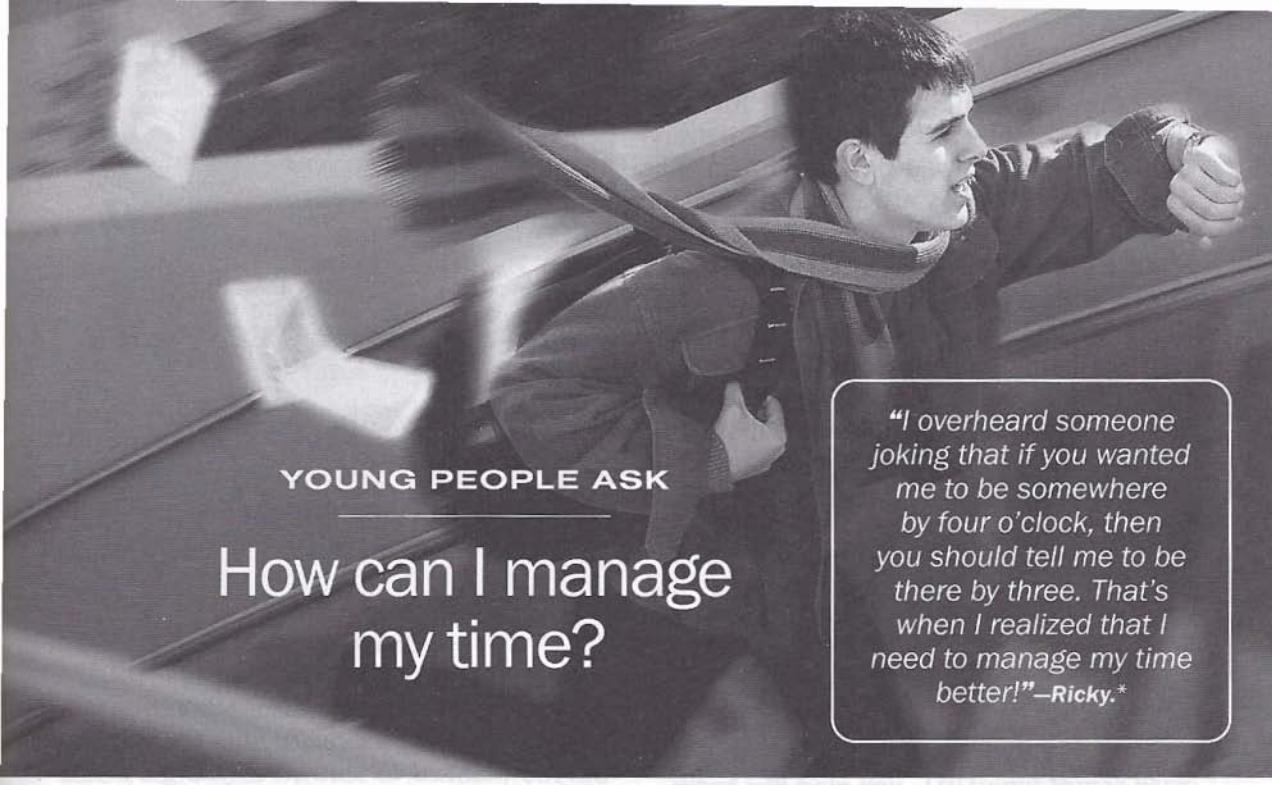
A modern visitor to Plovdiv may find it hard to locate the city's famed seven hills, or tepes, as they are called. A hundred years ago, one of the hills, Markovo Tepe, was demolished as the city expanded. Six hills remain as silent witnesses of Plovdiv's ancient past.

Three are obvious to the

visitor: Bunardjik Tepe, Djendem Tepe, and Sahat Tepe, called such by the Turks because of the clock tower built on this hill. Trimontium, as the Romans called Plovdiv, comprises the three remaining hills: Djambaz Tepe, the largest and highest hill; Taksim Tepe; and Nebet Tepe, which in Turkish means "Guard Hill."

A stroll through the area of Trimontium takes one into the heart of Plovdiv's past, from the ancient ruins and walls of Philippopolis to the still-functioning Roman theater. Of interest too are the well-preserved houses of the Bulgarian National Revivalist era that line the narrow cobbled streets.





YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

How can I manage my time?

HOW many more hours could you use in a day? What would you use the extra time for?

- To hang out with friends
- To sleep
- To study
- To exercise
- Other.....

Although it would be great to get a few more hours in the day, that's not going to happen! So, what can you do? Many young people have learned that managing their time has helped them to find those few extra hours they so desperately need. They've also noticed that being in control of their time has reduced their stress, improved their grades, and gained them more trust from their parents. Let's see how time management can work for you.

Challenge #1 Making a Schedule

What might stop you. Just the thought of scheduling makes you feel trapped! You like

*"I overheard someone joking that if you wanted me to be somewhere by four o'clock, then you should tell me to be there by three. That's when I realized that I need to manage my time better!"—Ricky.**

to be spontaneous, and you don't want every minute of your life controlled by a planner.

Why do it anyway. King Solomon wrote: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage." (Proverbs 21:5) Solomon was no doubt a busy man. He was a husband, a father, and a king—*likely all before he was 20 years old!* And his life got busier after that. Similarly, your life is busy now. But probably it will become even more hectic as you get older. Better that you get organized sooner rather than later!

What your peers say. "About six months ago, I started planning my schedule regularly. I was trying to make things easier, and having a schedule seemed to do the trick!"—Joey.

"Lists help keep me on track. When I have an extra-heavy load, my mom and I write it all down to figure out how we can help each other reach our goals."—Mallory.

What will help you. Look at it this way: Suppose you're going on a road trip. Each family member randomly throws his or her

* Names in this article have been changed.

bags into the trunk of the car. It looks as though there won't be enough room for everything. What could you do? You might take everything out and start again, putting the biggest bags in first. Progressively, space is found for the smaller bags.

The same is true with your life. If you start filling up your time with smaller things, you risk not being able to fit in the important things. Make space for the big things first, and you'll be amazed at how much more time you'll have for the rest!—Philippians 1:10.

What are the most important things you need to do?

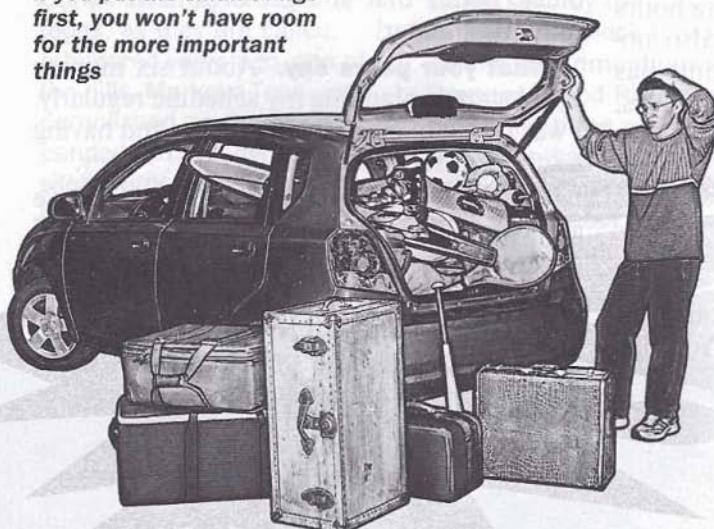


Now go back and prioritize—number the things you need to do in order of importance. If you get the big things done first, you may be surprised at how much time you will have left over to take care of the little things. But, remember, it doesn't work the other way around!

What you can do. Get a pocket planner, and prioritize what you need to do. On the other hand, perhaps one of the following alternatives below would work for you.

- Cell-phone calendar
- Small notepad
- Computer calendar
- Desk calendar

If you put the small things first, you won't have room for the more important things



**In a week's time,
youths between the
ages of 8 and 18 spent
their hours this way:**

17 with their parents

30 at school

44 watching TV, playing video games, instant messaging, and listening to music



Challenge #2 Sticking to a Schedule

What might stop you. After school you just want to relax and watch TV for a few minutes. Or you planned to study, but you get a text message inviting you to a movie. The movie won't wait, but you can put off studying until tonight. 'Besides,' you tell yourself, 'I seem to do better under pressure.'

Why do it anyway. You may obtain a better grade if you study when your mind is more alert. Plus, don't you already have enough pressure to deal with? Why add to it by cramming for a test late at night? What will the next morning be like? You may oversleep, feel more stress, have to rush out the door, and possibly be late for school.—Proverbs 6:10, 11.

What your peers say. "I love watching TV, playing the guitar, and being with friends. These things aren't wrong; but sometimes they push the more important things back, and I end up rushing."—Julian.

What will help you. Don't just schedule things you have to do—schedule things you enjoy. "It's easier to do what I have to,

WHERE DOES MY TIME GO?

Add up the hours you spend each week

watching TV:

playing video games:

using the computer:

listening to music:

Total:

Hours I can easily
use for more
important things:

knowing I have enjoyable things planned later," says Julian.

Another idea: Have something to aim for, and then set little goals along the way to make sure you're still on track. Sixteen-year-old Joey, mentioned earlier, says: "I would like to be a full-time Bible teacher. That goal helps me stick to my schedule now in preparation for an even busier life later."

What you can do. What are one or two realistic goals that you could achieve within the next six months?

.....

What is a realistic goal you could achieve within the next two years, and what do you need to start doing now to reach that goal?

.....

TO THINK ABOUT

- How many hours of sleep do you need to have to perform best?
- Who might you ask to help you with your schedule?
- If you already use a schedule, what adjustments might you need to make?

Challenge #3 Being Neat and Organized

What might stop you. You're not sure how being neat and organized has anything to do with managing your time better. Besides, being messy seems so much easier. Cleaning your room can be done tomorrow—or not at all! You don't mind the mess, so it's really not a big deal. Or is it?

Why do it anyway. Having everything neat and orderly will save you time when you are looking for your things. This will also give you much-needed peace of mind.—1 Corinthians 14:40.

What your peers say. "Sometimes when I don't have time to put my clothes away, things I need find a way of getting lost under all the mess!"—Mandy.

"I couldn't find my wallet for a week. I got pretty stressed over that. I finally found it when I cleaned my room."—Frank.

What will help you. Try to put things back in their place *as soon as you can*. Doing things *regularly* rather than waiting until clutter gets out of control will make cleaning quicker and finding things easier.

What you can do. Try making neatness a habit. Keep everything neater, and see if it makes life easier.

Start small—start *today!* Which suggestions from this article were most helpful to you?

.....
I'll try these tips for week(s) and see if they help.

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

Should You Be Afraid of the Dead?

Members of the Annang tribe in Nigeria believe that if the dead are not buried with appropriate praise and recognition, their souls will bring trouble—including death—to family members. Some Chinese also believe that if burial traditions are not followed, the soul of dead ones will attack and even kill others.

THE BELIEF that at death something leaves the body—the soul, the spirit, the ghost—is commonplace in many cultures throughout the world. Many also believe that this soul or spirit can interfere in the affairs of family members or friends.

Yet, is there really some conscious entity that lives on after a person dies? And can that “something” harm the living? What is the Bible’s viewpoint?

Are the Dead Conscious?

The Bible declares that the dead are “conscious of nothing at all.” It also says that the dead are “impotent in death.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Isaiah 26:14) Regarding the first man, Adam, God’s Word explains: “Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and *the man came to be a living soul.*”—Genesis 2:7.

Note that Adam was created a soul, that is, a living person. According to the Bible, Adam was not given a soul that could live apart from his body. So when Adam sinned, he died. He became a “dead soul.” (Numbers 6:6) “The soul that is sinning—it itself will die,” the Bible also says. (Ezekiel 18:4) All of us inherited sin, or imperfection, from the first man, Adam. So when we die, the soul dies.—Romans 5:12.

When the Bible describes the condition of the dead, it does not use mysterious terms, but it uses expressions we can understand,

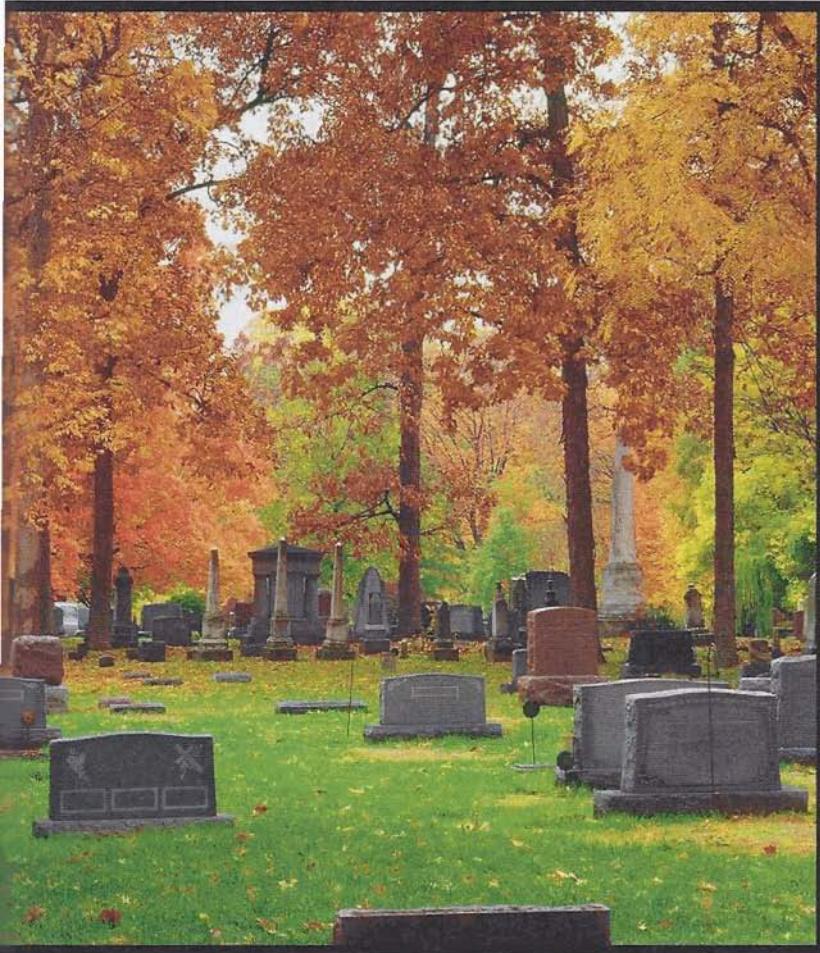
such as “fall asleep in death.” (Psalm 13:3) Once Jesus said concerning a 12-year-old girl: “She did not die but is sleeping.” People “began to laugh at him scornfully because they knew she had died.” Yet, the Bible explains that Jesus woke her from the sleep of death.—Luke 8:51-54.

It was similar when Lazarus died. Jesus told his disciples that he was going to visit Lazarus “to awaken him from sleep.” The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant, so “Jesus said to them outspokenly: ‘Lazarus has died.’” The apostle Paul too spoke of ones ‘who had fallen asleep in death’ and said that in God’s due time, they would be brought back to life.—John 11:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

Significantly, nowhere does the Bible teach that a soul lives on after an individual dies. So there is no basis for fear of the dead. What, then, is responsible for the common belief that some part of a human lives on after death? And what is behind the fear that the dead can harm the living?

The Lie—The Deception

False religions have promoted the idea that at death humans do not really die. Early in human history, the teaching of the immortality of the soul gained worldwide acceptance. As a result, at the death of some rulers—such as the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt—their slaves were killed so that the ruler would have their services in a future life.



Evil spirit creatures, not dead people, delight in harassing humans

in harassing and frightening people.—Luke 9:37-43; Ephesians 6:11, 12.

The Scriptures speak of Satan as “the father of the lie,” who “keeps transforming himself into an angel of light.” He and his demons are “misleading the entire inhabited earth.” (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Revelation 12:9) Satan, in fact, is behind the lie that the soul is immortal and can harm the living.

Believers of the Bible, however, are protected from being deceived by such lies. They have come to know the truth about

Many people have been harassed by what they have been led to believe are the souls, or spirits, of the dead. They are convinced that such harassment has come from the unappeased souls of dead relatives and others. Yet, as the Scriptures clearly show, this is not true. Invisible spirit forces called demons are behind such attacks, and they delight

Satan’s attempts to deceive people into believing that the dead can communicate with the living. The fact is, as the Bible says: “The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Truly, God’s Word contains liberating truths about the condition of the dead!—John 8:32.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Are the dead conscious of anything?—Ecclesiastes 9:5; Isaiah 26:14.
- What is responsible for the common belief that some part of a human lives on after death?—John 8:44.
- Where can we go to find the truth about the condition of the dead?
—John 8:32; 17:17.



Catholic Youth Urged to Bear Witness

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN AUSTRALIA

LAST July Roman Catholics from around the world converged on Sydney, Australia, to celebrate World Youth Day 2008, a religious event sponsored by the Catholic Church.

Flag-waving visitors, or pilgrims, from 170 nations thronged the streets, cheering, singing, and spreading a carnival atmosphere across the city. Thousands of spectators lined Sydney Harbor to glimpse Pope Benedict XVI, who arrived by boat accompanied by 12 other colorful vessels. Some 500 million people worldwide watched the spectacle live on TV.

The final Mass, held at a city racecourse, drew up to 400,000 people, including 4,000 church officials and 2,000 media personnel. It was the largest single gathering ever witnessed in Australia, eclipsing attendance

Colorfully dressed pilgrims paraded through the streets

records set at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

What is World Youth Day? Why is it held? What activities does it include? And what light did it shed on the faith of the young people there in Sydney?

"An Erosion of Faith"

World Youth Day is an annual event celebrating the faith of Catholic youth. Church members usually mark the day in their local diocese. However, every two or three years, a large city hosts the event and Catholic youth around the world are invited to attend. Ten cities on five continents have staged such gatherings, and millions have attended these.





CHURCH VOCATIONS EXPO

World Youth Day 2008 featured the largest religious vocations expo ever held in Australia. Over 100 Catholic orders and agencies urged more than 50,000 pilgrims to consider careers in the Catholic Church as priests, nuns, or religious workers.

But, as church officials admit, World Youth Day is also about stemming the decline in the Catholic Church. "We face a serious erosion of practice and to some extent an erosion of faith," said George Cardinal Pell, Australia's senior Catholic cleric. "World Youth Day is an attempt to do something about it."

The number of priests is falling worldwide, according to Vatican figures. Tens of thousands have left the priesthood in recent decades to marry. The number of those who are training for the priesthood in Australia has plunged more than 70 percent over the past 30 years. The average age of priests in Australia's largest diocese is now in the 60's, some 20 years older than the average age in 1977.

Church attendance in many countries has also waned. About 25 percent of all Australians call themselves Catholic, but only 14 percent of these regularly attend church. Fewer than 10 percent of Catholic youths are thought to attend. Meanwhile, many Catholics disobey church teachings on sexual morality, contraception, and divorce. Others are disillusioned by church scandals, such as those involving pedophile priests.

World Youth Day "is really a last-ditch attempt to stop the rot," says *The Sydney Morning Herald*. "The church leadership in Australia and Rome is looking for restoration and renewal through the young." How are church leaders reaching out to them?

Pageantry and Parties

World Youth Day 2008 included church pageantry, group workshops, religious



Jehovah's Witnesses reached out to pilgrims who toured the city of Sydney



pilgrimages, and huge gatherings for the celebration of Mass. Although these activities deeply moved many of these pilgrims, some noted another spirit animating the proceedings. A young Catholic named Alexandra from the United States said about World Youth Day, "It's just one big party."

The six-day Sydney gathering featured 450 festive events, including concerts, films, plays, exhibitions, and street performances. The music ranged from opera and Gregorian chant to heavy metal and rap. Rock concerts drew thousands of young revelers.

These events concerned some Catholics. The occasion has "become just a happy party—a week of partying and concerts and world activities with very little that is truly holy and sacred," said priest Peter Scott to Australia's ABC News. In fact, in the year 2000, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, wrote: "'Rock' [music] is the expression of

elemental passions, and at rock festivals it assumes a cultic character, a form of worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship."

—*The Spirit of the Liturgy*.

The question might be raised, "Will World Youth Day prove to be a life-changing event?" "Perhaps for a tiny minority," noted former priest Paul Collins. "But most will revert to their previous patterns of existence," he said. "Fundamental change doesn't occur through spectacular events, but through reflection, careful planning and a willingness to tackle deep-seated problems."

"Be My Witnesses"

Church leaders are clearly conscious of those facts. Hence, World Youth Day 2008 featured the theme: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses."*

* This theme is a partial quote of Acts 1:8 from *The Jerusalem Bible*.

Bishops urged pilgrims to "discover a new apostolic zeal to witness more fully the Gospel in the modern world." Pope Benedict XVI exhorted pilgrims to become "a new generation of apostles," and on another occasion he urged them to spread "the Good News among their friends, their families, and all whom they meet."

These appeals struck a chord with some sincere pilgrims. Ramido, a 20-year-old from the United States, told one reporter: "I take being a witness seriously." But Beatrice, an 18-year-old from Italy, observed: "Young people today don't speak about God. To be a witness these days is a very difficult thing." Many pilgrims echoed the comment of two teenage girls from Texas, U.S.A., "The only ones who witness where we come from are Jehovah's Witnesses!"

Youths Who Bear Witness

Indeed, Jehovah's Witnesses, young and old, are well-known for their zealous witnessing. Why do they do it? "Love for God, love for people, and love for the Bible," says Sotir, a 22-year-old Witness from Sydney.

During World Youth Day 2008, nearly 400 young Witnesses from Sydney, though not attending the event, joined in a special campaign to share Bible truths with visiting Catholic pilgrims. "I was delighted to meet these spiritually-minded young Catholics," said Travas, aged 25. "Many of them had good Bible questions, and I enjoyed showing them satisfying answers."

"My approach was relaxed and informal," said Tarsha, aged 23. "I wanted to welcome them to Sydney and hear what they believed." "Where appropriate, I gave the visitors a gift—the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?***" said Frazer, aged 20. "Everyone I met was happy to receive it."

Many visitors clearly enjoyed their discussions with Witness youths. Suzanne, from Fiji, asked Belinda, a 19-year-old Witness,

why God has permitted suffering. Belinda suggested that they discuss the answer presented in the *Bible Teach* book. When they finished, Suzanne said: "Usually people just tell me that God works in mysterious ways. This time I really got an answer!" When Belinda gave her the book, Suzanne exclaimed: "I was trying to memorize everything you said. I didn't think you would let me keep the book!"

One Filipino visitor asked Marina, a 27-year-old Witness, to take her photograph

"We face a serious erosion of practice and to some extent an erosion of faith."

—Roman Catholic George Cardinal Pell

in front of a Sydney landmark. A friendly discussion followed, and Marina gave the woman a *Bible Teach* book. "I actually prayed last night to understand the Bible better," the woman remarked. "This book could be the answer to my prayer!"

Levi, a 27-year-old Witness, struck up a conversation with two visitors from Panama, a mother and daughter. The exchange soon turned to spiritual matters, and a fine discussion of Bible teachings followed. The two accepted a *Bible Teach* book. Later, Levi asked, "What has been the highlight of your trip?" Grasping the *Bible Teach* book, the daughter replied, "Meeting you."

Yes, many young Catholics were eager to know more about the Bible. What about you? Would you like to understand the Bible better? Then why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses for a free home Bible study? They would be delighted to help you too!

1. The she-ass. 2. Balaam's staff. 3. Jehovah's was angel. 4. Ebed-melech. He knew that Jeremiah was Jehovah's prophet and did not deserve death. 5. That was destroyed.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Give your children a good start in life

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN CANADA



■ "Television can be a wonderful learning tool," says a report in *The New York Times*. However, "sitting passively in front of the tube for hours is taking its toll on the bodies and minds of children," robbing them of opportunities that can foster creativity, learning, and social interaction.

After studying the viewing habits of 2,500 children, researchers at Children's Hospital in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., "found that the more TV watched by toddlers aged one to three, the greater their risk of attention problems at age seven," says the newspaper. Such children were increasingly aggressive and impatient and had a decreased attention span. According to educational psychologist Dr. Jane M. Healy, "many parents of children diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder found the difficulty markedly improved after they took away television viewing privileges."

What can parents do to reduce the time their children spend watching television? The report offered the following suggestions: Set limits on when and how long your child can watch television each day. Avoid using the television as a babysitter. Instead, involve your

child in doing household chores as much as possible. Select the shows your child can watch, and turn off the television when the chosen shows are over. Whenever possible, watch the selected programs with your child and talk about what you see. Finally, limit your own television viewing.

Nurturing creativity and social skills in children takes time, determination, and self-discipline. The positive results are worth the effort. This is attested to in an ancient proverb that says: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (*Proverbs 22:6*) An integral part of such training involves instructing children in proper moral values.

Jehovah's Witnesses successfully use their book *Learn From the Great Teacher* to instill lessons of acceptable behavior in their children. Indeed, good communication and loving attention by parents during a child's early years are sure to reap lasting rewards. What can be more satisfying than for parents to see their offspring grow into respected and responsible adults?

Biblical Name Unearthed

Archaeologists digging in Jerusalem's ancient City of David have discovered a 2,600-year-old clay seal impression, or bulla, bearing the name of "Gedaliah the son of Pashhur." Gedaliah is spoken of in the Bible at Jeremiah 38:1, as is Yehukhal—called "Jucal [shortened form of Jehucal (Yehukhal)] the son of Shelemiah"—whose name was found on a bulla in the same area in 2005. The two men were officials in the court of King Zedekiah. *The Jerusalem Post* reports: "This is the first time in the annals of Israeli archeology that two clay bullae with two Biblical names that appear in the same verse in the Bible have been unearthed in the same location."

Technology Used Against Crime

The New York Police Department receives most emergency calls from citizens by phone. Advances in technology recently made it possible to contact the police by text message. "Citizens are now being encouraged to capture crimes in progress on their cellphones and send the videos to the police," reports *The New York Times*. Steps are also being tak-

■ "Consultations for emergency contraceptives—the famous morning-after pill—tripled in the last six months, [and] sales have increased more than 200% since 2004. . . . Calls intensify on Mondays. Most are made by adolescents." —CLARÍN, ARGENTINA.

■ American cell-phone users between the ages of 13 and 17 each "sent or received an average of 1,742 text messages a month in the second quarter [of 2008]." —THE NEW YORK TIMES, U.S.A.

■ "Mental disorders affect nearly 12% of the world's population." —WORLD FEDERATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH, U.S.A.

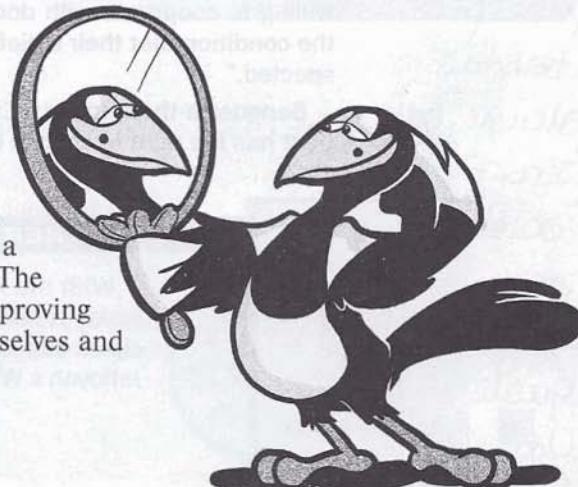
■ "An estimated one in five European adults have tried [cannabis, the source of marijuana] at some time in their lives." —EUROPEAN MONITORING CENTRE FOR DRUGS AND DRUG ADDICTION, PORTUGAL.

en, says the paper, "to enable the Real Time Crime Center to send photos out to all patrol cars in the area of a crime."

"We are facing very serious peril [the political crisis in Georgia] . . . God is with us and [the] Virgin Mary is protecting [us], but one thing concerns us very deeply—that Orthodox Russians are bombing Orthodox Georgians." —GEORGIAN CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH ILLIA II.

Magpies Recognize Themselves

"It had been thought only chimpanzees, dolphins and elephants shared the human ability to recognize their own bodies in a mirror," says a Reuters report. Now, Eurasian magpies have been recognized as members of this "club," which had commonly been believed to be exclusive. Researchers marked magpies' bodies with a colored dot that they could see only in a mirror. "The birds regularly scratched the mark on their body, proving they recognized the image in the mirror as themselves and not another animal," claims the report.



A Patient's Right to Choose

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ITALY

■ Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to accept blood transfusions. This refusal is based on Bible commands, the earliest of which says: "Only flesh with its soul—its blood—you must not eat."

First-century Christians were told simply: "Keep abstaining . . . from blood."—Genesis 9:4; Acts 15:29; Leviticus 17:14.

At Monterenzio, Italy, secondary-school students were asked to write an essay on the importance of donating blood. Among those students was Benedetta, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who wrote the following:

"It is well-known that Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusion because of their adhering to Bible principles, but this does not mean that they do not accept other treatments. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses value their health. They strive to find the best medical care available for themselves and their children. They are more than willing to cooperate with doctors, on the condition that their beliefs are respected."

Benedetta then added: "Every patient has the right to choose the treat-

ment that he believes is in his best interests, the right to be respected, and the right to know the risks and benefits of the treatment he will undergo."

The Monterenzio branch of AVIS (Association of Italian Blood Donors) awarded prizes to the students who best expressed their personal feelings on the subject. A report in *Monterenzio Vivace* magazine stated: "A special mention was given to Benedetta Barbi for her essay that went against the mainstream—the contents being far from the position that AVIS takes—but through which the student was able to express her beliefs with moderation and politeness."

Even though Jehovah's Witnesses' stand on blood goes "against the mainstream," many doctors now see merit in their position. The Witnesses' stand has been a major factor behind a number of innovative medical procedures that reduce blood loss during surgery. This has resulted in benefits to Witness and non-Witness patients alike. However, the main reason Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood is firmly founded on the Bible, as noted in the introduction.

The next time Jehovah's Witnesses call at your home, why not ask them about the Creator's view of blood? They will be eager to discuss it with you, doing so with "deep respect."

—1 Peter 3:15.

FURTHER INFORMATION

With the help of many recognized experts, the DVD *Transfusion Alternatives* explores the medical, legal, and ethical principles surrounding transfusion alternatives. It is available from Jehovah's Witnesses.





What Is Missing From This Picture?

Read Numbers 22:21-27. Now look at the picture. Write your answers on the lines below, and complete the picture by coloring it and drawing in the missing elements.

1.
2.
3.

FOR DISCUSSION: Why did Balaam become angry? How do you feel about the way Balaam treated the she-ass, and why do you feel that way?

From This Issue

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

PAGES 7-8 Being afraid of people can do what?

Proverbs 29:_____

PAGE 7 What does the stupid one walk in?

Ecclesiastes 2:_____

PAGE 7 The plans of the diligent one make for what?

Proverbs 21:_____

PAGE 22 What are the dead conscious of?

Ecclesiastes 9:_____



Children's Picture Search

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

What Do You Know About the Prophets?

Read Jeremiah 38:1-13; 39:15-18. Then answer the following questions.

4.

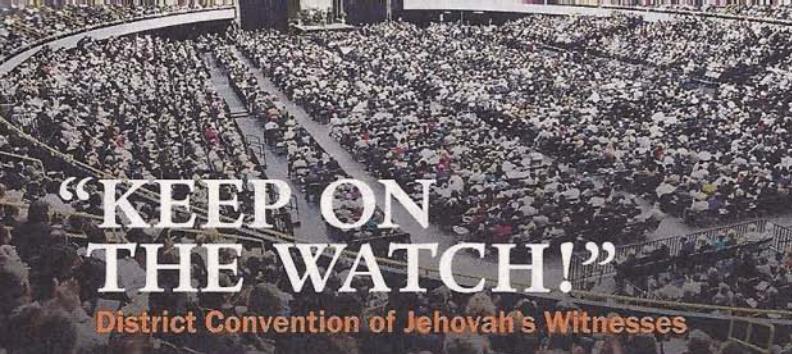
Who rescued Jeremiah, and why did he carry out that risky action?

5.

What did Jeremiah later tell that man?

FOR DISCUSSION: Why did Jeremiah deliver Jehovah's message even though it was dangerous to do so? If you serve Jehovah as Jeremiah did, what can you trust Jehovah to do for you?





"KEEP ON THE WATCH!"

District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses

Thousands of these three-day conventions, which are scheduled to begin in the United States on the weekend of May 22-24, will be held throughout the world for months to come. In the United States, sessions will begin each day at 9:20 a.m. with a musical program. Friday's theme, based on Matthew 24:44, is "**Prove Yourselves Ready.**" The chairman's address will be followed by the talks "Conventions Help Us to Remain Watchful" and "Jehovah—God of 'Times and Seasons.'" Then the symposium "**Imitate Faithful Ones Who Remained Watchful**" will consider how Noah, Moses, and Jeremiah did so. The morning program will end with the keynote address, "How Jehovah Helps Us to 'Keep on the Watch.'"

The first part on Friday afternoon is "Answers to Questions About 'the Last Days,'" followed by the talks "'You Know Neither the Day Nor the Hour'—Why?" and "Know That the End Is Near." Next will be the six-part symposium, "**'Stay Awake' as Christian Families!**" The first three parts address husbands, wives, and young ones directly. The last three parts are entitled "Keep Your Eye Simple," "Keep Pursuing Spiritual Goals," and "Maintain a Family Worship Evening." The afternoon session will end with the feature "Verses That Move Us to 'Keep Strict Watch.'"

Saturday's theme is "**Keep Your Senses, Be Watchful,**" based on 1 Peter 5:8. The five-part symposium "**Help People to 'Awake From Sleep,'**" will include the parts "Our Ministry—Why So Vital?," "Be Observant in the Ministry," "Focus on Improving Your Skills," "Don't Forget Your Relatives!," and "Maintain Your Sense of Urgency!" After the talks "Imitate Jesus' Example of Watchfulness" and "Be Vigilant With a View to Prayers," the session will

conclude with a talk on baptism, after which those who qualify will have the opportunity to be baptized.

Saturday afternoon's program will feature the five-part symposium "**Watch Out for Satan's Traps!**"—"The Fire," "The Pit," "The Snare," "The Trap That Chokes," and "The Trap That Crushes." The

special presentation, "Until I Expire I Shall Not Take Away My Integrity!" will follow. The day's sessions will end with the talks "Do Not Look 'at the Things Behind'" and "Learn Watchfulness From Jesus' Apostles."

Sunday's theme, based on Habakkuk 2:3, is "**Keep in Expectation . . . It Will Not Be Late.**" After a talk on the day's theme, the symposium "**Keep Your Eyes on the Things Unseen**" will consider the following subjects: "The Ten Horns . . . Will Hate the Harlot," "The Nations Will Have to Acknowledge Jehovah," "All These Kingdoms' Will Be Crushed," "The Devil Will Be Bound for a Thousand Years," "They Will Build Houses and Plant Vineyards," "The Wolf and the Lamb . . . Will Feed as One," "God . . . Will Wipe Out Every Tear," "All Those in the Memorial Tombs Will . . . Come Out," and "God Will Be 'All Things to Everyone.'" The public talk, "**How Can You Survive the End of the World?**" will complete the morning session.

A special feature Sunday afternoon is the touching modern-day drama "**Your Brother Was Dead and Came to Life,**" based on Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Following the summary of the weekly Watchtower Study, the convention will conclude with the talk "Keep in Expectation, Watching for Jehovah's Day!"

Make plans now to attend. To find the location nearest you, contact the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses or write the publishers of this magazine. In some places four-day international conventions will be held. The March 1 issue of *The Watchtower*, our companion magazine, has a list of all convention locations in the United States, including those that are international.